



DEPARTMENT OF MASS MEDIA

THE ECLECTIC EXPRESS

2019-20



SWINGS IN A CIRCUS



The ups & downs of daily routines, the topsy-turvy journey that life is. A Ying Yang, a perfection beyond our comprehension. These are all Swings In A Circus. What drives us all towards sanity in complete chaos? Hope, passion, desire, happiness, love or anything that helps you out of bed each day.

All life came to standstill a few months ago. The way of living changed in a matter of a few hours; there was havoc, panic and total chaos. However, most of us bounced back. Every person has a unique way of dealing with chaotic situations and what is even more beautiful is how unique each and every person's perception of chaos is.

What does it really mean to be chaotic? How does one find their sanity in complete panic? Hope, to achieve. Passion, to stay motivated. Love, to care and be cared for when needed. After all there is no recipe for happiness and one has to find their way as they go in the Circus that life is.

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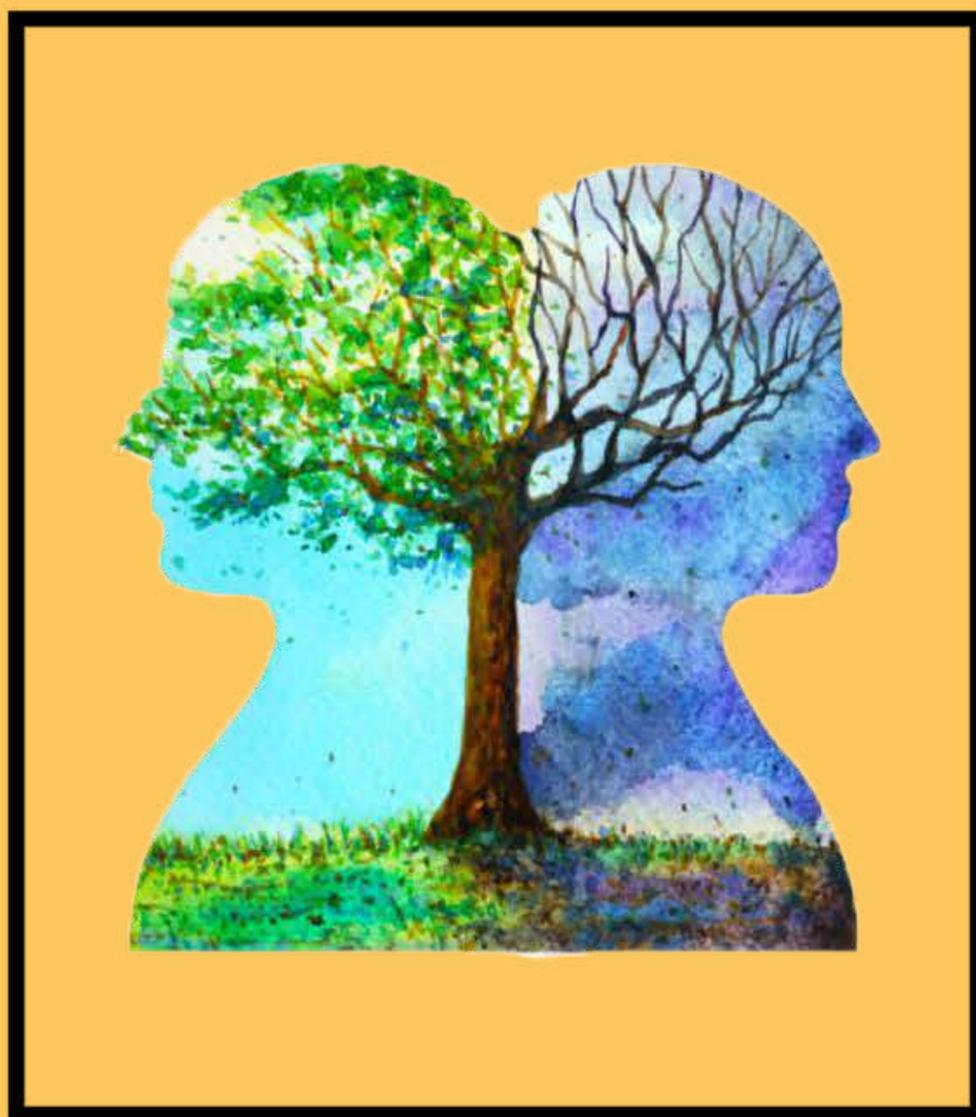
CHAOS

There is an undying discomfort between two words, the unannounced silence. It approaches you as a pause, sometimes a dramatic one but as you wait for something more, it leaves you with a punctuation mark. That place, the nowheres that exist everywhere are chaotic. It isn't necessarily melancholic, the world doesn't crumble around you, the world stays and stops while you are left to feel everything all at once, or sometimes nothing. It is as if your right leg is stuck outside while your left leg lingers inside the doorway, you're here but you're always leaving. It's not always a first hand experience, some are hand me downs or second hand embarrassments, some are comforting silences too. Is this transitional movement called life?

So, one day I had nothing to do and I observed damp clothes left out to dry on a windy afternoon. While I smiled at the thought of one floating away, my aunt panicked at the thought of thirty more tasks to do. She has a habit of micro-managing her home and she's pretty good at it. If you're wondering why I am diverting from the topic, it is because my aunt saw chaos in what was important to her while I saw beauty in a pass time. So chaos is good, it's usually where our heart is. We're always reflecting our priorities and preferences on others so we look for similar chaos and that's how we bond and understand a few.

Life exists between pauses and spaces. It exists between chaos and calm, the sky and us. We're not here to fill them, we are it. Now, isn't that beautiful?

- Janvi Madabusi



WE ARE THE CALM

Everything was normal
Before,
We saw things tumbling
and felt them rumbling
We sensed the chaos awaiting,
The treacherous flares burning,
in disastrous form, without warning
Set to engulf
And crush us whole.

We gear up to fight,
with our remaining light
Got thrown away,
Broke in small pieces,
As all our attempts went in vain
and all of us in bane
We prepared to leave the planet,
Relegated to some dark pit
And forgotten by all.
Never to return.

We were leaving
before we heard something turn
Then felt something burn,
within us
Like the souls set on fire,
Resilient to the uproaring chaos
Resenting the notion of surrender

We stood up
and put ourselves back
like a firm bulwark
We are calm in the chaos.

- *Yash Advani*



Illustration By - Ria Lakhani

THE CROSSROADS OF CALM AND CHAOS

Calm and chaos often are the figments of our imagination. Introspection and lockdown make you realize the notions that until now were like the fridge magnets, right in front of us but never carefully observed. This thought took me back to one of the fondest memories of my childhood, 'The Great Golden Circus'. Every summer my sister and I would visit our grandparents, they would take us to many places with rides and swings, the circus was my favourite, it was always a thrilling experience. The jokers and the animals would make me laugh, but I tightly held my grandmother's hand when the trapeze artists were performing the stunts. They would jump from one swing to another, fearlessly and effortlessly. I always felt that they took a lot of risks to perform these stunts until someone changed my mind, she told me that "when a trapeze artist performs the stunts, they take no risk, the risk and chaos lies in the mind of the spectator." It's our heart that starts rushing; it's our mind where the nervousness quivers.

We create chaos and design our calm. We perceive the chaos more easily than calm. Perception is more than a state of mind and is a sharp judging instrument. It does not only affect the individual who is being judged; it affects us more than anyone. Perception is often the first step towards chaos. The calmness within us also exists in our perceptions; it makes us the person who is capable of making rational decisions. While perception might give an impetus to both, it also gives birth to a dangerous drug, hope.

Hope possesses the capacity to throttle the two. It lures us into doing something that we might never imagine. The hope that sufferings of the pandemic come to an end made us all explore those sides of us that we never knew existed, it made us read, sing, dance, paint and gain a sense of belongingness, it gave us those beautiful moments that would otherwise be fantasies, it minimized our options in such a way that we could judge the importance of people around us. It forced us to be patient, to wait, to long for everything that we had planned.

But patience is a double-edged sword. While on one side it gives us a sense of purpose and calmness, on the other hand, it cripples some of us. Patience demands a person to remain peaceful, but when one deliberately tries to do that it often causes chaos. The pandemic stopped the lives of some individuals and their families. The tensions of income and economy, of politics and citizenship, or daily expenses and supplies ceased the lives of some sections failing to wind up the immense chaos, the people who suffered loss were left scarred.

In the end, life is much like the circus which I visited as a child, swings of hope and opportunities may or may not come to our ways but in the end, we would, like the trapeze artist, one day make it through the crossroads of chaos and the calm and eventually strike a balance. All that we need is to be patient.

- Shubhangi Pandya

THE SIMPLE JOYS

A walk on a windy day,
The sunset on a shore.
Flying birds chirping around town
Or just finding my way around.

Sometimes I feel so out of control,
But these small things help me hold on.
The simple joys, a calm place in total chaos.

It never takes a huge gesture,
Just stumbling onto a happy picture is enough.
A little bit of nostalgia and a rush of memories,
Sometimes even gushing tears rolling down like rain.

You can find happiness even in the sad parts,
It only takes an attentive look around.
The simple joys, a calm place in total chaos.

An unexpected warm hug could take all my worries away,
A stranger's smile or a dog's attention.
A little appreciation or a vibecheck with someone I just met,
Are each enough to make my day.

Sometimes I'd risk it all for what seems so trivial to the rest,
It would become the greatest surprise,
a treasure I hold very close to my chest.
The simple joys, a calm place in total chaos.

- *Chhavi Jaggi*



Artwork By - Zahabia Mithaiwala

HUMAN AND PLANT

Papa was never a great storyteller.
This department was handled by mum,
So, for any story, I always ran to her.
Stories from princesses to animals; she had it all,
But once, Papa did tell me a story.
Surprisingly, that's the one I recall!
It was a competition that I didn't win.
I came home with a sad face, and
Papa knew that I couldn't just swallow my chagrin.

He sat next to me,
Smiled and said,
"So, do you want to hear a story?"
Before I could say yes
I could hear it because
Papa began nonetheless.
"There used to be two friends.
And they did everything together.
Every possible thing that can be penned.
Their names were Human and Plant, but
Being together wasn't a choice,
Instead, a compulsion somewhat.
They were two peas in a pod,
It seemed like a single soul survived.
Because both were on board.
Only plant's oxygen could the Human breathe.
And it was Human's carbon dioxide for the plant.

That kept them alive indeed!
But one day,
They had a huge scuffle,
"Out of us, who's better anyway?"
As the argument did continue,
Both kept coming back to the
Same question- "Me or you?"
So, not seeing each other.
Was their decision and they thought,
'This is only for the better.'
With their backs facing each other
They started walking away
And with each step farther,
Breathing became difficult for both
Suffocation that took over was so painful that
Each other, they couldn't anymore loathe!
So, they ran back, close to each other.
And took deep breaths.
So that breathlessness wasn't a bother."



I was perplexed.
I didn't really understand it all,
But was eager to know what's next!

Papa continued
"As time flew,
With different angles,
The lives they could view.
They still fought,
Argued and cried
But this time, they had a few positive thoughts.

They smiled and laughed.
For they knew that it was what
Made their lives beautifully carved!"

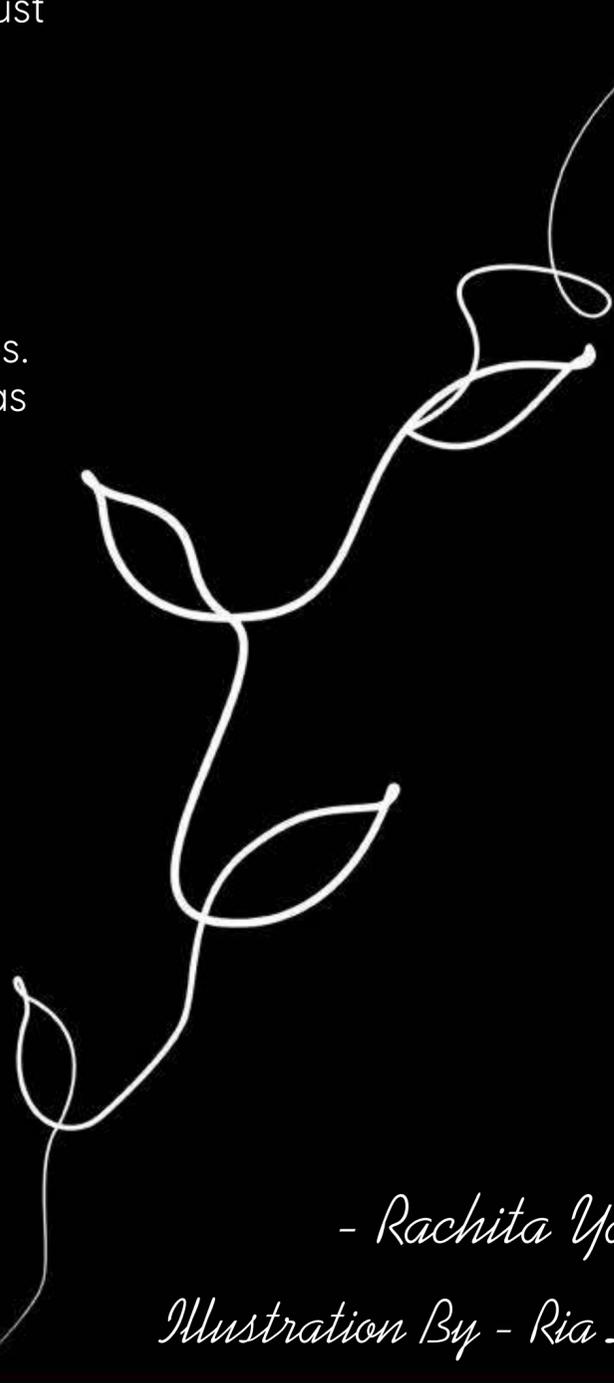
Papa paused and then said to me,
"All of us have something that resembles the
relation between Human and Plant.
It is the feeling of sadness and of glee,
Because happy and sad aren't independent.
They would've been meaningless.
Had either of them not exist.
You lost today, someday you'll win!
You're sad today, someday you'll be happy.
And there's nothing wrong with it, trust me.

You must experience it all.
Our feelings are like tree leaves,
They're dull, and they shed in the fall.
But every spring brings leaves, green and lively.
All of this isn't a phase,
But something that'll always recur,
Be it the sad or the happy case.
So, if you feel lost today, don't worry,
Because tomorrow you'll find your way,
There is nothing wrong in taking your time, trust
me.
If today you're not sad or lost,
What an ounce of happiness means,
You'll understand at no cost!"

Back then I just yelled at Papa,
"See, that's why I don't come to you for stories.
You were saying something, but all I heard was
blah blah blah!"

Papa smiled and said,
"Okay, let's go down.
And some ice cream we'll get?"
Suddenly the gloomy air vanished,
In that moment of that sad day,
I was most joyous and content.

Even today, ice cream
Reminds me of my Human and plant
And of my failures and my dreams
Even today, I tell Papa
About my great days, and the bad ones too.
About my happy days and the sad ones too,
And that has kept the soul,
Of my Human and plant,
Healthiest to its core.



- Rachita Yadav

Illustration By - Ria Lakhani

WHOEVER IS CALM AND SENSIBLE IS INSANE

- Utkarsh Masand and Vani Srivastava



She's wilderness in the order!



*Between the chaos of kitchen and order
of cooking; stand our mothers.*



*Those sick of the calm
know the storm.*



Taandav : peace and chaos.



*Amalgamation of
order and disorder.*



Swings of life: sadness and happiness.



*When everything around you is crazy,
it is ingenious to stay calm.*



*She walked under the shade with a soul
burning in the fire of her chaos.*

FLEETING ECSTASY

The cheers around me are deafening,
and yet my soul feels numb,
I know I won't hurt myself if I fall,
but I'm still afraid to jump.
Though I stand high above the ground,
and my audience is seated down there,
Their gaze continually tantalises me,
I can feel them sense my despair.

Images flash through my mind,
of a battered, broken me,
Fallen from the swing,
down and out on the unyielding ground I see.
It all comes racing back,
the relentless sobs and the unending pain,
How I told myself I had no choice
but to get back up and do it again.

With a heavy sigh, I jump,
and feel my feet leave the sanctuary of the platform,
I hear the wind roaring in my ears,
and yet somehow fifty feet in the air, I still feel warm.
The warmth of freedom that lets me escape
the perpetual angst of a decision going wrong,
I have now let go,
and this is precisely what I've always longed.

I'm flying,
and a flood of endorphins embraces me,
The thrill of letting go is intoxicating,
and I never want to stop being this free.
I seem to forget my troubles,
I can't remember what had made me so dismal,
At that moment, all that matters is my happiness,
a happiness that knows no equal.

I twirl mid-air with the grace of a gentle breeze,
and the resounding applause can't seem to drop,
I revel in love, knowing that I can't ever
let this newfound emancipation of mine stop.
I soak in every moment,
determined to relish them forever,
And before I even realise,
I'm back onto my platform, for my act is over.

I feel my rush ebbing away,
as the audience stops applauding for me,
Even though I'm back to my comfort zone,
I'm scrambling to find any sort of glee.
I instantly crave that thrill again, but I realise,
the next time I stand on that platform,
ready for my life, ready for my show,
Anxiety will creep up my spine again,
and it will take a lot of courage for me to let go.

- Aayush Ambasht



Illustration By - Urichi Shah

CHASING A DREAM

The alarm goes off, SNOOZE, the alarm goes off, SNOOZE. The alarm goes off, she wakes up. She is a person of grit, a person who believes in herself and her dreams. A person who has left everything behind and come to this part of the world to fulfil her lustrous dream of becoming a performer. It's her audition today, and frankly, she is late. Her clothes are wrinkled, with only a banana to satisfy her empty stomach in hand she heads out. She is out in the scorching heat and is swiftly taken aback by the rush hour, no one is stopping for her to cross the road.

It is almost like the world doesn't want her to reach on time. Being a thick-skinned person, she knows nothing can stop her on the most important day of her life. But there is one person, the taxi driver, he doesn't want to drive where she seeks to go. All she wants is to hop on a taxi and focus on what's ahead of her, The Audition.

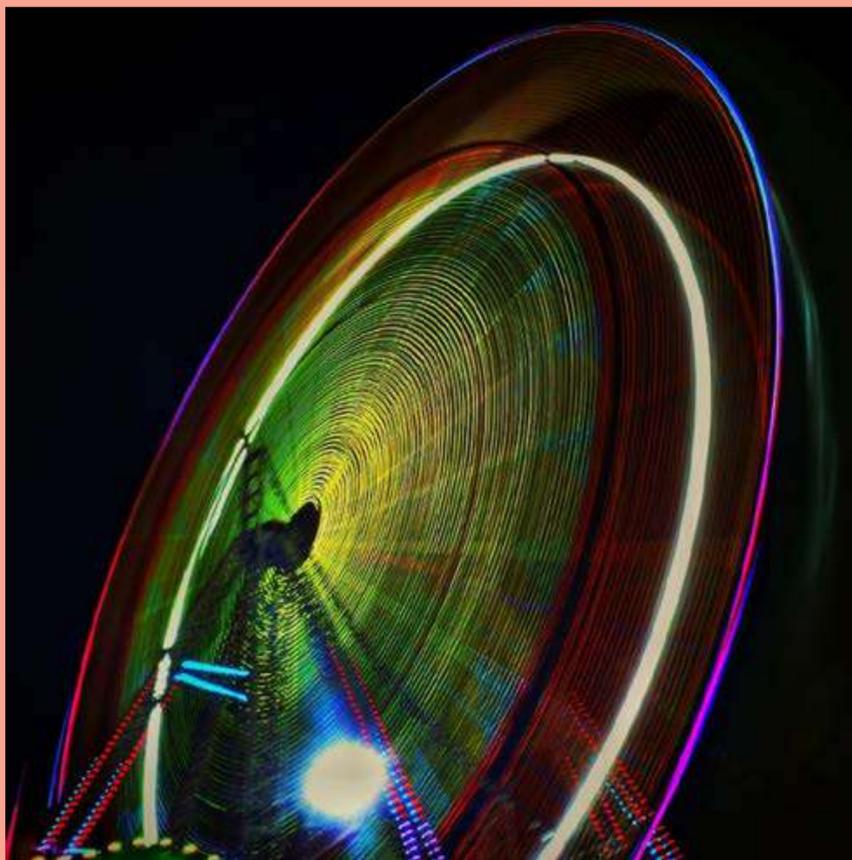
She finally gets a taxi, but this guy won't go with the meter on. The price is too high, but she has no choice. She suddenly realises that the banana in her hand all this while is now crushed because of the morning fiasco. She tells herself that she has saved enough money on breakfast and owes herself this taxi ride. She hops in and explains her urgency to the driver, but the next turn he takes-traffic jam, she's frustrated. Without music to block the honking, she cannot focus on her act.

After forty-five exhausting minutes, a jerky power nap, a mental breakdown and an almost accident she finally gets there. She gets out of the taxi she hopes that she'll finally find peace and calm at the location, she pushes the door open and more confusion. There's noise, people rehearsing, people doing their own thing in their unique way. She, nervous and frightened, starts to think she does not belong here, and she'll never be ready for her audition. She is thinking about her mother, who has fought against her father to send her little girl to this big city. Only her mother had faith in her and her talent. For the first time in her life, she fears letting her down and reminds herself that isn't an option.

Soon she starts to notice people, notice their skill, talent and hard work, she realises that they are just like her - passionate, driven, and confident about themselves and their talent. They've all come from different parts of the country and have big dreams, she thinks about their families and how they would have convinced their parents about their goal and what they want to do, some might have run away from their families, to make it big. She thinks about their struggles, how powerful they are to give their dreams a chance, working hard for it. Not everybody can do that. She is just like them and belongs here. Something has changed in her, she's experiencing something she has never experienced before. She is cherishing this chaos, chaos of dreams and finding peace in it. She is ready and more focused than she ever was for what lies ahead of her, The Audition.

- Arnav Tickoo

THE LOST SANITY



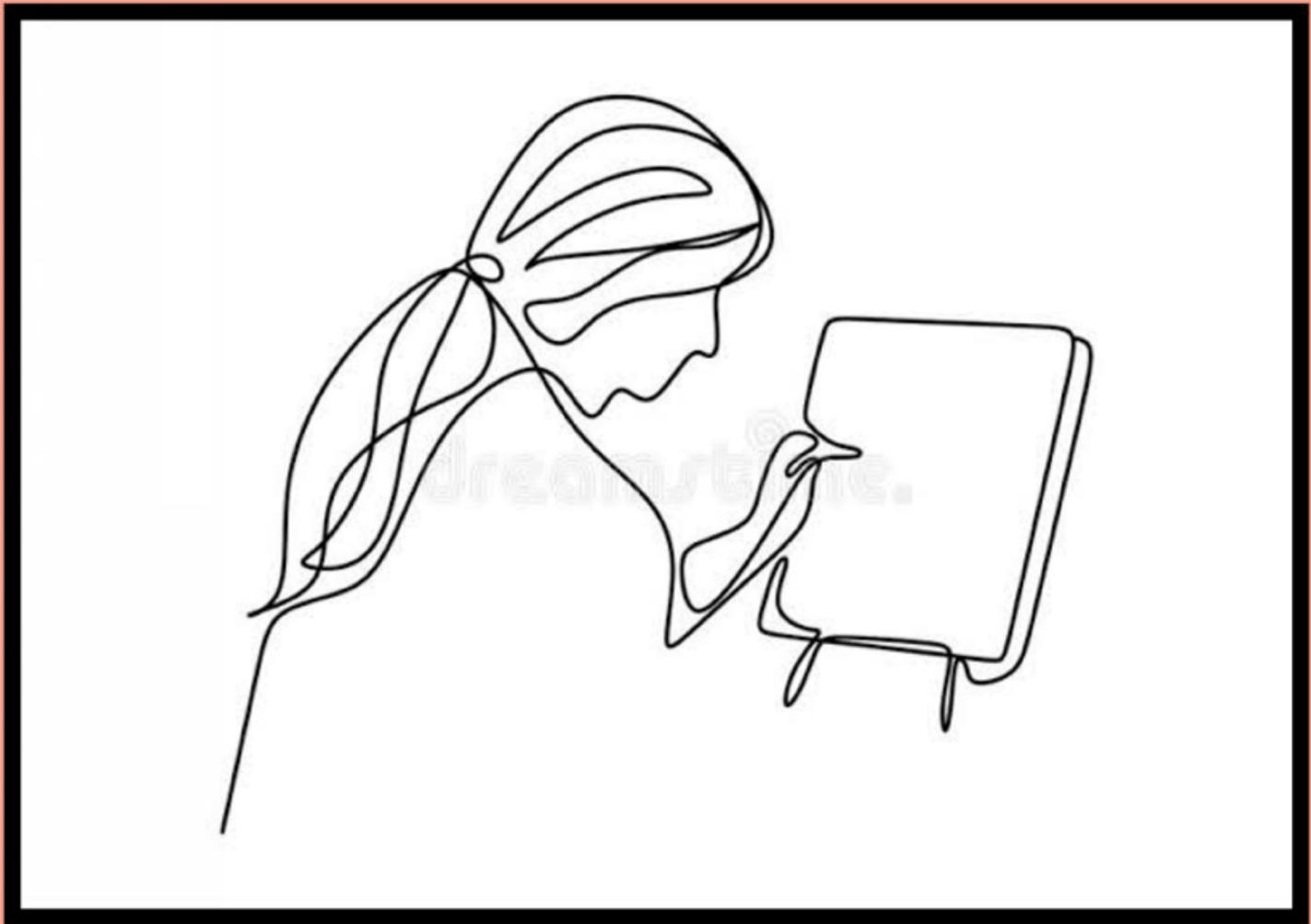
Amidst the crazy crowd, the calmness rests within the minds of The Daredevils who risk their lives. They go unnoticed in the crowd but are still the heroes of the child in our heart, who wishes to wave the ten-rupee note like the siren of peace and acceptance of the heroism they display, risking their lives just to disappear into a cypher, well like a soldier who is undervalued yet devoted in the well of death, the stuntman does it all. With the calmness of a saint and courage of a cop, they have a lot of hearts to win.

Up into the Ferris Wheel impersonating faith, the more we try touching the heights, the more complicated it gets, the chaos of thoughts that go together in our inner mind failing to reciprocate with reality, but the moment we reach the top it seems like we can touch the sky and nothing else in this world seems impossible. Then reality strikes hard, and we start stepping down, it feels like we're being dethroned, moments ago we felt like the rulers, and everything is now like a gigantic hoax, we realise that things have to end for us to have a new beginning. And then we pass through the stalls, splendidly conning the crowd. The crowd is ecstatic about the antiques presented to them like a bouquet of lies - easy and affordable but deceptive.

Life is a deceiving journey; sanity is achieved only after appreciating the little insanity that pushes you to do the crazy. The Daredevil's paradise seems like a chaotic nightmare to those who wish to find sanity in monotony.

- *Peehu Bhatt*

PAUSE



Surroundings seem still, but are enigmatic,
Unfolding as they should be.
Yet the beginning is yours,
You paint your canvas,
You choose elements for your circus,
You create your picture.
You are a bud of that blossom.
Of which the stars are on-lookers.
The wilderness around you is waiting,
The Universe is also patient.
The world that was playing is paused,
Waiting for you to rewind it.
There is a halt for your enticing reverie.

- *Vani Srivastava*

MIND GAMES

You're walking on a plank of wood high up in the air, so high that you can't see anything below, and you're getting closer and closer to the end. Finally, you have no other option but to go forward, because behind you are all the things that haunt you, all the things that you wanted to run away from in the first place.

Normally, you would've just paused this whole thing and shoved it to the back of your mind every time it popped up. But, when you're in a void where nothing changes, and there is nothing to distract you from this, what would you do?

So, you take the logical option, thinking that the only way out is through, right?

You take a step back and face your demons, again. You realise that even if you don't talk about them anymore, sometimes they do affect you. You break down because you've been here before. Does that mean that the entire time you spent moving forward was a waste of time? Suddenly, all your demons, all the chaos in the world, pushes you towards the edge. You try to maintain your balance, but you fall anyway. You fall into nothingness. There is nobody that can hear or understand you the way you want them to. After a while, you know it in your gut.

This is it! This is the lowest low point of your life, and you can't get back up. So, you spiral back to discover deeper truths about yourself. You realise that when we grow, we get closer to our roots. It means, reviving your forgotten interests, reconnecting with your failed friendships, or simply just rejuvenating yourself by taking a break. That's real change, the kind that nobody wants, the kind that only happens when everything goes out of control, and you don't have any choice in the matter. All you can do is, embrace the uncertainty, and follow your instinct. Because having a circus in your head means that you'll either be walking on a tightrope daily or be tumbling through the air. Because "A circus can't just be beautiful. It has to be weird. It has to be frightening." You have to keep going with the flow though, how else will it all work out in the end?

- *Ria Lakhani*



REASONS AND HOPE

Sometimes things don't work out
The way you hoped they would,
Hope, such a positive word.
We, humans always need a motivational force
that drives us
That makes us want to live another day,
For some it's faith,
In someone bigger than themselves,
For some, it's ambition & fame,
To leave a mark such that
They'll never be forgotten,
For some it's love,
For some, it's revenge and hate.
But for me its hope
Hope that I'll figure things out,
Hope that you'll make an opinion &
Have the courage to say it out loud,
I hope that we all will realise
That there is a reason why we
Keep going on even when
Things don't work out.

- *Vaidehi Chhaparwal*





*Blade runner 2049:
A human impact*

Eyes. You start a film with an eye. Eyes are windows to the soul. Someone in the film says "to be born is to have a soul". Eyes and birth. Eyes and life. The person who says this was not born. So often you feel more for what you don't have. But his eyes say everything, he doesn't speak much but he feels more than an ocean. He's a replicant. A creation of man, not a human, not a robot, just an imitation, a slave but to be precise he is a Blade runner. A killer of old models of replicants. Such is the cycle of life.

He lives in a world where as far as the eye can see there are neon advertisements, brutalist buildings, no trees, smoke and flocks of humans of all cultures like a breathing stampede. Cyberpunk. It's chaos in all its form. The very absence of nature and the fact that the only time you see nature is a dead tree triggers an anxiety of what life means or rather what its absence means?

His name is a serial number. "KD6-3.7". His memories are not his, they were created by a memory maker. He is in love with a hologram girl that he bought like you buy an iPhone now. He bought love but he feels it. Everyone in this world is trying to hold on to something real, when nothing is. But now he is told that there was a child born of a replicant, a birth, an unheard marvel.

Now I ask those who read. How often do you realise you are alive? How often do you feel that to be born is to have a soul? Not very often, right? Our humanity is the single most underrated concept ever. Taken for granted like fallen leaves from an autumn tree. But what if you were never human and now you find out that maybe you were born, maybe you are alive and not just living. Isn't that a true taste of emancipation, isn't that purpose? Wouldn't you do anything to be told that you are human, that you are real? Those memories that you thought were implants may actually be yours? That you can find yourself now. Wouldn't you chase it?

His chase from being a serial number to being "Joe" made me question the very essence of what it means to be a human, his chaos was my chaos, his pursuit of the truth brought me closer to life and just when he thought he was born he is told that this story was never about him. He is not the child. He was not born. There is no anxiety larger than knowing your life was a lie then trying to find a truth only to realise that your life is one big broken dream. All he wanted was to feel something real.

And no, this film did not have a happy ending, no he didn't start a revolution, he died. But in his final moments he realised what it means to be born, to be human and there is no greater inner peace than knowing that. He never says it, but he felt it more than an ocean. He was more human than human.

He knew to be human is to be fragile. It took a non-human to make me feel the miracle of life, And now I am at peace and I embrace life.

- Surya Mor



The "humanness" of cinema

"Maybe that's why it's called a screen because it protects you from the world," says a character in a 2003 movie 'The Dreamers'.

Growing up as a socially awkward teenager then an adult, it was mostly cinemas from where I fulfilled my sense of humanly knowledge and interactions. That's how whenever I'd get lost amidst the dust of the world, I'd seek a mirage of humanness in cinema. And going to theatres is the best way to feel that mirage. Hence every year, I'd count when a particular movie would screen and thus temporarily "protect" me. I thought for every lousy month or year there would always be a movie screening with an empty corner seat from the aisle in the right side of theatre for me. But this year as I counted my hectic and usually tiresome days and months for a movie, a pandemic struck the world, and a complete nationwide lockdown was announced.

I suddenly found myself stuck in the four walls of my home with my four family members and no contact to the external world apart from the internet. With life coming to a standstill and nothing to look forward to, a laptop or phone screen to watch a film wasn't the most appealing thought. Perhaps this screen didn't seem enough to replace the aura of a theatre. Some days later, though, I landed upon an old foreign language film which I couldn't stop admiring. It helped me discover a foreign culture, and as ironic as it is, my sense of familiar comfort lay in foreign language films from an era I hadn't lived a day of. They had a certain allure to them as they were also something I would never find on new screens. And as days went, I would often find myself delving deep in the ocean of what's the blend of vintage, emotions and aesthetics.

What became a turning point was when I came across this 1988 film named "Cinema Paradiso". Written and directed by Giuseppe Tornatore, it is what NY times describes it as "an Italian Memory film". Set in post-war Italy, this movie encapsulates the sense of beauty amidst debris - a lot of what we are trying to seek as it tells the story of an 8-year old boy Salvatore, nicknamed Toto, enchanted with the beauty of cinema as he witnesses film screenings and film admirers from all walks of life in his neighbourhood movie theatre CINEMA PARADISO. He obsesses over film reels and the process of film projections and tries to learn it from the philosophical projectionist Alfredo who he even develops a bond of friendship with. He has a widowed war mother, who still hopes for his father to return from Russia as there's no official news of his death, but Toto knows the reality, and he refuses to live in denial and gloominess. Instead, he chooses to look for beauty where he can. Throughout the movie, he grows up with his love for cinema and the same projectionist friend who gives him life advice through quotes of filmmakers. This friend plays a vital role in how Toto became a famous filmmaker years later as he is the one who pushes him towards following his love for cinema by going to the city and telling him to 'not give in to nostalgia'.

This movie described the magic of cinema in such a way that I realised myself getting immersed with a sense of hopeful nostalgia too. I started to look at lost days, not with regret but remembrance—a sparkling one. As I sit to find parallels between the communal movie-going experience shown in the movie and what I enjoy - being alone amidst a crowd. Over the years, being absorbed with individuality, I overlooked the same humane aspects in my life I find cinema appealing for. At the end of the movie, Toto's character is shown feeling a sense of regret and loss even as he achieves what his heart wished reveals him as quite flawed despite his love and passion for films.

This character makes the human I look for in a cinema close to home. However, all these aspects, as gloomy and hopeless as it may sound, provided the channel for my emotions to find a sense of purpose and hope—something to look forward to.

Perhaps the screen - no matter how big or small can always protect us. And protecting does not mean keeping one in a bubble of safety but really making us aware enough to look for ourselves. Aware of our heart. Aware of what makes us human.

- Anushka Sharma

TRAPPED

We all are trudging down the same road
Coming across faces, old and new.
Seeing the sky range in different shades of blue,
The day passes by in a blur.
Not knowing what we've spoken before
Sitting here lying amidst the buried calm.
The chaotic waves threatening to wash ashore
Struggling with reality, it slipped off into the astray.
All trapped in their little minds
Shielded by mere walls.
Living on repeat, chained by a routine so tight
What a shame, what a plight.
We are still trying to break free
Holding onto faux flickers of light.
Oh, we're losing our mind, our sight,
Too reckless to even put up a fight.

- Avantika Sharma



Illustration By - Mehek Shahani

THE FLIPSIDE OF PRIVILEGE

I seem to have a bittersweet relationship with privilege. Some days seem wicked because the ability to acknowledge its existence is a privilege in itself.

Some days I feel I don't deserve it, yet I find myself complaining about 'trivial' things. It is almost paradoxical. This divide got wider during the lockdown. The constant reminders by the media, of the confusion and exasperation faced by the people due to this pandemic made me question a lot of things, especially myself.

"Oh, you're doing so good, what problem can you possibly have?" they say.

Because privileged people aren't allowed to have problems, especially those related to mental health. You could be crumbling within your mind, but the net of privilege buffers you from asking for help. The external chaos only adds fuel to the inner turmoil, and a sense of calm gets reduced to nothing but a vague memory.

It isn't easy to feel gratitude when you think you're Alice-in-Wonderland. You can't help but feel amazed by the surrealism of it and feel disproportionately out of place simultaneously. Unlike what people assume, looking at the world through the lens of privilege isn't as rosy as it seems.

When you're in a position of privilege, any problem, if not conventional enough, is trivialised and makes you feel guilty for even thinking about them.

It's an incredibly vicious cycle of guilt and contemplation propelled by the wheels of your privilege. But then, I wouldn't know about 'real' problems because after all, I'm privileged.

- Somya Raghuvanshi

EPIPHANY

I woke up and picked up the newspaper on my way to the kitchen to make green tea and breakfast. Not for me, for my mom. Strangely it took me four months to call out a pattern.

Multiple routine events in the day reaffirmed my doubts. As I took the breakfast to her, she was on her phone, smiling looking at a message. I waited for her to notice how I had plated the dish, but she didn't look at me. Disappointed, I left the room. Nonetheless, I got back to the usual chores. After some time, I asked her to get up and exercise with me. Convincing her to get out of the blanket to leave Netflix was the most exhausting part of the work out.

Around three, she left to buy some groceries, and before she left, I reminded her to ping me when she reaches. Three hours later I had no message and various unanswered calls. Finally, she called me back. "Why did you not pick up my calls?" was answered with hurried and excited explanations of meeting her friend. I cut the call angrily.

How could she not tell me where she was? Didn't she know I was waiting for her? Annoyed, I got back to work. I kept all my anger aside and, prepared her favourite dishes for dinner. I welcomed her with a warm hug. As she savoured her dinner I let mine run cold for I was lost in the warmth of this moment. Her delighted expressions worked as the best stress busters. When we moved into the comfort of Netflix and blankets, I was, as usual, ecstatic. For the hundredth time, we started playing *Pretty Woman*. Before starting, I quoted a dialogue from the movie which said: "In case I forget, I had a great time tonight."

This is the moment it hit me. A line that my mother always used to say to me before we started watching the film. Had I turned into my mother? I instantly paused the movie, a flashback of the entire twenty years of my being was right in front of me. I was speechless as I realised that what I got tired of in just a few months, my mother had been unconditionally doing for me since the past **20** years. This lockdown gave me the much-needed time to experience some part of my mother's life and why she loved it even though it was so hectic; it was for the joy of her loved ones and the smallest moments of happiness. Embracing the freehand on time, I walked a few steps closer to my idol's persona. I remember how I always used to shun her ideals and negate them—especially the one where she told me to live in the moment and look after myself. I finally realised what it took for her to balance her work, dreams and her love for me.

My mom looked at me, and she laughed hysterically. She knew what I was thinking about. I hugged her tightly and started crying as she laughed and said "ho gayi na senti?"; a taunt that I used to overload her with. Soon I tucked her in bed, gave her a goodnight's kiss and returned to my room with a huge smile.

This pandemic has given me a chance to get closer to my mom and try to love my loved ones unconditionally. It has taught me to be grateful and appreciative for the things that I always took for granted. It has taught me to greet the problems of my life with a smile. Accepting and appreciating the parts of my mother which live on in me and being my mother's mother are the most special things that this lockdown has taught me.

- Vaidaangi Sharma

NATURE'S CALM

It was eight in the morning, when I woke up to some unusual voice, trying to soothe me like a lullaby. I was sleepy, but my curiosity to discover the melodist compelled me to wake up and look for it. It was a grey billed koel chirping in my backyard. Her canorous and calming voice took my drowsiness away. Within the next few minutes, I was in my backyard, sipping tea and admiring the visitors that had come to embellish my abode. It was so pleasant to witness those beauties after about a decade.

There was also a ringdove that cooed among the branches, the squirrels that ran through the gulmohar tree while there were some sparrows hanging out at my neighbour's fence. All of them tried to create a hustling environment; little did they know that they were showering peace. The peace that was draped with the technology-driven, modern garb had now been lifted, fleetingly.

I could feel Nature reclaiming, the creatures rejoicing and both of them, healing. It's strange how they've found their calmness amidst the chaos that has gripped us completely. The lockdown has unlocked the freedom of Nature. Various factors such as no vehicular emissions, no industrial wastes, no traffic, have contributed to the cure of Nature. The air, the sky, the water, the land, have started curing as there is less burden of exploitation.

Seismologists have claimed that even the slightest seismic events can now be discovered due to fall in the noise levels. It is a transition that hasn't been witnessed in decades. Delhi's air quality has improved so much that it has been claimed as the best in the last five years. The Dolphins have been found enjoying at the Mumbai coast, selflessly, which was once the spot of the selfish creatures. Thousands of flamingos that arrived in Navi Mumbai have given a treat to the wetland as these guests found their space to tourist the city. Nature, flora and fauna, which have been taken for granted for years are enjoying the temporary freedom without any fear and interference.

Nature has been preserving itself due to the reserved involvement of humans. It has been exploring itself just like us in the quest of calmness and solace. But is Nature on an extended vacation or it's us? I think it's both of them. By all odds, if the twain live a life of shared responsibility, we would have fewer vacations and more serenity.

- Purvi Khemani

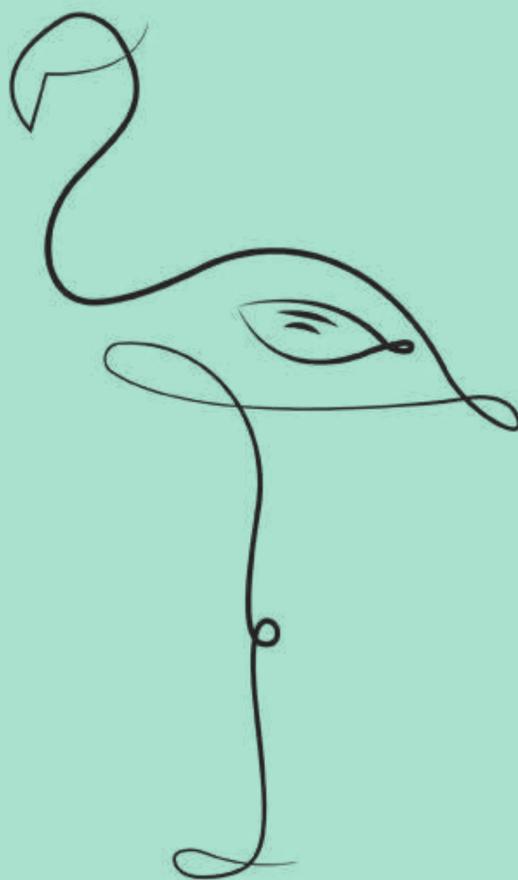


Illustration By - Ria Lakhani

STRIKING BALANCE

Have you ever experienced a sudden ringing in your ears which makes you think, “Woah, what is that, “until it slowly subsides as you grow accustomed to it? That was basically, in a nutshell, my experience of the unprecedented pandemic and the consequent lockdown. The world seemed more and more like a post-apocalyptic film, with the media going berzerk, and commonfolk getting wild with their conspiracy theories. However, in juxtaposition to this macrocosm, my life was now consumed by this unfamiliar vacuum.

The world was in a state of disarray, but somehow, also in a state of... peace? But how could that be possible, you may ask. Well, I'd say it's because of the dualistic nature of chaos—a yin and yang relation. As we humans panicked and scurried into our homes, the wildlife peacefully proclaimed the vast empty roads. Similarly, I got more rest and relaxation than I was used to in the last 8 months. However, my unoccupied brain was also plagued by a deluge of nagging thoughts.

By tumultuous wind, the eye of the tornado is said to be a point of stillness. As we work our way out of this shared misfortune, some of us will look at it as a time of introspection; for some, it will have been a period of restoration. For me, it will be the time I honed the act of striking balance.

- *Sahana Sinha*



If temples and churches are places of worship, why are mosques replaced with hotels and lives?



Aashna Malkani

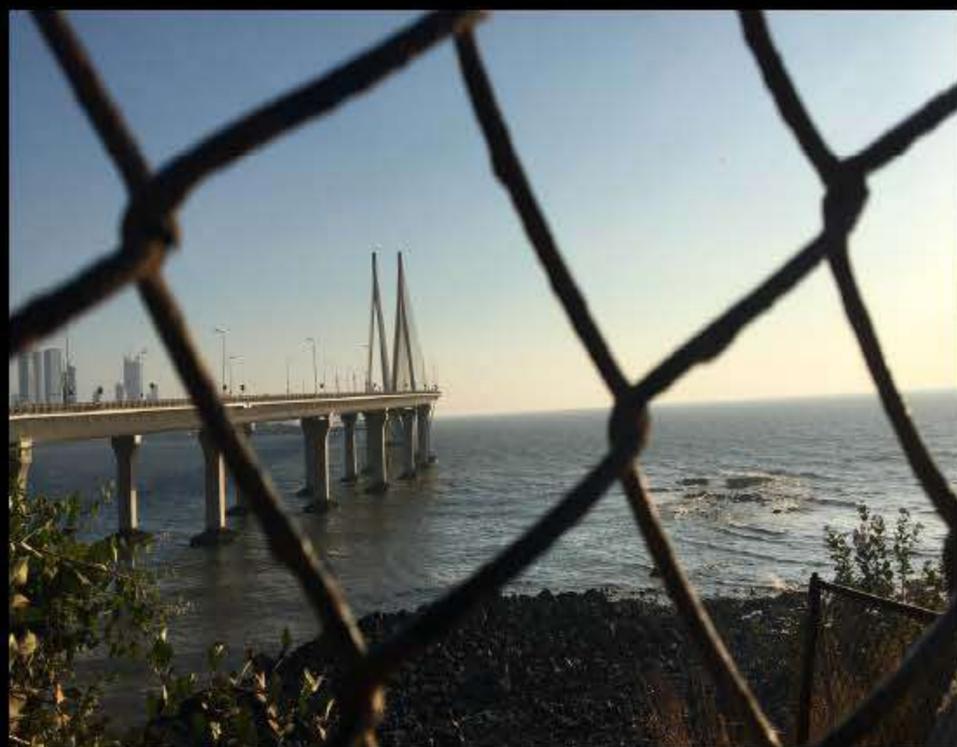
Sarita Dewani



Pranav Pahwa



Utkarsh Masand



Maanvi Amesar



All we needed was to stay inside
to notice what's outside.



Zahabia Mithaiwala

Yasha Gada





A TRIBUTE TO OUR GUIDING LIGHT

Jai Hind College bids a heartwarming valediction to Prof. Dr S Varalakshmi – HOD of Bachelors in Mass media (BMM). She always believes in giving students responsibilities for various tasks and has lauded their efforts. Her expertise has provided a distinct face to the academic curriculum.



Dr. S. Varalakshmi

She has always backed her students and colleagues in every nook and cranny and has been a mentor for all. Fondly known as “Vara Ma’am”, she is revered by every student, and they will always cherish and retain the values she has instilled in them. During her prolific tenure, she originated the flagship festival of the department “Detour”. Her tireless commitment is the reason behind the éclat of the department. On behalf of the college fraternity, Eclectic Express editorial wishes her good health and luck for all future endeavours.

A few heartfelt lines for her...

We've a lot to express, a lot to say,
Words can't suffice the image you display.
We are the chaos, and you're the calm,
We cannot poise without your charm.
It'd be tough as the colours would spill,
We'd still paint till your picture is filled.