

The Assam Valley School

**THE
INK**

Literary Journal *Founders' 2019* *Volume 13*



Vision Statement

To create citizens beyond boundaries by building strength of character and preparedness for life, believing that education is the best adventure in a child's life.

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"That is part of the beauty of all literature. You discover that your longings are universal longings, that you're not lonely and isolated from anyone. You belong."

~ Francis Scott Fitzgerald

From the Editor's Desk

foreward

Human beings have always felt the need to communicate with each other for myriad reasons. It may have been cave paintings or inscriptions on rock, cloth, the bark of trees or on metal. The messages may have been visual as in paintings and sculpture and later, with the development of language, people have used words to either record information for posterity, to share their feelings or emotions or even to protest unjust laws and practices.

In this edition of "The Ink" we offer you a potpourri of thoughts from budding writers who, we hope, will metamorphose into prolific authors with time and just the right encouragement. This Literary Journal is a conglomeration of poems, essays and stories of paranormal, fantasy, mystique, magical, unrequited love, whimsical longing, melancholy feelings, reflections and much more. When you read this journal you will discover the experiences that have changed students' lives and you will find poems, stories and articles that will touch your heart. It will also give you an insight of the genres of the books these youngsters read as their thoughts and writings are definitely influenced and reflected by them.

This work of literature is accompanied by various astounding illustrations that give an entirely different appearance to the Literary Journal. Each illustration also has its own tale to tell which adds an eloquent connotation to each article.

We invite you to sample some of our young and raw but talented scholars' work of art as well as their reflections; put together in a fashion which would please people who love poetry, poesy and songs and feelings put together in beautiful words.

"I know nothing in the world that has as much power as a word. Sometimes I write one, and I look at it until it begins to shine."

~ Emily Dickinson

POET'S CORNER



“When I look back, I am so impressed again with the life-giving power of literature. If I were a young person today, trying to gain a sense of myself in the world, I would do that again by reading, just as I did when I was young.”

~ Maya Angelou

Spring

It's spring, It's spring,
the flowers sing.
Unheard to the human ear,
But to the bird and bees, it's clear.
The trees wave their hand,
The grass fills the land,
It's spring, It's spring,
Finally, it's spring!

~ Dweepaneeta Nath | 4



Biraaja Chingakham - 11

My Teacher

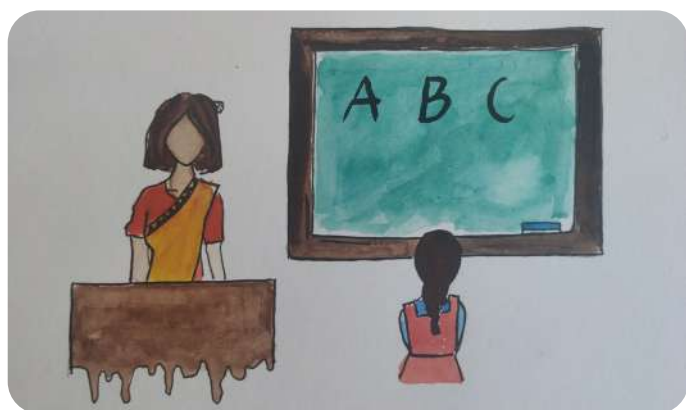
I love my teachers,
As they are great creatures.
Their way of teaching,
Is like holy preaching.

When they love,
I never get nervous,
But when they scold,
My body becomes cold.

They love us, they care for us,
But they get angry when we create a mess.
They are like a dense tree,
Under which, we enlighten free!

They are teachers of good quality,
As they have a delightful personality.

~ Arpit Yadav | 1



Biraaja Chingakham - 11

Roses are Red

Roses are red,
Violets are blue,
My name is Aadyaa,
And I love you.

Hey buddies,
Don't be like fire,
Who gets confused,
Where to go.

Enjoy the day,
By the way,
Ark and Sancho,
Helped me with this.

~ Aadyaa | 4



Biraaja Chingakham - 11

Letters to Herself



Biraja Chingakham - 11

She had a thousand things on her mind,
But there were no answers she could find.
She knew she had to make things right,
Therefore, she moved on with all her might.

Have smiled through these times, every day,
And her silence was all, she had to say.
Was never good at expressing herself,
But could spill it all on paper quite well.

The papers, they know it all,
The things she had on her mind, to recall.
Took a pen and wrote it all,
To the one who never makes her feel small.
And once she starts writing from the top,
There was no reason to stop.

Here's a poem that unfolds,
The words of an unspoken girl.
And all that she had ever said,
Was in the letters to herself.

~ Raseen Moshin Shah | 10

"It is in literature that the concrete outlook
of humanity receives its expression."

~ Alfred North Whitehead

The Fears I Face

That fear, if I don't fit in?
Maybe that's what stops me from letting in.
Oh god! I am bad at being cool,
I'm scared, it would seem like I'm a fool.
Yeah, that boy just said I'm black,
Wait, does he even know what he lacks?
She says I'm really bad at being lit.
Girl, that's my face, you are no one to judge, get it?
Then don't you take away my glee.
"That fat stomach of yours", they say,
Why does it even matter to you, did I ever come
in your way?
I hate it cause they hate me,
I would not even care if they loved me.
Well, why would the stuff I purchase,
Lead to the fears I face?
Why would my shape, size, colour or face?
Lead to the fears I face?
Why can't I get my own space?
To be free from all of this,
And never let it be, the fears I face.

~ Srishti Bajaj | 8



Ananya Singh - 11

As strong as a Man



Ananya Singh - 11

Today she smiled after a long time,
Forgetting what happened to her a few days ago.
Today she spoke after a long time,
Forgetting all the harsh words she heard last night.

Today she stepped out after a long time,
Forgetting what happened to her on the streets a few days ago.

Today she stood up for herself because,
She is a woman as strong as a man.

She asks herself every-day, "Why me?"
Who prohibits her to see the light?
Who is to blame for the fight?
Will it happen again tonight?

Today she stood up for herself because,
She is a woman as strong as a man.

She cannot wear what she wants,
She has to wear what others want,
She is tied up by society,
which calls itself sovereign.

Today she stood up for herself because,
She is a woman as strong as a man.

We treat our mothers and sisters well,
She too is a mother and sister to someone else,
She struggles to see tomorrow right,

But she has to see the years after.
She will write history for,
She has dedication to do so,
But she will never shed a tear,
When asked about her pain,
Because she is a woman as strong as a man.

~ Vansh Sharma | 11

The Forbidden Love

She waits for the sun to go down,
And the ancient clock to indicate the midnight.
Slowly she tiptoes on the grass,
To meet him - her forbidden lover.

Love gives you the strength to break laws,
Rules tied around your ankles by society,
It seems so heavy and pulls you down,
While love gives you the wings to fly.

So they enjoy each other's company,
His voice seems like music in the silent night,
Their touch ignites a spark unknown,
For they come closer to unite their soul.

But then the birds start chirping,
Alarming them of the sun that's about to rise,
She runs back from where she came,
For they are strangers in broad daylight.

~ Sonam Khunjuju | 11(Ex-Aviator)



Biraja Chingakham - 11

Fading Rainbow



Ananya Singh - 11

Count the friendships you broke that others had built,
Inhumanity was with what you chose to grow,
Now watch the colours of your life turn into a fading rainbow.

~ Hana Shanifer | 8

A Vibrant Smile

Her smile enthralled many,
And left me mesmerized,
Stupefying her eyes were,
That twinkled in the sunlight.
Her sun-kissed blonde hair scintillatingly blew,
As the wind sang,
Its vehement ditty.
Balletic movement of hers,
Like sweet honey to my soul,
But as I edged near her,
She faded away from sight.
My efforts to find her
Were in vain,
Then I thought to myself,
Was she a vision or a dream.

~ Sikunpriyaa Goswami | 11

You never cared about how that girl felt,
The girl who always had to keep her mouth for
all the things she dealt.
The truth, it was something she could never
reveal,
Never did you care if her wounds would ever
heal.

That boy in school whom you once called black,
Never could he hold his tears back,
He didn't even have the courage to look in the
mirror,
All he wanted to become was his own killer.

Remember the girl you always called fat,
Said it was a disgrace to sit where she sat,
In vain, every night she would go to bed,
With myriads of insults ringing in her head.

All those people whom you have insulted and
taunted,
Those lives you wrecked and dreams that you
haunted,
All of them now have become beautiful souls,
Now see as they all achieve their goals.

It is time for you to realize that you are clothed in
guilt,



Biraaja Chingakham - 11



Ananya Singh - 11

Tears hit the Floor

As she walks out the door,
She can't let him know,
What he wants to know.

He wants to know,
What makes her so sick,
But how does she tell him,
About his brother's misdeeds.

He'll get to know though,
Once the child grows old,
And so she must go,
For she can't break him more.

Her pale lips,
Had been stained with blood,
Her favourite black dress,
Lay tattered on the floor.

She had yelled for help,
Yet no one had heard,
The voice of the girl,
Unwillingly being touched.

She wished to die,
And she almost did,
For he had treated her so badly,
She almost quit.

But in her head,
She had heard a voice,
Pleading with her,
To hold on just a bit.

She did not deserve this,
But neither did he,
How was she to know,
His brother would be the poison.

~ Anahita Susan Stephen | 11

Lessons Left

Burnt photographs slowly fly down,
On the pillows of green silk,
Scorched memories fill the ground,
Of a mistaken place of honey and milk,
The smell of rancid rain,
Pulls the effervescent mind war,
Running, oversized grey tee stained,
Now with a cocktail of tears.

As the door slowly closes,
On all the things we ever knew,
Winter slowly courses the skin,
With pins and needles and you,
And amidst all the drudgery and drunkenness
of the night,
Lay a flower, an unexpected one,
Hyacinth of the colour white,
Oh! The cadence of suffering has just begun.

~ Nizovino Meyase | 11



Ananya Singh - 11

You



Biraaja Chingakham - 11

I almost died today,
Or did I already.
I cried, twice,
But no tears came out.
Who am I?
No, don't tell me,
Because when you know,
You'll cry.
I was jealous,
Didn't mean to do it,
I didn't want to,
But I had to.
I'm sorry; I didn't keep your secret,
I had to gossip.
Forgive me I lied,
Knew that the truth will make you angry,
Now, look at what I've done.
I didn't want to make fun of him,
But look at how others laugh,
Look at the attention I get.
Who am I?
No, don't tell me,
Because when you know,
You'll cry,
I am you.

~ Adrija Das | 10

LOSER

Who is a loser?
Someone who fails?
No, someone who fails is a learner,
Someone who does not try at all is a loser.
Not doing something you want to is plain
stupidity,
Don't be led by the fear of not succeeding,
But be pushed by your dreams.
No one is perfect, everyone fails at least once,
Does that mean that we all are losers?
We aren't losers but learners.
We are given chances to learn from our
mistakes.
Quitting is losing,
Not trying is losing,
Not rising from the fallen state is losing,
Falling is not losing,
Dreaming is not losing,
Dreaming is the first step to success.
Be a dreamer, be passionate,
Follow your dreams,
Enjoy what you do,
You might fail,
But you do not lose,
In fact, you gain experiences!

~ Hriyanka Bhuyan | 11



Biraaja Chingakham - 11

2:22

There were two at 2:22,
 One was me and one was you.
 We took the night to pick our brains,
 Open our thoughts and share our pains.
 You said you'd wear two pairs of jeans,
 Cause kids thought you were nothing but skins,
 I said I think that love's a trick,
 Cause everybody falls for it.
 You said you don't know till you try,
 I said that is exactly why?
 Then you read words within a prose,
 To my surprise they are the ones you wrote.
 I said I write poetry too,
 When I don't know what else to do,
 Cause paper is shameless, weightless, dead,
 And pain, weightless outside your head.
 There were two at 2:22,
 The exact time when I met you,
 One and one could make us two,
 But fall again I cannot do.
 I'm sorry if at all it hurts,
 When I left without a word.

~ Chumki Biswas | 9



Biraaja Chingakham - 11

The Tainted Girl



Biraaja Chingakham - 11

Her body felt impure,
 She was giving up.
 Society cursed her,
 Her parents had forsaken her.
 It wasn't her fault,
 But the world would not believe it.
 The thoughts kept knocking in her closed
 mind,
 The pain was swallowing her.
 The struggle was too hard to handle,
 The shame was too heavy for her.
 Looks of disgust broke her from inside,
 Bringing her to her knees.
 A happy, perfect life seemed impossible,
 Faking a smile felt too taxing.
 Later the world would ask why she did so,
 Her decision seemed too harsh.
 They would not understand but she is happy,
 In a place without judgment and sorrow.
 In a place where she can walk with her head
 held high,
 A place where they know she was not
 wrong.

~ Hiya Das | 11

Body Wisdom



Ananya Singh - 11

In the darkening chambers of cardiac,
Where blue blood rushes in.
Feeling the cold fire,
Burning thoughts of tint.

Frozen are the veins,
Can't flow the fluid to think.
Blocked by the composition,
A mixture of foreign link.

Heavy is the pumping brick within me,
Bribing the mind with cursed blood.
Thinking in her perception,
Equals to filling life with the worst flood.

Essential is the blood in the body,
Essential is the criticism in life.
Both fulfil the purpose,
By the secret ingredient hidden inside.

You are a recent intent by taking this advice,
You will be brought up with a true state of mind.
The shy wisdom in the body,
Can narrate the hearts' false history.

~ Karma Chamling | 11

Her Flawless Facade

Constantly feeding myself,
Sugar-coated lies.
Acting all strong,
While hiding under a disguise.

I find myself once again,
Within the comforting walls,
Of the bathroom stalls.

Hot tears start to spill,
And wet my cheeks.
I try to control them,
But continue to fail.

My body yearns to scream,
But I don't dare to,
Make a sound.

Clutching my heart,
I fall to the floor.
And feel myself,
Drown once more.

I stay there for a while,
Crying my heart out and then I get up,
For I have no other choice.

I calm my nerves down,
All by myself.
And fake a smile,
For the world outside.

~ Anahita Stephen | 11



Lydia Timungpi - 11

Back to the Future

Stuck in a kaleidoscope of colours,
With a hazy vision,
Looked down upon Macarius Montgomery did I,
Rubbernecking his bird brain at my corpse.

‘It is a dead corpse’ he declared,
‘So this is the wise fool’ I contemplated
But the world-famous Psychic couldn’t pay heed
to my thought.

There I was floating in the atmosphere,
feeling light as a feather,
It was bizarre that I could no longer hold my
guitar.

Then did my darling Macarilus deduce,
Kicking off with his theatrics I assumed,
‘I sense him in this very room,
The victim pleads to be helped,
‘Oh how I could thwack you with the broom ‘ I
yelped.

But Alas! The living dead can do nothing but
gape.
He proclaimed ‘I feel his fear trembling down my
spine,

The killer’s name starts with an M’
There stood me overwhelmed with his idiocy,
‘Why don’t we play scrabble while you are at it,
Oh let’s rather blame yourself Montgomery for
it!’

Unknown was the identity of the killer to me,
With a blow on the head did I last possess this
crafted physique,
The killer had gone incognito henceforth,
And so did my memory of him.

In this heavenly state of mine,
Devoid was my mind of any notion of vengeance.
Unconcerned was I about the name of the sinner,
But no longer could I stand the psychic’s
mockery,
Then did I feel a twinkling in my hand.

I felt yet again life pass though my disfigured

“What is wonderful about great literature is that it
transforms the man who reads it towards the condition of
the man who wrote.”

~ E. M. Forster

entity,
And then with all my might did I,
strike him two blows on the head.
‘I am watching you’ whispered I into his ears.

‘Holy Hera!’ Screamed my dear friend Macarilus,
‘Blistering barnacles! I am out of here’.

Since that day forth,
The psychic went to see the psychiatrist,
Oh a ‘psychic did I say?’

~ Anushcka Joshi | 10

Que Sera Sera

The world is a sad place,
But it is not a bad place.
We’re all a tiny bit crazy,
So, everything seems hazy.
The little things truly matter,
Even the way the raindrops patter.
Humans are complicated beings,
But that’s what makes us special beings.
We crave to be loved,
Or to be in love.
Loving another is easy,
But apparently loving yourself is cheesy.
This poem is really random,
But it gave me some freedom,
To speak my mind,
And while away, sometimes.

~ Christine Houmai | 10



Biraaja Chingakham - 11



Nilasha Bhimsaria - 10

Love, it's so not possible,
It's not my cup of tea,
Until I saw a boy,
Who sat right behind me.

His looks were the reason,
All the maidens died for,
A space in his heart,
Is all they longed for.

I too was one of them,
But his looks were not the reason,
It was his manner and poise,
Constant in every season.

He once took my dreams,
I rose up with a smile,
I so wished we walked together,
Each and every kilometre or every mile.

Each time I was set to sing,
I became my own best,
My concern was only his thoughts,
Which just left behind the rest.

It was then that he found a girl,
How pretty! But unexpected,
For she couldn't be the one,
On whom his love rested.

~ Shagun Agarwal | 12

The Styx

Go down to the summer solitudes,
And smell the mist of death.
Watch, as it takes over your body,
And then, your head.
Feel the churning waters of the river,
As they take you back, back to hell.

Feel the pounding in your head,
As they try to take you out,
Feel the gentle bed,
As you are brought back,
Back from the grave.

Feel the gentle touch,
Of a mother's loving hand.
As the river flows by,
Unscathed, through our worldly plane.

~ Anikaith Anant Joshi | 7



Lydia Timungpi - 11

"Great literature is simply language charged
with meaning to the utmost possible degree."
~ Ezra Pound

Wings of Freedom

I fly free,
With a restless heart.
I reach the sun,
With my wings of freedom.

A teenage soul,
A mind with so much to explore.
Conscience weak,
Yet headstrong.

The search for love,
I am so sweet.
Innocence in my blood,
Yet swayed by temptations.

From the view of flight,
Feeling so high.
A dreamer,
Bound to Nature.

The Spirit within me,
Slowly lights up.
A Bird with wings of Freedom,
The soul lives on,
And youth forever alive.

~ Diya Nath | 12



Biraaja Chingakham - 11

The Butterfly

She was like the butterfly,
That wanted to fly up in the sky.
But she knew before she could do that,
She had to pass many spider webs.

Still, she was happy about it,
All because she knew at the end,
She would get to spread her wings,
And fly higher and higher in the sky.

She cried and wept while growing,
While she saw others live happily.
She sure was jealous of them but she knew,
At some point in time, she would fly.

Alas! The day had arrived,
When she had to fly high,
As soon as she had set a flight,
A butterfly pushed her hard.

She fell onto the ground,
She was hurt, not because,
She could never fly now,
But because of who had done it, her friend!

~ Tanvi Agarwal | 11



Ananya Singh - 11

A Canopy of Short Stories & Essays



I realized the amazing power of literature and of the human imagination generally: to make the dead live and to stop the living from dying.
~ Ivan Klima

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To all the dogs I have loved...



Ananya Singh - 11

This story is dedicated to all our dogs past and present.

Well, how do I start? Let me start with the picnic that my mom went for with her friends. When she came back, she had a bundle in her hands. Oh my god! It moved, it was a puppy, brown with white spots. I jumped for joy and hugged him and the puppy tried to bite me... that started a whole new chapter! A puppy that was forever trying to bite things and my dad getting angry with him for everything he destroyed!. Torro, oh what a fun dog he was! We had non stop jumping on the bed sessions, chasing and tug of war....Torro made everyone run!

One day, he went out and never came back! Then came the time when everyone was miserable and we cried every night. My parents said he would come back but he never did! After that, we kept requesting our parents to get another dog!

On my sister's birthday, my parents went out and came back with a tiny puppy that could fit in our hands. Its ears were bigger than its face. It didn't have a tail but it was so cute we named him DJ. He did not bite a single thing, was very careful about his looks and stole all the green peas!

After two years...

One fine winter evening my mother went out again and called me downstairs. There was a man with a pup and it jumped right into my arms! We took him upstairs, DJ sulked for 2 weeks. We named him Winter. One day I saw DJ and Winter running away. I caught Winter but he bit me but I stopped him. At night Winter would try to chew my hair, then we had to get up and feed him again and again. Again, another day after DJ and Winter got settled, I heard my mom call a man. I asked who he was? It was a man from the pet shop. Are we getting one more dog I asked? No! she said it is for your cousin Jill.

After eleven days....

It finally arrived. I told Jill she was getting a puppy. She jumped for joy. It arrived and it was so small it was not even able to stand. We named it Snowfy.

Now, only two of my cousins, Raina and Joyi did not have a dog. "They should get one too", I said! "You are right!" said my mother. She quickly called the pet shop and asked if she could get one more Labrador and the man said that we were in luck. The puppy was coming after eight weeks but that was the starting of the new year I pointed out. "Yes, we can give the puppy as a birthday gift," she said. Great idea, Mom.

After eight weeks...

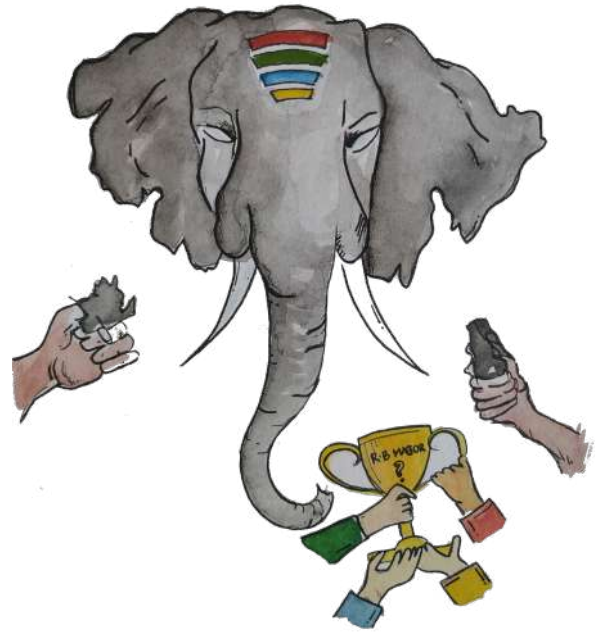
The puppy arrived, it was as cute as the other puppies. They all made the DJ run every time. All our dogs are at home and we love them all very much.

~ Dayanita Das | 5

Elephant Snatching

The

silver elephant which shines with pride and ego of the receiver stays still under the surveillance of the Head of School's office. For those of you who do not know about this silver elephant, it is that pride of the school which emits such a magnificent aura that no house can resist to possess it. This silver elephant is the "R.B Magor Trophy." It has seen a kaleidoscope of events, talents, passions and struggles vetted just to behold its magnificence thrice.



Biraja Chingakham & Ananya Singh - 11

It was originally started to have a healthy competition between the houses and crown a particular colour victorious for the deeds they have done in the past year but the word "healthy competition" has now become a utopian concept in the current situation of the school. This coveted "best house" trophy has become the root of jealousy, pride, ego, greed and an irrational amount of competitive spirit. People have become obsessed with the notion of having the silver elephant and their lives have started to revolve around it. Members of each house have started doing activities out of the need to win inter-houses, leaving aside their own interest.

The values which a student is ideally supposed to inculcate in their time at school have been entangled with the bait of the R.B. Magor Trophy. Once the bait is taken away, the fishes stop coming. They stop striving to win inter-houses and the importance diminishes. With my eight years of living in this school, I have seen how every year the purpose of this prestigious trophy has been completely confused by us. All the joy of playing matches, the pleasure of singing, fun of dancing has just vanished. We are working under stress and pressure for the sake of this trophy. The idea and purpose of this trophy was not to stop enjoying inter-houses, not to act good but be good, not to cheat and lie but to be honest, not to work under pressure but to work with dedication and interest and not to strain senior-junior relationships.

Our social skills have reduced to an incessant need to be declared the best house and once this trophy is won and the parties are over, it only leaves overly inflated egos, boastful minds and an aura of superiority.

The positivity of the cup has been heavily overshadowed by the negativity. Well, I am a part of the Red House which has won this prestigious "R.B. Magor Trophy" consecutively for three years and sometimes it makes me wonder if I do everything for myself or for the colour that I wear?

~ Aruni Manchey (11) & Sanjana Barooah (10)

A New Beginning

It was a dream come true to be a part of The Assam Valley School. I have always looked forward to studying here since I heard about how amazing the school is and how fun and loving the Aviators are. Now that I am finally here, I can't agree more to what people have to say about this remarkable school and the Aviators.

It's funny how I imagined wearing this uniform and never expected to actually be wearing it. Remembering how wonderful the school and the people are, I almost always forget that I am away from home. My lovely Housemistress, Dame and Tutor are the three women who give me the love of my mother and I consider myself lucky enough to come across them. Being a part of Bhoroli House was something I wanted since my cousin was a part of Bhoroli too and she loved the house and the girls so much I thought I'd fit in quite well. I am more than grateful to finally be a part of Bhoroli House. I love how all the girls work together. Their unity, love, understanding and respect for each other is on another level and I really appreciate how they helped me fit in so well. I have known these girls for just a few months but it surprisingly feels like years. They were strangers before but now I call them family. Bhoroli is indeed a home away from home.

My experience in AVS as a newcomer has been like a roller coaster ride with a lot of ups and downs in between but I managed to cope with everything with the help of my friends and my three godmothers who kept on reminding me that I am capable of doing better, be it in sports, academics or activities. I don't regret my decision of coming to AVS because of the number of opportunities I get here and AVS helps me get better in every field I choose.

Being an Aviator was what I had been wishing for, for years and now that I am one, I can finally say that I am a proud Aviator and of course a super proud Bhorolite.

~ Vidisha Pradhan | 11



Biraaja Chingakham - 11

“Geniuses can be scintillating and geniuses can be somber, but it's that inescapable sorrowful depth that shines through originality.”

~ Jack Kerouac

Feminism

Human beings are going places with innovation, technology and science in the 21st century. The very idea of humanity is witnessing a paradigm shift and this time it is about equality, gender rights and justice for all. The age-old debate between the sexes is still going on and we are still fighting over superiority between men and woman and recently the atmosphere has been vitiated by certain events and incidents.

The recent debates on feminism intrigue me. By all accounts, any common and civil man knows the definition of feminism and he respects and supports it wholeheartedly. This generation is aware of all the issues and is quite adamant that women are as good if not better than men and we are seeing the change happening right in front of us. But are all sections of society getting the true essence of what we call feminism?

Women are becoming presidents, prime ministers, chief executives all around the world (ironically America still doesn't have a female president) and the glass ceiling has been broken and shattered. But, sadly there is a new trend emerging that every man is a creep, rapist, stalker, serial killer and women are being assaulted (physically and mentally) day in and day out, all day long and the male species has become a monster. I get the point that women over the centuries have been a victim of misogyny, sexism and downright crude and unjust behaviour and have often been treated like a second-class citizen and did get a raw deal in every sphere of life.

The mighty men's cause has not been helped by people like Harvey Weinstein and US President Donald John Trump, who have, by being in power, behaved like bullies and are responsible for murdering the soul of a woman even when she is alive. But, for every Weinstein and Trump, there are millions of men around the globe who are respected, looked up to and who believe in justice and equality. Just because men don't scream and shout from the rooftop about a '#MeToo' campaign doesn't mean that they are perverted or bad people. Humanity is still alive and many humble men will die to protect the honour of a woman and will always stand up for genuine women's causes and suffrage.

We live in times where male bashing has become the norm and we generalise every man as some sort of animal, who will pounce and destroy woman's dignity. Let me assure you that the majority of men have never teased, assaulted or taken advantage of any female and this gross generalisation has to stop. We all know that our society is not perfect and fair and it has always been skewed in favour of the 'stronger' sex and time has come for a realisation of this fact and the clarion call goes out to all to make the requisite changes.

Feminism is a concept which is accepted by all rational and educated men all around the world but when women in the grab of feminism attack men and indulge in character assassination then it is not a level playing field. In Indian culture, many goddesses have been women and we pray and look up to them in times of difficulty. I believe in equality, gender justice and I am a proud feminist but those who propagate pseudo feminism are doing more



Lydia Timungpi - 11

harm than good and please, not all men are terrible. There are people who will always rise and stand up to champion the rights of women and women have to accept that to make a change in society. First, they have to realise that men are not evil and the universe also has many good people. And, when I say this, I don't become a feminist but a human being.

~ Daiyan Alam & Gaurav Beria (10)

Individualism



Nilasha Bhimsaria - 10

In a day and age where social media trends and societal wants are coveted as martial law, the concept of originality and being a unique individual can sometimes be blurred out by the constant feeling of wanting to fit in. Society is harsh, people are worse and above all, judgement is excruciating. In times like these, one must wonder where exactly the trends end and the individual begins. Ask yourself this, are the things that make you a 'unique' individual by-products of your own doing or are you too a puppet, designed by society to fit into the collective masses. Are the things you like actually your own opinions or are they dictated by what you see as the norm to be by the people you surround yourself with? Are those same people only around you because you think they are compatible companions or because they make you feel secure enough to be a part of society?

Existential crisis aside, being an individual is a lot harder than you think. Not everyone can suddenly get up one morning

and decide, "oh, today I'll be a singer" no, in this spiral of a maze we call life, decisions are not meant to be made with such ease and haste. Do you want to be good at something? Before you even begin to partake in the process that could lead you to a point where you can be recognized, you are already judged, berated, opinionated, segregated and classified into categories of social complexity that not even the world's best intelligence agencies could begin to even decipher a snippet of what can happen in the single second the human mind takes to process change. The individual you see yourself to be or seek to be is not what society will see or expect and neither will it accept it. So, if all these things exist to negatively point us away from a path of originality, uniqueness and quirks then why do we all still pursue such a presumably 'lost cause'? The answer is simple, it's human nature.

An individual is not made up of one single unique trait because that trait more often than not exists in someone else as well, so it loses its speciality. However, the appeal lies not in singular individual traits but in how it mixes and matches with other traits a person might possess. These combinations and levels of it are what makes each person different and special. Funny to think, what makes us a distinguishable individual who stands out from the mass collection is a mass collection of distinguishable individual traits. An irony that sets the tone for life and existence of the human race.

~ Jeremy Jahau | 11

Life

You should love something fully while you have it, even if you know you'll lose it someday. We lose everything. If you're trying to avoid loss, there's no point in taking another breath or letting your heartbeat one more time. It all ends. That's all life is. Breathing in, breathing out. The space between two breaths. I know it would hurt at that point and you would feel like everything is falling apart. Life will break you. Nobody can protect you from that and living alone won't either; for solitude will also break you with its yearning. You have to love. You have to feel. It is the reason you are here on earth. You are here to risk your heart. You are here to be swallowed up. And when it happens that you are broken or betrayed or left or hurt or death brushes near, let yourself lie under the sky and listen to the sound of silence. Tell yourself you went through it all.



Biraaaja Chingakham - 11

You have come to accept the feeling of not knowing where you are going. You have trained yourself to love it because it is only when we are suspended in mid-air with no landing in sight, that we force our wings to unravel and begin our flight. As we fly, we still may not know where we are going but the miracle is in the unfolding of the wings. You may not know where you're going but you know that so long as you spread your wings; the winds will carry you. I have realized, it is during the times you are far outside your element that you experience yourself the most. You see and feel who you really are, the most! That's why I enjoy taking myself out of my own element, my own comfort zone and hurling myself out into the unknown. Because it's during those scary moments, those unsure steps taken, that you are able to see who you are. Like a comet hitting a new atmosphere: suddenly you illuminate magnificently and fire dust begin to fall off of you! You discover a smile you didn't know you had, you uncover a feeling that you didn't know existed within you. You see yourself. You're a shooting star. A meteor shower. But you're not going to die out. You're just going to keep on coming back.

You are running and singing and when it's raining; you're the only one left on the open street, smiling with your eyes fixed on the sky because it's cleansing you. You peacefully make your way to the river, a lonely road, following the smell of the ocean. You are the one waking up at 4 am to witness the sunrise, where the sky touches the sea and you hold your elbows, grasping tight to whatever you've made of yourself. You are learning persistence and the closing of doors, the way the seasons come and go as you keep walking on these roads, back and forth, to find yourself in new time zones, new arms with new phrases and new goals. And it hurts to accept that it hurts and it hurts to learn how easy it is for people to not need other people. Or how easy it is to need other people but that you can never build a home in someone's arms because they will let go one day and you must build your own. You are free with every road as your home. No limitations and no commitments. But then winter passes and summer comes and you fall short for safety. You fall for his spell, slowly humming him to sleep because you

were tired and small, too weak to take or handle those opinions and views, getting attacked from every angle. Against your art, against yourself, against your very way of living. He collected your thoughts, your few possessions and built isolated walls around your values and character. You protected your own definition of beauty and success like a treasure at the bottom of the sea, for no one saw what you saw, or felt the same as you did, and so you wanted to keep to yourself. You hide to protect yourself. Yet again, you were unravelling your life. If you look at what you have in life, you'll always have more. If you look at what you don't have in life, you'll never have enough. Life will always have its own share of happiness and obstacles.

Everything takes time. We just need to move on with it and everything will fall into place and you will realize life is not that bad after all and with time you will be proud of what you have become with your strong heart and desires. You will look back at yourself and smile saying how life can be changed. You will realise you belong to earth and this is the right place for love.

~ Tushar Das | 12

My Sikkim

A state that is nestled in the Himalayas and is always connected to nature is Sikkim. I am a Sikkimese and I love my state. Sikkim for me is very diverse even if it only occupies a tiny part of the Indian map. It is the only place I would like to stay in this entire world because of the lush green foliage and the peaceful roads. If you ever come to Sikkim you will be enthralled with



Lydia Timungpi - 11

its beauty because its splendour cannot be compared to any other place. Every time I open the window of my room the icy, chilly breeze takes all my tensions and fears along with it. Where in India you will find a state where only organic farming is done and where only organic vegetables are sold? It can be found nowhere but in Sikkim.

It is so close to nature and its beauty is far better than Switzerland. It is so clean and green and that's because we Sikkimese believe that our state shall be kept clean

and green. It is so diverse because the people are from different origins and cultures within the state. We have Nepalese, Tamangs, Rais, Lepchas, Tibetans and Dukpas and we all share and respect each other's cultures. You will never find a place like Sikkim because of its rich history, traditions and religious beliefs. I love my state and that's not because I have to, it is because no one can hate such a heavenly place.

~ Lavanya Adhikari | 8

Project Birthday: Confidential

“Enter to Learn- The Scholar’s Academy!” These are the exact words written on the brightly painted board above the gate which opens to reveal that same building in which I spend my entire day. From doing algebra so slowly that the Mathematics teacher probably thinks that I have anaemia to looking at our Computer teacher suspiciously when he would allow us to browse the internet at our free will, this building, a school, either scores full marks for fun and interaction or barely passes because of loads of homework in the mental tests it is so often subjected to, in the minds of great critics, secretly.



Lydia Timungpi - 11

If you are thinking, who are these characters who judge schools secretly for the fun they may have or for the difficult concepts in different subjects, you do not have to go far. They are not the descendants of James Bond or Sherlock Holmes. Look outside a window overlooking a field in which these critics play. Yes, the correct answer is children. However, there are a lot of situations in which schools impart many values and I am sure the values they learn would be another good addition to the success criteria required to pass these tests. One such example to show the effect of these values was the “Project Birthday” which took place in our school.

At that time, our class 7 was responsible for hosting the yearly students’ participation programme which we students had secretly created. We said it with as much grandeur as one might say ‘We are hosting the Olympics’. The

decided task for that year was to celebrate the birthday of our English teacher, Miss Lucy. She looked sad and this was probably due to the death of her uncle, of whom she was fond. Her classes were very interesting although some of the more active students got bored as they wanted to play outside.

The plan was that we had to surprise her. The preparations began. The prospect of having a surprise birthday party for a teacher was so exciting that even the guard let us in during off-school hours. The big day arrived and we all were so tense that we, one of the noisiest classes in the school was quiet throughout the entire Physics class that the teacher who experienced high decibels frequently with his own high pitch vocal acoustics, probably to attempt to break the sound barrier from this class was baffled to experience silence there and was forced to ask whether we were all right and whether something was bothering us. “Where are the force and energy?” he asked, only to be greeted with our enigmatic grinning smiles.

For a while the rocket science of Physics took over leaving many in the class dizzy due to high, echoing, circular, verbal motion from the teacher.

The birthday party was a great success!

We overloaded our teacher with cards and gifts. Miss Lucy was pleasantly surprised and quite happy though, in the end, she remembered the memories she had as a child when she had celebrated her birthdays with her late uncle. She had been orphaned at an early age and she had started living with her grandparents. She had learned to face difficulties and to stand up to challenges. She had learned to teach noisy and unruly children like us and she had also disciplined us. Wow! Really strong! That is actually one of the biggest qualifications I can think of that makes her strong.

After a few minutes, her phone rang. Suddenly, I heard her ringtone which was in the form of a song sung by Justin Bieber, and we all knew that she may have been inspired by it to be perseverant and to never give up.

I realized that by being perseverant, we may be able to fulfil our wildest dreams and desires. When we had been perseverant, we had been able to give one of our teachers a birthday party. By letting in some optimism and perseverance, we were able to do so well. This formula was actually revolutionary, but we could not understand it at that time. If people understood this, then the world would be a better place for sure.

As I walked back to my classroom, I remembered the song which acted like a ringtone for Miss Lucy and I decided that making the world a better place was everybody's duty. I smiled and started singing the song to myself:

I will never say never (I will fight)
 I will fight till forever! (Make it right)
 Whenever you knock me down
 I will not stay on the ground
 Pick it up
 Pick it up ...

When life gives you a fright,
 Put your chin up and look at the things bright.

Miss Lucy had endured immense pain all through, yet her perseverance, grit and determination made us realize the value of hope, optimism and sunshine. We tried to be the rainbow on her birthday. For the record, five of our classmates fell down while trying to decorate the classroom. Sprains and bruises were healed as we could feel the sense of joy radiating from Miss Lucy's face. Excellence overcame clumsy work and the classroom on D-Day was a sight to behold as we were at our creative best. Miss Lucy was speechless and salty tears of joy trickled down. Every effort was appreciated and we forgot who was jostling to decorate the doorway and how many were involved in pushing down Joe who was trying to fix the Welcome Placard on the door, not to mention naughty Steve who tried to tickle him the moment his arm was raised. We gave her a bear hug and were happy to see her smile once again.

~ Aayat Hazarika | 7

Love and Compassion



Ananya Singh - 11

The Dalai Lama once said, “Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries.” Love and compassion are indeed essential to humans, animals and nature. Without love and compassion, humanity cannot survive. One should take this quote seriously because these feelings can get you through life with a positive attitude that can lead to being a successful person.

A world with loving and compassionate people will make a better, caring and encouraging society. However small they may be, they can protect other people and boost others’ self-confidence. The key difference between love and compassion is that love is a deep feeling of affection and attachment towards someone whereas compassion is a sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others. Love and compassion are two positive feelings that help to make the world a splendid place to live in.

People look at love as a possession that has to be acquired and preserved. Love in that sense is the biggest fallacy which is the cause of a lot of unhappiness. However, it is not like any other material thing to be demanded by others. Even if someone offers us plenty of love, we may not be able to appreciate or return it. Sadly, we live in a world which is lacking love and compassion. The sad reality of humanity is that people ignore the sufferings of others. Perhaps, many turn a blind eye not for lack of love or empathy but for their own survival. We often learn compassion only after we have suffered ourselves. I believe that love and compassion are not luxuries, it’s a necessity and if all humans expose themselves towards these emotions, the world will surely be an exciting and happy place.

~ Shenella Watson | 12

Split

The clock struck midnight and I was alone in a dark room. I woke up with a jerk and chills was running down my spine as I was reminiscing the horrifying and the most gruesome incident that had ever occurred in my life. My family had been murdered the previous night and I was in a mental hospital. The doctors were hesitating to tell me what had happened to my family but when they finally did I was shocked to know that I was the cause.

The police officers were telling me that it would be difficult for them to investigate and research this case but since my family had installed CCTV cameras all over the house, all the footage had been recorded. My parents never told me that I had this mental problem where I totally transformed into someone else and forgot about my dear ones. As I was watching the footage, tears started rolling down my cheeks as I saw that I had killed my own family with my bare hands and my heart broke, even more, when I

saw them pleading for their life. I was indifferent towards them and ended their lives with a cold-blooded expression. As the footage ended, the doctors took me back to my room. They injected me and I felt myself dozing off. The next moment I woke up, I was again in a dark room but this time I had a syringe in one hand and blood in the other. I felt my head throbbing and I started searching for the switches. When I switched on the lights, blood was splattered all over the walls and floor. I went out of the room and saw that the doctor and nurse were lying on the floor, dead. I realized that I had killed them too.

As I was running away from the hospital with fear in my heart, I turned right and entered a room and then I saw a girl who looked around the same age as me. I asked her why she was there and she told me that she was running away because she had a split personality disorder. I assumed that I had the same disorder as her. She asked me the same question and I replied by repeating her words. It then hit me that I was practically a criminal and I would be a danger to everyone if I was out there in the open. As I walked out of the room I soon realized that this would continue my whole life and I would have no clue about whom or when I would kill someone next.



Biraaja Chingakham - 11

~ Chesta Mundra | 10

Beauty

A small, six-letter word with infinite meanings. This small, little word has a huge impact on everyone's life. Sometimes positive and sometimes negative. Everyone talks about how internal beauty is all that matters but things like body shaming, fairness creams and plastic surgeries still exist. Very few people really know how much to acknowledge real beauty. People always judge others on the basis of their facial features, body shape or clothes. Real beauty is the way a person cares about other people, shows small acts of kindness and stays humble no matter how rich or pretty one is. It is about how one looks at things.



Biraaja Chingakham - 11

Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder. A person can find the smallest of things beautiful, it may be an insect or a cap. Everything is beautiful if you want to look at it that way. Seeing the world with a positive perspective can change a lot in one's life. A person who can see the beauty in everything will always be satisfied and happy. It is easier to make friends as one stops judging people by appearance and stops criticising and passing comments that hurt others. Try finding beauty in everything and life will take a turn towards something 'beautiful'.

~ Prisha Singh | 9

CLIMATE CHANGE

On the 20th of September, 2019, millennials in Britain took to the streets in masses to protest against climate change, a deeply concerning problem which is rather blatantly being ignored by the world's leaders. One day later, on the 21st, these protests have inspired a worldwide protest against climate change. What is rather surprising about these protests is that the majority of the people participating are in fact, millennials; whereas, the older, so-called "boomer" generation is nowhere close to being worried.

There is a rather ironic touch in this pattern of participation. The so-called "boomer" generation seems to blame the millennials for all the world's problems when it is they who have destroyed the earth's atmosphere to almost a point of no return. Where the problem lies is that after the "boomer" generation passes away, the millennials will be the people living on the planet and they will have to be the ones to deal with their predecessor's destructive consequences. Somehow still, teenagers using smartphones appear to be a bigger issue at hand. What the world lacks at this point is a

body of young, innovative leaders. The world has seen enough of old leaders who have continuously failed to see to the safety of the planet's future; leaders who would rather spend trillions of dollars trying to settle in an uninhabitable planet rather than saving the only habitable one; leaders who look at business opportunities rather than environmentally friendly options. One fine example of such a leader that the world does not need would be the Brazilian president, Jair Bolsonaro, who had refused to accept help from other countries at the 2019 G7 summit to stop the Amazon rainforest fire as he felt "insulted" and his little ego had been damaged. He cannot be the only person blamed for this incident, though. Considering the fact that it took world leaders and media three weeks of the forest being on fire to actually consider it to be a problem is quite a matter for concern. It is even more shocking, that the world's leaders put sanctions on countries who do not follow their principles of democracy but do not even raise a question when an executive decision of a country may adversely affect the world; not a single country had objected to Jair Bolsonaro removing restrictions and laws set to protect the Amazon forest - 20% of the world's oxygen producer and the world's largest biodiversity without any alternative solutions.

Serious steps need to be taken in a mature, cooperative manner by the world's leaders to save the planet from the clutches of destruction. Priorities need to be set and the young people's voices need to be heard, for they are the ones who will be the inhabitants of the planet in the years to come.



Ananya Singh - 11

~ Areeq Imran | 10

Mystical Mystery

It was raining heavily, as Lisa lay pondering quietly on her bed. She thought about the big, bad ways of the big, bad world. She thought about why the dead could not live on and why there were so many in orphanages at such a young age. Just then she heard a quiet knock on her door. 'Come in,' she said, to find the sweet, if not shy, Samantha looking nervous as usual. 'Matron is calling us downstairs for a lecture on the importance of environmental studies,' she squeaked. Lisa sighed. She was not at all fond of matron's tedious lectures. As she got up to go, she noticed the small figure of a girl crying on the pavement



across her room. 'Oh my goodness!' she exclaimed. 'The little girl will catch her death if she stays out in the cold,' she thought and quickly grabbed her warmest coat and raced down to the road. The girl had stopped crying and had started shivering. Lisa rushed towards her and put the coat on her. 'I am Lisa Jones,' she said. I am sorry to rush into you this way but I was afraid that you might fall gravely ill in this weather. 'Oh it is quite alright Lisa,' the girl said, 'I am thankful for your generosity. My name is Mary'. Soon the conversation began.

After discovering that they both shared a love of reading mystery stories Mary and Lisa chatted like close friends and decided to take a little stroll around the place which I named 'asylum'. Mary told her all about her life with her family before the dreadful fire in which her entire family had perished. At this, Lisa felt a fat teardrop rolling down her cheek. Her parents had been killed in a car accident when she was an infant and she understood the pain

of such a loss. Suddenly she heard the matron's voice calling out to her rather angrily. Lisa was about to say goodbye and leave when she turned around and asked Mary where she lived. At this point in their conversation, there was a mystical look in Mary's eyes which made Lisa's blood run cold. 'I don't,' she replied simply and disappeared into thin air leaving only the coat behind. Lisa stood, caught in a trance from which she recovered only to the voice of the matron who was still shouting, 'Lisa Jones come back inside right this minute.' Lisa picked up her coat which had seemed to have lost all its warmth and quietly walked back to the orphanage. There was silence for a long time.

Ananya Singh - 11

~ Aanya Sarkar | 6

Great Expectation

Yes, I'm an academically driven child but what does that mean? Am I supposed to keep on studying and topping my class every time? It's not that I'm afraid of disappointing my parents and my teachers. I try my best but I cannot come up with the same results every time. When I initially came to this school, I was dedicated to my academics. I do not see that in me anymore. People change with time and so have I. My first two semesters were greatly appreciated by my parents. Of course, I was getting marks according to their expectations. Right after this, my confidence increased and I started doing much better than before and with this trend so too did their expectations rise. Now,

they expect me to secure good marks all the time and whenever I miss out on their benchmark, they tell me I'm not putting or working to the best of my potential. Yes, I know that I can do it but not every single time. Parents need to understand that marks matter but so does my happiness. It is not that I'm not happy when I secure fantastic marks but I do like to use my free time to chit-chat with my friends and not study. Many a time people give up and lose the dedication required to score well. When you need it, you do it yourself. You can never put in your best if it is not you but your parents who want you to do well. I'm not saying that expecting good results from their own child is a bad thing. I just want to convey that it may only be expectations from them but for us, it is a burden. Personally, I feel that my parents expect a lot from me. I know they are trying to steer me in the right direction in order to be successful in life but it is something that pressurizes me to study all the time, leaving all the fun things and other interesting activities for my friends to do. You can only be the best if you do whatever you want to do if it comes from your heart. Apart from studying there are millions of things to do in life.

~ Shristi Bajaj | 8

My Homeward Journey

I was extremely late. My train left for home at 7:30 am and I was running late by forty-five minutes. As I hurriedly brushed my teeth and tried to make myself look presentable, I wished I had not stayed up so late the previous night, watching the re-runs of my favourite talk show. I rushed down to the reception and checked out immediately, booked a cab and prayed that the train had not left the station.

After I arrived at the station, I tried to move as quickly as possible towards platform three, dragging my overly stuffed suitcase behind me. Alas! All my efforts went in vain as a man clad in a dark blue suit informed me of the train's departure half an hour ago. I wasted no time in feeling sorry for myself and rushed to find a bus in order for me to catch up with my train. I did not want my ticket to go to waste. As I checked my phone for a suitable bus, I felt my stomach grumble. That was my stomach's way of reminding me that I had eaten absolutely nothing but a few pieces of pineapple while I had turned my room upside down,



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looking for my missing sock. I finally found a bus and left for my train's second stop in exactly ten minutes due to which I sadly had no time to grab a bite. Thankfully, the bus station was around two blocks away from my current location and thus all my pleading to the cab driver to "Please hurry up" paid off when I reached the bus station and heaved a sigh of relief as I saw that the bus had not left the station. I got

onto the bus, hurling my suitcase behind me and utterly regretting my decision to pack all my favourite shoes. A look of dismay replaced my relieved one as I took in the crowded bus, not to mention the reek of perspiring bodies. Dismay turned into horror as I realised that I had no place to sit and looked at a man to my right, seated comfortably. He completely avoided any eye contact with me. I sighed and made to grip one of the seats handles to steady myself and thought how chivalry was completely dead. Throughout the ride, I kept wishing that the girl beside me would not pick her nose so comfortably without any care about where she put the dirt later. Honestly, I did not want to know. The bus ride seemed to go on for eternity and I almost had tears of joy in my eyes as the bus finally reached the station. I heaved myself out and towards platform five, contemplating my next move if I had missed the train yet again. Relief surged through me as I saw the train stationed at the platform and it beckoned me towards it. I calmly walked towards my compartment and settled myself in my seat next to the window. I bought myself some peanuts and took out the book I was currently reading and felt victorious as I watched the scenery shift outside my window and started reading my book as I embarked on my journey homeward. So much for the re-runs of my favourite talk show!!

~ Anushka Barua | 10

Across the Mountain

Nature is beautiful in its own way. From the towering mountains to the shy little shrubs-beauty can mesmerize you anytime. Unfortunately, some people see nothing beyond their own wants and needs and thus, neglect to take care of the environment. Only a few take some measures to help take care of the environment and the family of Andrew Davidson was one of them.

Andrew's family comprised of his wife, Michelle and his sons, Brice and Miles. The Davidson family always tried to reduce pollution and the use of plastic. They recycled all their waste. They went on family trips to places where the greenery was



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in abundance. They once chose to trek in the mountains in the next neighbourhood. They were all extremely happy and excited, especially Brice and Miles. The journey began with their encounter with a hare. They clicked its picture and gave it some fruits to eat. It did not even touch the food and just hopped off. They all laughed about it. About a couple of hours later, they were under the thick canopy of trees in the mountains. Sunlight barely reached the ground. The ground was muddy and the air moist. However, they enjoyed all of it by looking at the bright side that they get to see many types of animals, insects and plants. Well, soon enough, their smile vanished. They realized that they had not brought a map with them and had come the wrong way. They panicked a little but the parents stayed strong to help their children fight back the tears. They decided to go back to the point of intersection. Well, the aggressiveness in Brice made him resent the decision of his parents, and he said that he was old enough

to find his way out. His parents scolded him and reasoned with him for not doing so but Brice would hear none of it. Thus, he caught the wrist of his eight-year-old brother Miles and took off running. The father ran behind his sons but they were too fast for his old self. They were soon out of sight and they just vanished. Disappointed, Andrew returned to his weeping wife. He told Michelle that they had to keep moving in order to find help. She did not agree at first but eventually had to since there was no other option. They walked for about half an hour and then stopped for a break. They planned ways to get out of the forest and search for their children. Well, it was not as easy as it sounds to survive in this situation.

They were lost and it was evening. As dusk was approaching, the insects grew savage. Leeches were found stuck on the couple's feet. However, they were not hurt since the leeches were not many and their pants and shoes were extremely thick. They tried getting out by first reaching the mountain top but they could see nothing in the darkness of the night. They decided to descend the mountain and try to search for a river. Well, they failed at this too for there was no river nearby so, without having any food, they decided to sleep through the night.

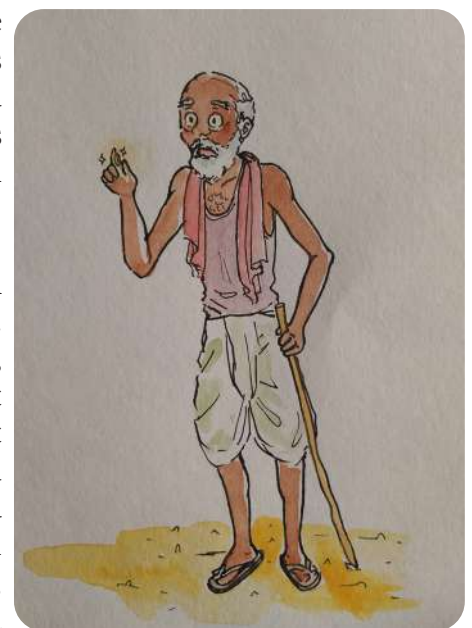
With the rise of the sun, they woke up the next morning. They thought of calling for help on their mobile phones but realized that they did not bring them, so they made a fire. It was a tough job but they did it. It was a signal to the people who lived down in the village and they came running and rescued them after a couple of hours after locating them because of the fire. They were happy when they saw their children with the villagers. It was a mystery how they had reached there. The family was extremely ecstatic to be reunited and both the parents thanked the villagers. After feasting with them, the villagers helped the family find their way back home, across the mountain.

~ Hana Shanifer | 8

The Gold Ring

Tony and Yeji live together with their grandfather in the city of Malaga. Malaga is a huge city in Spain and is really expensive. Their grandfather Burgas tries really hard to support Tony and Yeji's education. Tony and Yeji are ten years old. They are twins and have lost their parents in an accident when they were very young. Grandfather Burgas is their only family.

"Come for breakfast Tony", shouted grandfather Burgas. Yeji had finished eating her breakfast and was ready to go to school. "It is getting late brother" cries Yeji. "I am coming, wait", shouts Tony as he comes downstairs running. He does not eat breakfast for he is getting late for school. Grandfather does not like it and asks Tony to first eat his breakfast. Tony shouts, "You know we have to walk to school and it is not nearby. If you really want us to eat our breakfast peacefully every day then why don't you buy us a bicycle?" Grandfather sighs and says, "If I really had the money then I would have bought you a bicycle". Tony shouts again, this time much louder than before, "You always say that for everything, you are useless, there is no point asking you for anything". Tony stomped out of the house and Yeji followed him.



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Grandfather Burgas was really sad. He did not have enough money to buy them a bicycle but the stubborn children would never understand that. Grandfather kept staring at the gold ring that he was wearing. It was his son's last keepsake and all he had left of him. A tear rolled down from his eye, he removed the ring and went outside the house.

Later that afternoon, Tony and Yeji came back from school and to their surprise, they saw two new bicycles in the garden. A huge smile came across Tony's face. He was really delighted to see this surprise. Grandfather came and patted Tony's shoulder and said, "Are you satisfied with this?" Tony and Yeji both cried out, "They are amazing!" Grandfather smiled and went inside to prepare lunch but the smile was not exactly a merry one but rather a sad one.

That evening, grandfather was really quiet, it looked as if he was sad and missing someone. Yeji came and asked "Grandpa, why do you look so unhappy and where is Dad's ring? I remember you used to treasure it so much, more than your life too". Grandfather just smiled and said, "I guess I lost it somewhere". "Grandpa, I will search for it," said Yeji with concern. Grandfather stroked Yeji's hair and said, "You will never be able to find it because it can never be brought back from where I lost it". Yeji looked confused but without giving it a second thought she went away.

Grandfather thought, "Sometimes to give someone else some happiness, you have to sacrifice something which is very dear to you".

~ Ankita Sarkar | 9

THE PARTY WITH THOSE TINY PEOPLE

Little Emily has come to Willow Falls to visit her granny and spend her summer vacation. Little Emily has midnight dark curly hair and skin as white as snow and eyes as blue as the sea. It has been three years since she came here. Little Emily is living with her granny inside the cosy wooden cottage with a big lawn in front of their house. There are two maple trees; one small and the



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other bigger one, in the centre of the lawn. The lawn contains a large number of daisies and sunflowers. Little Emily's granny always goes out in the afternoon as she has regular meetings in the community centre. So every afternoon, little Emily used to take with her, her magnifying glass and observe the flowers.

One day little Emily was busy observing the sunflower stem when suddenly she saw something mysterious. She was astonished to see two pixies. She felt scared, yet had millions of questions in her mind. Looking at her curious face, the two pixies introduced themselves as Toto and Moto and stated that they wanted some daisies to decorate their house as they were going to have a pixie-goblin party. Little Emily, with curiosity and tons of questions in her mind, plucked some daisies and also a big sunflower for them. As little Emily helped them to get those flowers, Toto and Moto asked Emily to come at midnight near the big maple tree to join them in the party. Little Emily was desperate and waited for the sun to go down. So around 9 o'clock little Emily quickly has her dinner and goes to bed but does not

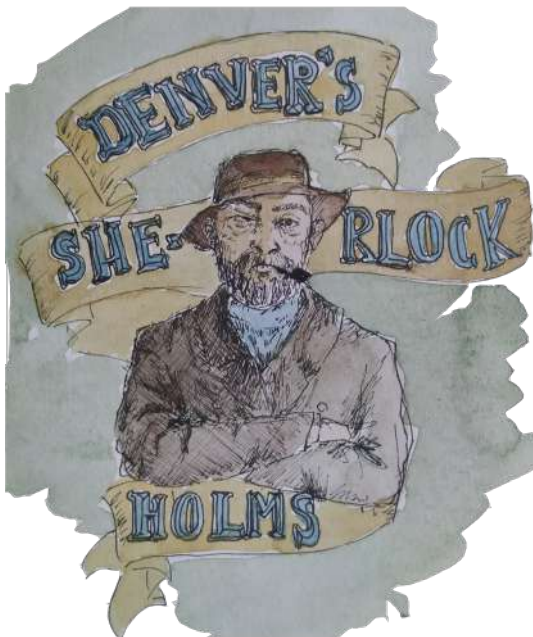
fall asleep. Little Emily's granny closes the door behind her and retires to her own room for the night. Emily takes the chance and steps out onto the balcony and climbs down. She goes near the maple tree and sees Toto and Moto waiting for her. Toto takes out his magic wand and turns Emily into one of them. So Emily enters the party and sees how beautiful the place looks. She also meets some other pixies and goblins. Some were friendly yet some were rude to her. Emily helps herself to a lot of cakes, cookies and pastries. After an hour little Emily feels drowsy and wants to go home to sleep, so Toto with a swish of his wand again turns her into her original size and all the pixies and goblins bid her goodbye. Little Emily says bye and quietly slips back into her room and sleeps. As little Emily wakes up, she jumps out of her bed and brushes her teeth and goes near that same big maple tree to say good morning to the pixies and the goblins but instead she finds a small note which says, "Dear Emily as you have found that pixies and goblins do exist in this world and if this truth came out, we would surely be hounded by people like you hence we have moved to another tree. We are very sorry and so we have kept a gift for you inside the tree hole". As Emily put her hand inside the hole she finds a soft thing and as she pulls it out, she finds it to be an alive, breathing rabbit. She was very delighted. The rabbit was still sleeping so she takes the rabbit to her granny. Emily narrates the entire story to granny and she happily allows Emily to keep the rabbit with her.

Little Emily plays with her rabbit every day with great joy and happiness. I would like to suggest to you too to take your magnifying glass and look around your garden. Who knows that you too may end up finding, a pixie or two, maybe!!

~ Fariha Zaman | 8

The Perpendicular Heist

There was a man whose name was Joe Albert. He was very fond of poking his nose everywhere when not needed but who knew that one day he would become a detective. During his childhood, he was very mischievous and did not like to study. He hated mathematics and he irritated his teachers terribly. Who knew that one day his mathematics skills would help solve a case?



Lydia Timungpi - 11

Denver was a small town in his country. It had a national bank which was quite busy and had many customers. The bank provided a fantastic service and it had good staff too, though some of them were suspicious, because they were rumoured to be jealous of their manager and his wealth. One night, there was a robbery in the bank and the money was stolen from the vault. There was a huge loss of money and the bank was unable to answer its customers. They filed a police report and were asking for help. There came along Mr Joe who was a detective by heart but a professor by profession. He took interest in this case as he too had a bank account in that bank. He requested the bank manager for his support and he was given full freedom to investigate the scene. Firstly, he

proceeded by asking the staff about where they were when the robbery took place. Everybody had their own reasons except four people, John, Mark, Hussain and Bonnie; they were heavily suspected as they stayed back after closing hours to finish their work. Joe began by measuring everyone's sizes while the four in question were wondering why. He knew that height and weight always help solve the case.

Mr Joe checked the CCTV footage of the main working area until four of them left. No activity there. He then proceeded to check the footage of the corridor to the vault. He was confused due to the fact that the information he received was unclear. He could see a person's shadow but no clear vision due to the darkness. He could see the shadow was about thrice the height of a dustbin nearby and nothing else. He then went back home to do his work. He thought long and hard. He kept on thinking until he remembered his mathematics teachers 'boring' lectures on algebra and trigonometry. Though it is mentioned that he hated Mathematics, he remembered it all because he used to have fun with teachers. He applied Mathematic logic to his case. He assumed the shadows begin to be 'X'. The dustbin's height which he calculated during his deduction was around 250cms. Therefore, he calculated to be 'X' into 250 into 3, which was around 750cms. He could think no more and dozed off.

The next day, he planned something and confidently went back to the bank. He investigated the corridor he had seen earlier. He measured the angle of the camera and found it inclined at sixty degrees. He also measured the width of the corridor. He deduced and calculated everything he wanted and went home to complete this case, compiling everything. Using trigonometry, which he liked most in mathematics, he knew that $\sec \theta = \frac{\text{hypotenuse}}{\text{base}}$ and with this he could find out the perpendicular height. The shadow's height was already known, so he went on to examine the angles. The angle of the CCTV camera was sixty degrees. He calculated that $\sec 60^\circ = 2$. He had to pat himself on the back as he deciphered that the robber's height would be twice his shadow, which was now 1.6 meters. The four suspects who stayed were recalled and re-examined. Out of them, Mark was the only man whose height was 1.6 meters. After the police investigation, he was indeed found out to be guilty of thievery. Mr Joe explained to everyone how he came to solve the crime. He thanked his mathematics teachers for bearing with him and helping him to solve the case. Mr Joe was rewarded by the bank manager and received many plaudits for being "Denver's Sherlock Holmes!"

~ Manan Agarwal | 10

Fashion

We live in a world where little things matter the most. Starting from every strand of hair on our head to the nails of our toes; everything matters and this is what fashion is all about. Fashion is not a single big thing; it is a million little things. Fashion has become more of art nowadays, in all groups, particularly the youth. Moreover, fashion is a very sensitive thing that matters to almost all people.

The question that arises is - Why is fashion so important? The sole and prime reason is being confident. We are humans after all and our ears only want to listen to positive things about us. Fashion gives us this hope or rather an optimistic notion that people will only think good about us if we look suave and trendy. Apparently, we have become so fragile that a mere fact that we are

not looking fine can emasculate us. We fail to appreciate the inner radiance and beauty one possesses.

Fashion has taken over our minds so drastically that we have preconceived notions about people. Some of these include 'being fair is beautiful', 'expensive watches are magnificent'. It is not that fashion should not matter, it indeed plays a great role but when we start valuing it over rather necessary things, it hampers our progress.

Fashion is supposed to be what we wear and what gives us comfort. Practically it takes us beyond simplicity. It changes as frequently as the weather. For example, why does a person tattoo or pierce their body? The body doesn't demand it but the current trend does.

Fashion can actually turn out to be very positive and it can become an intrinsic part of our lives if we take it correctly. It can make dull people interesting and modern people extraordinary. There are people who often use fashion to be in the limelight. You are free to make your own choice but you are not free from the consequences of your choice. In terms of fashion, it means that one can wear whatever he or she wants which in turn can either make them look a clown or a hero.



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~ Shashank Agarwal | 11

Global Citizenship

In today's times, education is considered a very important aspect of one's life and a lot of resources and money is pumped into the education "industry". Children are made to go to school and parents and guardians are always hoping for good marks and grades in return of their expenditure on their child. The world is moving very fast but still there have been many instances of heinous crimes and war, in particular, has become an "industry". The question begins here, "what are we doing wrong?" The answer to this is that the present-day education does not hold a global perspective and tons of data are forcibly drilled into an innocent child's head and at a point in time, he or she thinks that the aim of studies is only to acquire a job and to feed one's family.

The three most popular industries of today are - weaponry, liquor and tobacco in the second and the third being drugs and medicine. This clearly shows what kind of civilization, we have become. The only solution to this would be global citizenship education which would indoctrinate the values of peace, harmony and a global perspective towards life in all of us. An education system which would not force students to memorize the subjects they dislike but rather teach them practicality; and where practical and theory classes would become two sides of one coin. It should be an education system which would promote the feeling of cooperation and coordination rather than competition. This would help humanity to grow as a civilization.

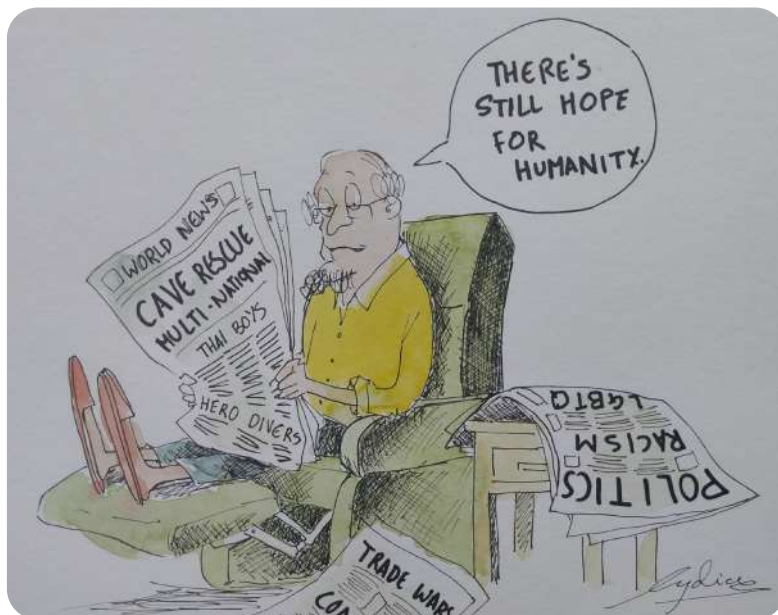
We, as humans have competed enough; for land, for gold, for power and in today's scenario for jobs. Now, we need to introduce a global citizenship education where we are not divided by the

boundaries of our countries, ethnicity or religion but are united as humans. Presently, the world scenario is getting worse day by day and thousands are getting killed in war-torn zones but what are we as humans doing? Just merely bombing and killing and the term is “terrorism” which in reality can never ever be eradicated this way because it is an ideology. These are the reasons why global citizenship education must be paid heed to and the educators in today’s age must do away with their old school mentalities and think beyond one’s “marks” because numbers cannot save us, only humanity can.

This will lead to a peaceful rebellion where Ali, Ram, Joseph, Tenzing, Valinda and many others will share a classroom and be world leaders of tomorrow, a world which will know only love, a world which will have interschool cooperation competitors and a world where education does not remain an “industry” but a humanitarian service, free of cost.

~ Nilay Dhakal | 11

Humanity



There was a time when people would set their loved ones and family as their priority before anything else. But today, I am afraid, the only thing we busy ourselves with is how to stay on top, how to win at any cost, regardless of who we trample underfoot along the way, caring little about the poor and needy people around us. The word humanity is no doubt part of our lexicon nowadays but of what use; we merely pay lip service, hoping that some good samaritan will come along and set everything right.

Lydia Timungpi - 11 If we have a few months to live and you are to choose between your family and yourself, we will definitely put our wants and needs first and then think about our family. This has become the norm of today’s society. We look for instant gratification and in order to fulfil this, we do not let anything come in our way. Instead of thinking of spending quality time with our loved ones and doing things that would make us happy even for a short while, we will run around selfishly doing things that will benefit us but not others. This thought of saving ourselves before anyone else will always haunt our minds. We tend to lose our rational thinking power and see the situation from a perspective which will enhance oneself and not the whole society we are living in.

What if we are to rise above our own selfishness and work towards helping others and seeing to their needs, especially our own family first and then the rest of humanity as no man is an island and without friends and family life is not worth living. It is possible to bring good changes in our society by removing racial and communal discrimination and hatred brought about by religions and superstitious beliefs. With a little

sympathy, empathy and compassion from each one of us, we can make this world a better place to live in. We, humans, have the strong power to choose peace over war and propagandas so let us do the right thing and bring harmony all over this wonderful planet once again! Let us at least try!

~ Fareeha Ambreen | 9

New Age Careers

New generations, new choices, new gadgets, new learning and new career options. What was a minute, a decade ago or what didn't even exist until recently is now the latest and newest career option for this generation's young and changed individuals who are extremely enthusiastic about anything and everything that catches their attention.

A recent survey on career option awareness among Indian students has revealed that a staggering 93% of students aged 14-21 are aware of just seven career options though there are more than 250 different types of job options available in India. Are parents to be blamed? The fact is, in India students face parental pressure to opt for conventional careers such as engineering, medicine, law, civil services and the like. Parents should be aware of their child strengths which would contribute to their success.



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If parents can build their own awareness regarding new career options, then they can be a helping hand in their child's career decisions rather than being one of those who push their children into one of the most common careers simply because they are unable to understand which area will be good for their child. Children feel much more confident in choosing a particular career when they are supported by their parents.

Why do you think the number of candidates appearing for JEE and NEET has been increasing every year? Science is a fascinating field, and what one can do with it often seems like a miracle to young minds. Whether it is gazing up at the stars and trying to figure out the constellations or applying algorithms in simple software on your computer to solve mathematical questions, everything revolves around scientific principles.

Science has often been confused with engineering and medicine. Students are ready to become doctors and engineers by putting in all their effort and then settle with meagre salaries. If these students knew about new-age careers they could do wonders with the amount of hard work they had to put in to get that meagre remuneration. It is not true that those with higher academic qualifications are still a priority but the job industry is seen to recruit those who possess the required skills and qualifications for holding the post.

~ Devansh Gupta | 12

No matter what . . .

No matter what, she will always remain in my heart. Even if she went to a world which is far beyond my reach, she will always shine bright like a star from the sky. Before she left us, she taught us one simple thing which is 'always stay happy'. With her tiny hands on mine, she passed away leaving us all alone. Some of us still cannot believe that she is gone as her presence was strongest of all.

It was a rainy day in July. My mother, a friend of mine and I went to my grandparents' place which was quite far from the city. All the way, I was wondering about my two-year-old cousin. I was very excited to meet her. When we reached their place she ran to me and both of us started playing. As it was a tiring journey we slept early. The next morning, it was raining cats and dogs. The cool breeze with tiny droplets was touching my skin. Everyone got up except for me. Grandma asked Wasi, my cousin, to wake me up. As soon as I got up she asked me to play with her. Usually, I used to get bored while playing with her but it was different now. I dressed her like a traditional bride, pretended we were baking a cake for her birthday, we were drawing and we even helped our grandmother with her work. Then, after lunch, we started to watch television. My uncle was taking drawing classes while my grandfather along with my friend was busy watching television. Wasi sneaked out of the house as her mother was busy in the kitchen. After I was done watching, I started looking for her. I did not find her anywhere. Afterwards, when everybody started searching, the situation started to become very serious. Almost the whole village started searching for her.



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After ten minutes her mother suddenly suggested that she may have fallen into the pond which was next to the house. Someone dived into the pond to search. Then when he came up I felt a grave, a very painful feeling in my heart. I felt as if someone had just shot me with a gun. This feeling I got when he came up with my lovely, adorable cousin's dead body.

True, we could not save her. All of us screamed as if it were we who were dying. We were devastated. The rain continued and our minds seemed to mirror the weather. Three years have passed, still, her memory is etched in our minds like it was yesterday. When her body was about to be taken away, her facial expression was as if she was smiling and that face and the tragedy of it all is a constant reminder that no matter what happens in life, we should always be happy.

~ Tasmin Ahmed | 7

"The weird, weird thing about devastating loss is that life actually goes on. When you're faced with a tragedy, a loss so huge that you have no idea how you can live through it, somehow, the world keeps turning, the seconds keep ticking."

~ James Patterson

value OF Life



Everybody needs some things to survive. Air, water and food are the basic necessities of life. This is not enough for people as we always crave for more. The sad truth is that once we achieve something, we take it for granted. We forget its value.

Life, we know, is unpredictable. There is no surety or security as anything may happen anytime therefore, we should live each and every moment to the fullest. We should use every second of the day instead of wasting time being idle. We should make

Lydia Timungpi - 11 our lives meaningful. We should focus on achiev-

ing our goals with extreme grit and determination. We should live our lives before it's too late as they say nothing lasts forever. We should always give back the love we receive from people who love and care about us. We should not let misunderstandings ruin our relationships for we may cease to exist at any moment. The best thing to do is go with the flow of life, accept what comes your way and value the life you've received.

There are many relationships that we get into during our short stay on this planet. We find friends, teachers, lovers and people some of whom stay, some leave. Such is life. Though people are blinded by material possessions, things remain a part of our lives, they have value too but these things do not make our lives meaningful. When a person dies, he or she will be remembered by the people that they loved and not at all by the secondary, material things.

We should remain grateful for the little things in life. It is a journey that is different for everybody and is unpredictable. We do not realize the value of something until it is taken away from us. We should not take this life for granted as the goal is not to live forever but to create something that does.

~ Ojas Borah Hazarika | 12

friends

As the saying goes "A true friend is someone who thinks you are a good egg even though they know that you are slightly cracked"

It has been four years since I entered the gates of The Assam Valley School. My stay may seem less worthy if compared to my friends who have spent eight years in this school. Nevertheless, for me, every moment whether sad or happy, scary or funny will be cherished.

Many times, my so-called friends have failed the test of friendship by betraying, deceiving or backstabbing me but that's what



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taught me who my true friends really are. Several wounds and scars were created by my alleged trustworthy friends and they were magically healed by those “STRANGERS” whom I never considered friends.

In these last four years, I might have changed my friend circle. They might have disliked me but this is when I learnt a rotten apple can destroy all apples in the basket. Sometimes we cannot choose circumstances in our life but we can make our own choices.

Moments have captured both the sides of friendship, good and bad. Some friends come for a reason and others for a season. As seasons pass by, friends keep changing but in these changing times along with changing people, if someone stays beside you through all the ups and downs, the smiles and the tears, the scars and the wounds, then you have, without a doubt, found a piece of heaven on earth.

~ Shrutee Kothari | 12

S u r v i v o r

You disrespect her;
 You hurt her;
 You molest her.
 But still, she survives.
 She is a woman.
 In her, lies the strength of,
 Goddess Durga;
 And the patience of,
 Goddess Parvati.
 Underestimate her and
 She will show you her worth.
 Love her with all your heart and;
 She will devote herself to you.
 She is a woman

From being a homemaker to working 9 to 5 jobs, every woman is an unsung warrior. From getting her first period and giving birth to her first child, every woman is a survivor who is underappreciated. Her body has the power to mature life, her breasts feed a new-born child and her monthly bleeding is the reason behind the existence of life. Then why is it that she is considered inferior and weak? Why is it that a baby girl is killed while a boy child is celebrated? Why is it that the source of life is suppressed and dominated over? Don't treat a girl child as a liability when she deserves to be treated like a blessing. Don't educate her to increase her chances of finding good husbands. Do so to let her be able to have an independent life. Don't ask her about her marriage plans, instead, ask her about her career plans. Teach her how to love herself before you ask her to love her husband. Teach her how to let out the goddess Durga within her and be fierce and strong in life. Teach her what she deserves to learn before you teach her what she “should” learn.

~ Indrani Phukan | 11

We are lying when we say that beauty and colour do not matter



Biraja Chingakham - 11

Am I beautiful? Do I shine enough? Am I pretty enough to be called perfect? These are the most frequent thoughts I get while walking through the school corridor, down the lane and almost everywhere. I hate crowds. The reason is quite simple. I get conscious as if with every step that I take they are judging me by the way I look, the way I dress and everything else possible. The worst part is, they tell me that it is okay, it is okay to dress however I want, it is okay to look the way God has made me and they tell me that looks doesn't matter but I know the truth. I know whatever I was told were lies, they pity me, they think that lying will do me good. But who am I to complain when I am telling myself the same lies every day.

Promises are meant to be broken, lies are meant to be told. So, how can I stop people from telling me the same lies I have been telling myself all my life?

Even if I tell myself that I don't care about what people think of me because of my colour, shape and beauty; in the end, I know that I do care. But it cannot be helped as God wanted me to be born this way! Whatever I have said till now was all negative but what if I put a bit of positivity in it? The whole world seems kind. Even if they are lying, they are trying to protect me from the truth. I myself am helping them make it and on the other side, I am loving it and learning how to love myself.

~ Shreeya Elangbam | 8

Power of Music



Music is a universal language that connects and influences people, irrespective of their caste, race, religion and region. It is a powerful tool that can be used to decipher human demeanour. It allows one to express one's innermost feelings. It helps you to focus on the brighter side of life and uplifts human nature.

Music is most relevant in today's world as it plays an important role in the lives of millions. It is a unique talent one can hone and it is a powerful tool. It has the power to arouse emotions and can attract people. At times people connect influence and urge others to take actions through music. Like in the struggle for Indian Independence where patriotism was spread and strengthened through music. There are various forms of music by various artists and each has its own flavour. Music is timeless.

The music industry is one of the biggest industries in the world. It takes dedication and hard work to pursue music. Music can play a vital role in our life; it helps us to express our feelings, be it good or bad. Music is a platform that can cause a great impact on the world. No power is as strong as the power of music.

~ Neha Swabnam | 10

E D a r k n e s s

Ever experienced what darkness feels like?

Darkness is when you feel lonely in a crowd. It is when your inner demons want to be set free and when you want to be the bad person. It is when your good and the evil intentions have a war in your head. You have the urge to do something reckless. But how do you fight the urge? It's a question I have asked myself many a time. Have you ever felt like every little thing is hurting you? That you just cannot bear and want to hurt someone. That happens to numerous teenagers. The evil thoughts come into your mind and you have this sudden urge which compels you to hurt someone. In order to remain a balanced and a good soul, you have to fight that urge and the demons that dance in your head egging you on to do something wicked and nasty. You have to think of every happy thought and memory in your life. The very reason God has sent you to earth is not to hurt someone but to make the earth purer and a happy place to live



Nilasha Bhimsaria - 10

in. You have to think of the reason the good people should remain in the light of goodness. You have to fight the anxiety. You must stand strong not to fall off the deep end because it is very hard to climb back up from the abyss you have fallen into. You must think of every reason your mother took the pain to carry you in her womb for nine months and your father who works hard every second just to make your life comfortable. They did it to make you happy so that you live a rewarding life and never fall into darkness because once you do then it is extremely difficult to come out into the light again.

The logical thing to do is you have to take a deep breath and keep breathing and keep counting in your brain till you calm and compose yourself. You have to let go of the anxiety that tries to take over your life and believe in “**Carpe Diem**” which means “**seize the day**” and try to be as serene as possible and let tomorrow take care of itself.

~ Yuthika Kejriwal | 11

a B e a u t i f u l C r y s t a l B a l l

I have always loved being with my family. I mean, who doesn't? But I was forced into going far away to a boarding school for my education. I did not want to go at all, nevertheless, I was sent.

The first day of school can be very, very scary and so it was for me. I met people, made friends but it was still all too difficult to be accepted right away. I was terribly homesick and wished every day that I could go back home.

I thought nothing would change but eventually, everything started to get better! I had adjusted to



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the school and its different facets of life. Moreover, I had made very close friends and they were Chrissy and Kath. I started doing very well in academics too. Everything seemed perfect. Even the days I spent in the House (hostel) did not seem to drag and leave me feeling lonely.

Before I knew it, Christmas had arrived and it was time to go home. I was happy to go home as both my friends lived close by. As I got home I got lost in the hustle and bustle of the city. My parents had said that they would not be able to spend much time with me this Christmas. This did upset me for a while but the thought of sharing Christmas with Chrissy and Kath cheered me a great deal.

I had a long Christmas list ready which I hoped to get, buy or be fulfilled before the holidays were over. I bought myself a new dress for a party at Chrissy's place which had been planned some time ago. I was so excited!

On Christmas Eve, I stepped out of my home ready to go to the party. I had avoided going out as much as possible before this because the snow was extremely thick and I was worried that I would slip and get hurt. As I walked down the steps shivering in my outfit, I notice something shining in the snow. Although the incident should have ended that day, it didn't.

The thing I saw looked very pretty and I was therefore tempted to pull it out from the snow and I did. It was a beautiful crystal ball. I thought it was a regular showpiece sort of thing but I as I held it for five seconds, it acted as a portkey! I was absolutely terrified about where was I going and how I was even supposed to come back.

To my utter disbelief, I was transported to one of the gas chambers of the Second World War where the Jews were gassed and killed. I had gone back in time! I have read a lot about the Second World War because I am a history student.

What I do realize that it was all a dream! My mother was sitting by my bedside waiting for me to open my eyes so that she could surprise me. It was Christmas! She handed me a box saying that it was my Christmas present. As I opened it I saw that it was the same crystal ball which I had picked from the snow! I did not lift the ball out from the box. I just took the box and kept it aside. I am still terrified of that crystal ball. I do not know what really happened but definitely, it was something weird and scary and I know with conviction that what I witnessed was positively not a dream!

~ Naviya Chamariya | 10

A Lesson worth Learning

One must not procrastinate or delay and as the proverb goes **“Time and Tide Wait for no Man”**.

It was the summer of 2016. I was returning to the classroom after breakfast when suddenly someone told me that a teacher was looking for me. I was really puzzled as to what could possibly be the reason for that. With this thought in my head, I went back to class. I was busy taking notes when the teacher who had been looking for me entered and started having a talk with my chemistry teacher who was giving me pitiful glances. After reading the expression on both their faces, I got a sinking feeling. My throat was feeling dry and itchy; I knew it was not good news. My chemistry teacher told me to pick up my things and go out but she said it very politely and calmly which made me even more confused.

I went out and the other teacher told me what I feel were the worst words I had ever heard in my life, “Your mother is very sick” I felt dizzy and light-headed but I kept my calm. He told me to go to the House and pack my things. I was being sent home. I knew it was serious as they were sending me home. I tried thinking what could possibly be the sickness my mother had been afflicted with.

I arrived at my hometown and immediately rushed to the hospital. My whole family was sitting in the waiting lounge and my first question was, “Where is she?” They told us that she was in the intensive care unit and that I had to wait for some time before I could see her. Now that fact that they said ‘see her’ and not ‘meet her’ reassured me a lot. When the doctor came, he told me that whatever happens, I must not break down in front of her and that even though she could not speak to me, she could hear everything and that she could not have any emotional stress as it would affect her. I decided that I would not see her as I would break down for sure.

I believe that human beings are the worst selfish beings on this planet and I was no different. My mother was in the hospital fighting for her life and I was in my room playing video games without a care in the world when I should have been in the hospital with the rest of my family, just for the sake of being there with her. In the evening a very teary-eyed aunt came into my room and told me that she was in a very critical condition and might not see another day. At that moment I realised that I was being stupid and that was the moment I felt fear, a fear which was worse than a near-death experience, a fear worse than getting caught in a triple homicide. It was the fear that I would never get to say goodbye to my mother, the fear that I would start hating myself for playing video games when my mother was on life support, the fear that my little brother who was at the time, only eight years old would not have a mother to look after him as he grew up. Within the next few hours, my fears became a reality and it really changed my whole



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view of life. Yes, I never got to say goodbye. Yes! I hate myself for it even today and that fear lives inside me till this day, that fear that I can lose anyone I value in a matter of moments but that very fear makes me cherish my family and I really thank my mother for that. Yes, I miss her but she taught me something I would have never learnt otherwise.

~ Anonymous

A Living Letter

It was a dark stormy night. Thunder and lightning had no intention of stopping and was disturbing the whole neighbourhood but it was alright for me. Having lived all by myself for the last ten years had made me strong enough to bear such calamity and eeriness that comes with such inclement weather. It was a tiring day already! I was on my toes all day at the office. I was drained of energy, so when I came home to provide



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some solace to my soul I was thinking of watching “The Hug Man’s Show”. I saw that there was no electricity because of which my idiot box proved to be of no use! I lit a candle and I was moving towards the kitchen to quench my thirst and at that moment I heard the doorbell ring. I walked towards the door and opened it with the candle in one hand. The door made a creaking sound and could be heard in the midst of the thunder and rain. There was no one in front of the door. I looked down and saw the envelope. I looked at it and smiled. It comes every year at this time. It was from my mother. I quickly ran to my sofa, forgetting my thirst and opened it as my eyes fell on the most beautiful words.

It read:

Dear Lisa,

Happy birthday dear! It is so unbelievable to see my little girl has grown so old and independent. I am glad to see you prosper and flourish so well. Be the way you are always. Make good choices and never regret anything in life. Someone or the other on earth go through what your Dad and I went through and the loved ones left behind have to face the pain. Everyone has their own story to tell. Do fulfil your dreams before you end up here! Be happy and stay strong my dear! I love you. Take care.

Love,

Mumma

I smiled as I folded the treasure of words in that piece of paper that was as precious as gems. I looked at the garland-covered picture of my mom and dad as I said to myself, “Happy Birthday, Lisa!” The clock struck 12.

~ Shagun Agarwal | 12

Amazing Friends, Incredible State

I

relax in my bus seat and switch on the music on my mobile phone with much trial and error. I have found that reggae music helps me fall asleep on buses, so I put on Bob Marley and pop a chewing gum into my mouth. As I relax to the beat, a suitcase gets shoved into my face. The relaxing and soothing energy from the music is lost. I glare upwards to see who the rude traveller is when I see what is obviously, a first-time traveller. She is a five-foot-tall lady carrying one huge suitcase and several small bags strapped all over her body. She is wearing a neck pillow and has a very worried and distressed look on her face. My gaze softens and I sympathize with the poor thing, I remember how frightened I had felt when I travelled alone for the first time. While I was examining the nervous soul, a tall and well-built man from the back helped the lady to her seat



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which happened to be next to mine and the man sat on the other side of me. I later found that the lady was a twenty-six-year-old woman from Delhi and wanted an exciting change from her dreary engineering college and the man was a thirty-five-year-old policeman in desperate need for a break from catching criminals. I, being the photographer that I am, asked if I could take photos of them throughout the trip to which they gave permission; it was like hiring a photographer for free, said the lady. We exchanged names and agreed to spend the tour together. I described myself to them as a thirty-year-old photographer who travelled the world to capture even a bit of the beauty I see in it. By the end of our bus ride, I had found new friends in Leyi, the engineer and Lima the policeman.

We were a part of the tour group that explored the beautiful places of Meghalaya which promised a breath-taking experience. I have been abroad many times but have never been to this beautiful part of my own motherland. I had heard about its beauty many a time and was thrilled to finally be able to explore it with my new friends.

We went to all the hotspots of Meghalaya. We went to Tura, the Elephant Falls, Nohkalikai, Mawlynnong and Sohra. The final destination of our trip was Sohra, the wettest place in the world. On reaching Sohra, Leyi, Lima and I went sightseeing around the village. I helped Lima and Leyi learn the ways of an experienced traveller and we shared many stories of ourselves and what had led us to this trip.

On our way back to the inn, Leyi froze in her steps and Lima asked her what the matter was. Her face had gone deathly pale and she looked like she would break down in tears

anytime. We sat her down and calmed her. She told us she could not find her passport and she did not know where she had left it. Lima immediately sprang into action and suggested that we retrace our steps. We tried covering most of the area but it would be impossible to search everywhere so we sat in defeat while Leyi tried her best to hold back her tears. That's when it struck me! I had taken pictures of them throughout our walk, surely I would have got Leyi's passport in the pictures. I hurriedly searched through my camera roll and there it was, Leyi's passport resting on top of the table of the small tea stall we had relaxed in. I showed Lima and Leyi the picture and we found our way to the tea stall. We asked the shopkeeper if he had seen a passport and he very sweetly gave it back to us along with some free tea and biscuits. Leyi cried tears of joy and continuously thanked us on our way back.

As the trip came to an end, I felt at sea at the thought of separating from my new friends but I felt very thankful for having met such nice and amazing people. These two helped me remember one of the main reasons for meeting interesting people and sharing our journey and story through my photographs. This trip was an amazing one as I had found new friends and also an idea for my new exhibition.

~ Havika Ome Apang | 11

Feelings are Fatal

The leaf let go of the tree and fell to the river. It swam there like the other leaves on the water. It was autumn already. Spring and summer had gone by like the wind blowing on a cold autumn afternoon. Spring was when they first met, right here under the same tree. The leaves were ripe and green and the flowers were blooming brighter than ever. She was probably the reason the flowers looked prettier than they were and the sun seemed warmer and more welcoming than usual. His smile put her at peace and made her feel as though everything was good in this world. They were happy together. However, winter was soon to come and the river would freeze

up and the tree would have lost all of its leaves by then. It would become difficult to meet each other or perhaps, this was the last time they would see each other. These thoughts made him sad but he still waited there for her every day. She always came by too. Spending time with each other made them happy. It looked like love and even felt like it but one did not really know if it was love because he was not human. He was the river on which the leaves swam and the sky reflected. He was the river and she was a human. He would soon go to deep sleep during winter.



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“Is this the last time?” she asked him. Her eyes were watery and her voice cracked. He felt a small pinch in his heart for the first time as he saw her like that. He had felt such things for a human for the first time and he felt their feelings so much that he almost thought that he would soon turn human. He took her hand and smiled. “I’ll always be here,” he told her. Winter soon came and the river froze. He went to sleep

and they never met that season. The atmosphere was cold and gloomy. It was like the winter felt guilty for doing this to them. Winter will have to leave eventually though. Spring would slowly walk in. When it did, he woke up and remembered her and he felt the pain. He felt something he had never felt before. It hurt and he wished to cry. However, if he cried, the river would overflow and there would be a flood so he held it all in and waited there for her again.

If she came back, he would probably turn human finally. He would then become a whole new being and one would finally be able to say that it is love that he felt for her, with all certainty. Only if she would come back and so he waited there for her hoping she would.

~ Moom Lego | 10

Home is where the Heart is...



Life is like a roller coaster ride and everyone riding it needs someone to hold hands with and scream their lungs out together during their ups and downs and the people with whom you can do these things throughout the ride are your true friends.

The simple meaning of friends in my dictionary is a prism. A prism consists of my six friends without whom my ride is not as fun as how it is now with them. The word 'prism' symbolizes happiness and this is why it suits them best. They are the ones with whom I do all the ridiculous things which I never imagined I could end up doing on my own. In these four years with them we had lots of ups and downs but we all faced it together and the bitter-sweet memories which we have created during these ups and downs

Biraaja Chingakham - 11 of our journey made our bond even stronger. They have become my family now and what does someone need when he/she has two lovely families.

The three-year stay in Tihu with them are the most precious memories that I will carry with me wherever I go. The more I stay with them the more I discover myself. My adventure and journey with them started during one of the "roll calls" when we all were scolded for being late. We started talking since then and soon realized that we had so much in common. I cherish each and every moment I have spent with them. I am very grateful to them for making this school a home away from home for me. Sadly, we will pass out from this school someday and we will have different destinies and different goals to achieve. Everything is going to change and our lives will turn upside down but I am happy because I will carry so many memories of them with me.

The things which I will really miss the most are playing volleyball with them on Sundays, going for dance practices together for many events, eating loads of food and mostly, a warm group hug. I will never forget the cartons of noodles and dumplings that Yajum's father bought for us and us turning into spendthrifts for our love of food during many Summer Fests and Founders. I remember walking in a line in the middle of the road for fun although it was quite embarrassing for me then and now it brings a smile to my face whenever I think about it. We never realized that we were making memories. We just knew that we were having fun.

Like every other story, this story has a sad part too. Tenzin Bhutia left The Assam Valley School last year and though we did not want her to leave, we knew it was for her own benefit that she had to do so. We thought we would lose our friendship but I was wrong as the distance between us brought our hearts even closer. My friends are the ones who put colour into my life and I never want it to cease, ever!

~Yangchen Khunjuju | 9

I MISS MY MOM

MOM,

Could you come back and stay awhile?
I want to hear your voice and see you smile.
I want to hold you tight and never let go
And tell you how much I love you.
~ Unknown

Caitlyn was woken up by the sound of the coffee machine whirring in the cold winter morning. She stumbled out of bed, her sweater keeping out the cold. "My activities seemed to have woken you up" admitted Mila without sounding upset or apologetic. Her sister had always found a way of putting Caitlyn in her place. The transient phase of shouting back had long passed and Caitlyn strolled towards the machine to claim her cup. Her sister sat, scribbling in her leather-bound notebook, hoping for perhaps an ambience in which to work. The morning passed by in a breeze and Caitlyn found herself armed with lecture notes for the afternoon classes as she casually walked towards the door. "You reek of death" yelled Mila. A statement that targeted the subject she taught and the clothes she wore.

The streams of cars that lined the road had her stuck in traffic and Caitlyn couldn't help but think of the first time they had bought a house together. The house had frilly white curtains and was decked with impulsively bought mahogany furniture that proved to be quite a hefty investment. The white chrysanthemums that grew on the fringes of the lawns were Caitlyn's choice and yet Mila would comment on how those flowers were kept for her funeral.



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The cars in the road hummed, waiting for the ever monotonous routes people were supposed to take. Caitlyn thought of the times she struggled, five years ago when she woke to the sound of a ringing phone and the news of their mother's death. The news of death didn't startle her as much as the absence of her mother did, the void slowly sank in and the chasm deepened over time. Manifestations of her mother lurked everywhere, Mila's eyes, the crinkled tablecloth, her cream coloured blouse and her mother's pictures. The sisters stuck through it together, crying to sleep, waking up in pain and whirring through their lives. Their pain subsided as they grew older. Each of the sisters overcoming the obstacles in their little ways. Mila with her dark sense of humour and Caitlyn by pouring herself into work. Caitlyn proceeded to the university in silence hoping for solace from the humdrum of life, stopping by a post office on the way to work to post a letter to her mother. She understood that the letter would most probably end up in the Dead Letter Office but the pain and grief of losing her mother lessened with every letter she had never written before.

~ Sieyina Meru | 12

JUST THE WAY IT WAS

Jackson had always been a short, scrawny little kid. He got bullied a lot and no one ever tried to be friends with him or even talk to him. He just sat there in his corner seat, weeping silently under his breath. He went back home and forced a little smile on his face, telling his old mother how lovely his day had been. His mother was a widow and Jackson meant everything to her so he always tried his best to look happy in front of her. His mother used to always tell him to stay strong but how much longer could he live such a life, such a horrible, friendless life and still keep smiling when he got back home. The bullies became stronger and more violent but poor little Jackson stayed the same, getting beaten up and having to do everything they said. One day he was so frustrated he let his anger out on his mother. He regretted it right after but did not have the courage to apologise. He had always been a coward.



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"A day like any other", thought Jackson, or so he thought. He got up, as usual, hating every second of his life. Thinking to himself to stay strong for his mother, pulling himself out of bed for his mother and living a life for his mother. He was always extremely tired from all the running around, doing different chores for the bullies but today his body felt light, as light as a feather. He could feel his muscles in his arms and legs being strong; he could feel the power inside him. He looked at himself in the huge mirror hanging in his room. It was a miracle. It was not him, not his thin face and body. Jackson had never seen this person, who was now standing in his bedroom; a tower of muscle and strength. He turned his head, so did this strange body. He blinked an eye, so did the body. Jackson could not believe his eyes. It was really him, in this God-like body. He

was just admiring himself in the mirror when a thought came across his mind, would his mother even be able to recognise him in his new body. That's when he heard a shout coming from downstairs, "Jackson, breakfast is ready". It sounded like his mother. He ran downstairs to see his mother setting the table for breakfast. A million thoughts crossed Jackson's mind, would his mother be able to recognise him, if not how would she react. Fortunately, she did know who he was even in his new body. It was as though the old one never existed. He happily ate his bacon, eggs and toast with his mother. Jackson's whole life had been that little kid who everybody bullied and teased. He could never stand up for himself, even if he did it wouldn't make a difference. It was as though his life's whole purpose was to do everything the bullies told him. He had no friends, no allies; he had nothing but all was going to change; after all, he had changed. He reached with a little fear in his heart but to his surprise, everyone came running to him asking him how he was and everything. Everyone was dying to talk to him. Even the bullies were at his feet. He felt as though he was an idol. Those people who just yesterday talked down at him and gossiped about him behind his back said all kinds of things were now practically begging to be his friends. He became a king at his school. He went around the school with hundreds of students trailing behind. He was living the life. He had everything. He had always been very bad at sports but now he shot goal after goal. He felt invincible.

Weeks passed and Jackson's life had become a paradise, a whole bunch of friends, a loving mother and his virile body. He enjoyed his life every day and loved every second of it but why did he always think of his past life, why did he miss his little, scrawny body, his lonely, friendless life. How could he miss his old life when he was having a perfect one right now. I guess all we can say is that maybe just maybe though he is a suave and handsome boy outside or has become one but inside he is still that a scrawny little lonely boy. He has learnt to value himself and take charge of his life but some part of him still misses the part which allowed him some solitude.

~ Anya Tayeng | 9

Women in Society

Love and respect woman,
 Look to her not only for comfort,
 But for strength and inspiration and the doubling of your intellectual and moral powers.
 Blot out from your mind any idea of superiority;
 You have none.
 ~ Joseph Mazzini



Society has to change! She who is raped might be a mother, a daughter, a sister or might be the future of the world. Sexual violence is deep-rooted in our culture; from violent rape scenes on hit TV shows to sexist dress codes that glorify rape culture; from famous athletes telling young girls they're "supposed to be silent," to near-daily stories of sexual assaults on college

campuses; from a former Olympic doctor accused of sexually abusing more than a hundred women, to a President of The United States who has been publicly accused of sexually assaulting more than fifteen women.

Five women getting raped each day in the capital of our country is not a matter to be neglected. 2,043 cases of rape were registered in 2018 as compared to 2,059 cases in 2017. Only last year, 3,175 cases of molestation were reported in India. We might think that it is only in the Indian society where the mindset of the people is so backward but that is not the case. When we look at this plague across the world, the problem gets bigger and worse. Every 98 seconds someone in the United States is sexually assaulted. That means every single day more than 570 people experience sexual violence in this so-called – “most powerful country”.



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This inhumane act of cruelty does not only affect the lives of the victims but also their families which have long term consequences. If The United States of America which boasts about its various powers to the world ranging from defence to political matters cannot assure security to its own women citizens, I guess we should forget about the concept of “powerful countries”.

Whose fault is it? Is it the fault of the government or the lewd mindset of the people? I don't think that the government is to be blamed much

because the most it can do is to legislate and punish the offenders. When we talk about laws, there are oodles of laws that have been made to protect women but the problem lies in its implementation. For example, dowry was legally banned in the year 1961 but still, according to a report 21 lives are lost every day across India because of the so-called tradition of ‘dahej’. To ensure women's safety at the workplace, sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013 was implemented but still we hear so many such cases every day.

A boy with unscrupulous habits is accepted by the society but if a girl has even a hint of a scar on her face, she is declared unsuitable for marriage. A boy is supposed to have fun when young, but a girl is supposed to learn the basic chores. A boy can go for late-night parties; he can independently roam around and relax with his friends at endless midnight parties, but if a girl does the same, she is assumed to be ethically wrong and is tagged as a girl who has no shame and respect for her family. Why does society work this way? Who gave people the right to interfere in the personal lives of girls? It is their life. Who are we to decide what a girl must wear or how a girl must carry herself? It is their choice, so let them be as they are.

When we talk about equality and feminism, we should not forget the contribution of the people who have given their lives for this social cause. The hard work of social workers such as

Malala Yousafzai, Eleanor Roosevelt, Betty Friedan and many others should not go to waste. It is high time for us to take collective responsibility and address this social malady. This can only happen when we start making this our priority and get together and work as a team; both men and women. Let's make this world "a better place for me and for you and for the entire human race".

~ Aryan Khatuwala |11

Too Deeply

Mikael is up on the dias, the reporter ready to scribble down every word that he speaks. The cameras snap away and the thought of his face being plastered on tomorrow's newspaper brings a smile to his face and he can't help but laugh at the situation. He had never imagined that he would gain fame this way, making him reminisce about back then. It was the night before Christmas and Mikael lay curled up in the corner of the floor littered with pages torn from his notebook. The juxtaposition of the men was strongly appealing and he thought to himself bitterly, "I should have been an artist instead of a writer."



The door to the room opened and Mikael rushed to hug the person behind it. "What a pleasant surprise," Viktor remarked. Mikael then looked up into the eyes of his lover and wondered if he ever regretted giving up on dancing. The country was war-torn and to make ends meet Viktor had to quit his troupe as no one had the time to visit theatres anymore. Viktor had taken up his father's old butcher house and came back tired every day. A hint of animal blood still clinging to him, Viktor asked, "Another writer's block again?" "The murder scene needs a bit more work", Mikael complained. Viktor being experienced in handling bodies and gore in his profession started handing out tips, "Make the body want less and give in more gory details..." Finally the draft was submitted and the book was published. Mikael had pinned his hopes on the book as he had only one more book left. He had confided in Viktor many times about his average career as a writer and had decided that the project would be his last as a writer. A few months later, the manuscript of the last book was completed and "Murders in Mielthor Town" was soon published.

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The book like the last one hadn't hit it off and business wasn't great. "These hands that were taught to craft beautiful sentences will now be handling chunks of beef" Mikael thought gloomily. A few days later his publisher called saying that the books were suddenly selling like hotcakes. He was puzzled at the sudden sales and wondered what could have

caused it. Later that night he found out that an actual murder had occurred in Mielthor town and the eerie fact about the murder was that it matched the exact details of his book. His next few books were also sold in an instant as right after the publication of the book, an exact murder would occur.

“Do you think that the “Mikael Murders” are committed by someone close to you?” shouted a reporter. “Now I wouldn’t happen to know a murderer would I?” he replied and the interview continued. That night Mikael showed his new manuscript to Viktor once again as he had always done with the previous books. “Oh what a frightful thing love is!” Mikael thought himself. He had seen Viktor returning late that night before the first murder and it was too much of a coincidence that he would return late from work right after the following murder occurred. Well who was he to judge as he too had buried his conscience and let Viktor kill these people? It was funny that they both had loved too deeply for one was his lover and the other, his profession.

~ Leyi Lego | 11

S a u d a d e

The sun completed its ascension. The sky was soon painted with myriad hues of scarlet and purple. Louise counted the minutes left until she was to finally leave this place. Just as a tinge of blue spread over the horizon, she tightened the collar around Ben’s neck. Even after her mother’s death, Louise’s father always made an attempt to make up for the motherly affection she was deprived of in her younger years. It was only a matter of time until he left for a supposed trip with his colleagues. He never returned.

It was blatantly evident how her Aunt wished to get rid of her when she dragged her into an orphanage in the remote outskirts of the town. “She’s the docile kind”, her Aunt yelled, the older orphans looking down with such impure disgust. Her lips twitched at the scent of soap that still faintly lingered in her cardigan. ‘Home’ was all she yearned for.



Ben had been her only companion since she entered those dungeon-like dormitories. It hadn’t been a week since the dog’s ninth birthday when he fell sick. With nowhere else to go back to, the usual routine kicked off with Louise and Ben sneaking out in the morning and returning by six.

Just as she made her way through the window to flee, the matron snapped at her. Louise supposed she ought to be used to being ordered around during odd hours. She felt fine long fingers, followed by a sharp

sting across her face and mentally cursed herself for being a ‘weakling’. Nevertheless, without a second thought, she pushed herself

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to the ground and signalled for Ben. The orphans woke up to the sound of the commotion.

Louise ran as fast as her feet could carry her. Running away through the swamp outside, she eluded her pursuers. Ben sped up his pace and went way further down, leaving her behind. The dog took a turn towards an alley she knew not of. Before long, she lost sight of him and sighed in defeat.

After having searched the entire street, she finally surrendered. Far in the corner, there stood a throng of people around a truck. Louise's curiosity being aroused, she walked up to the crowd. Nothing, absolutely nothing could replace the look of horror on her face. There lay Ben's body and a pool of bright, red liquid underneath it, which caused a metallic, pungent smell in the air.

She pushed her way past many people, ignoring their comments as she did so, and noticed a man dressed in dark, Khaki uniform. She immediately presumed he was a policeman of that area. 'Officer if you could please look into this ...', she stopped midway when her eyes met his. She noticed the concern that lined his aged features, as mixed emotions surged around her, 'Father' was all that she could whisper.

~ Takhe Reela | 10

My life changed for the better

I was not a reader at all. In fact, if someone asked me to read a book I would find it very tedious and I often thought about what was so grand about reading a book. I wondered how people could read such thick books and carry it around wherever they went. I watched my friends reading books during their leisure hour, after lights out and sometimes even between classes. They were obsessed with their novels and any other reading material. I always advised them to either sleep or do something productive rather than read a book.

All of this ended the day when, out of sheer boredom, I picked a book to read. The name of the book was 'Vendetta' by Catherine Doyle. Many questions used to plague me like-how could my friends and peers read such a lot and not care whether they were caught reading at odd hours and be ready to face any consequences. My questions got answered when I started reading this book. I have tried reading many books earlier but never really got keen about it. On



Lydia Timungpi - 11

the other hand, this book was amazing and I could not put the book down. Whenever I got any free time I used to take out the book and start reading and I used to get so engrossed in reading that I really did not feel like doing anything else. I wanted to continue reading at whatever cost or consequences, just like my mates or any other passionate reader.

As I mentioned before, I have tried reading many books earlier but always felt like it was not my cup of tea. I started reading this book because it was popular among my batch mates. There was a really long line and everyone was waiting eagerly to read it since there was only one copy available in the school library. All they used to talk at that time was about this book. It was actually a trilogy - Vendetta, Inferno and Mafioso. Seeing the growing interest of my own batch mates even I wanted to know what was so exciting about these books and how could they complete the entire series in a day or two. I was extremely curious to know what made my classmates and housemates give all their time for such a mundane activity like reading. I too got lost in the fantasy world of these three books. I was surprised or rather amazed at the speed with which I read this book and about how I completed in a 'bang' within three days. I was certainly reading it during my leisure hour, after lights out and yes, between classes too sometimes. Immediately, after completing Vendetta, I started reading Inferno and then I read Mafioso. Now, I certainly know how foolish and stupid I was by calling reading a mundane activity.

Now, I am an avid reader and one who will always have a book in her hand wherever she goes. Reading now has become like a meditation for me as it really relaxes me. I really regret not realising this fact earlier and for wasting so many years of my life not reading. Reading is an eternal part of my life. If people do not read then they are missing out on one of the best activities in this world. Take me as an example and please do start reading. It will transport you to a different world of imagination and happiness. Reading is a total bliss!!!

~ Marushka Singhania | 10

THE CURSED VILLAGE

The horrific and shocking happenings in a village started when the villagers were told by a mysterious girl that the Longiang family practices black magic and are planning to soon give sacrifices of children below five years of age. The girl's words were not enough to worry the villagers. The villagers took her words for granted and got involved in their own mundane work. They realised their mistake when they found the dead bodies of five children of their village in the nearby forest. This incident shook the whole village. The happy and lively village was now turned into a place where there was nothing but sadness, fear, terror and the cries of the families who had just lost their innocent children. They did not have any idea about who or what killed the children. During one of the children's burial, the same girl who had warned the villagers earlier came to them and blamed them for the happenings. She was in tears. After this no one ever saw her. The villagers after listening to her marched towards the Longiang's house. Their pain and



sorrow turned into anger and revenge. When they reached the compound of their house, they found the four people from their family hanging dead from a tree just outside their house. They then discovered a room in their house which was full of skulls, blood and other creepy and bizarre things. They also found something written in blood on the walls. It read that the family's bodies might be dead but their souls were not and their souls would not spare any of the villagers. All the villagers left the village out of fear and trauma. After leaving the village none of them lived for more than two years no matter how far they went to live a new life. The village is abandoned now. Whenever journalists visit the village, they all witness weird paranormal activities.

Every year a big religious event is held at the village where priests and monks from different places gather together to weaken the evil powers. Some people believe in it while some do not but the house with the terrifying and unbelievable horror still exists. My heartfelt pity and compassion are for the uncle who told us about this disturbing story of his village because he died two months after telling us about his experience.

~ Yangchen Khunjuju | 9

“Literature is where I go to explore the highest and lowest places in human society and in the human spirit, where I hope to find not absolute truth but the truth of the tale, of the imagination and of the heart.”

~ Salman Rushdie



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