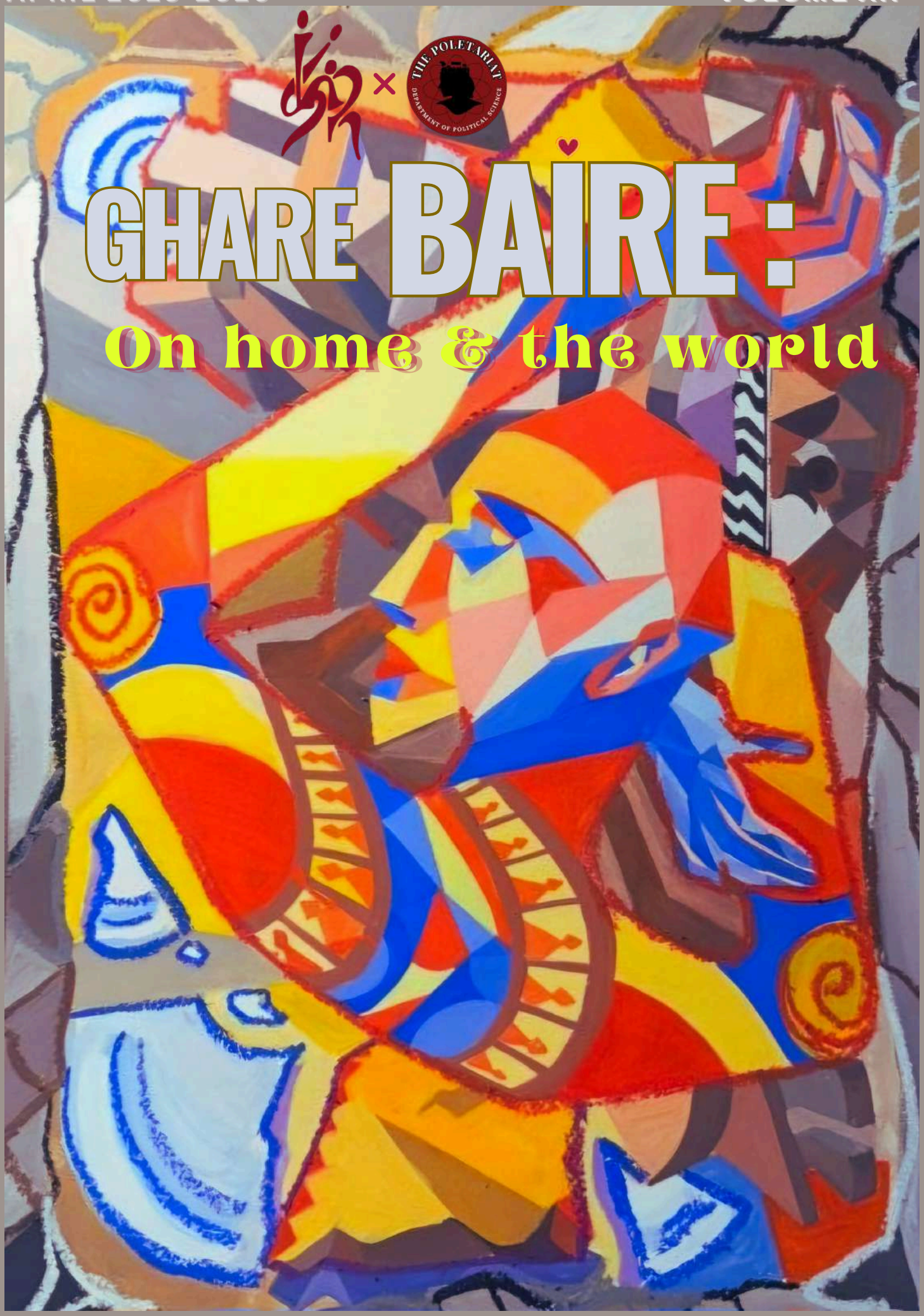
APRIL 2025-2026 VOLUME XII

# GHARE BAIRE :

## On home & the world



THE POLETARIAT| DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE|LSR

# A NOTE ON THE COVER PAGE

*Credits: Giang Giô, Pinterest*

My artwork **Peek into the Suitcase** is a visceral exploration of the fractured identity and the eroding sense of "home" in an era of f orced displacement and precarious living. The central figure is not merely packed but compressed & forced to crumble his very being into the rigid confines of a suitcase, transforming a vessel of transit into a final, suffocating domesticity.

The composition highlights the physical toll of uncertainty i.e. the man's legs have hardened into cold, architectural structures, giving hopes of a place called home which now sits in the tight space same as his like an unfinished dream . His back which has now become a facade of the communal features windows through which others peer out, while one figure desperately attempts to escape the shared trauma of their enclosure. Despite this chaos, his eyes reflect a haunting acceptance of a life reduced to essentials. Scattered beside him, broken plates and instant food serve as mundane relics of a shattered domestic life, symbolizing the fragile, temporary nature of a home built out of necessity rather than belonging

*Artwork and concept by:* ***Nayonika Jena (1st Year, Department of Political Science)***

# MEET THE TEAM

## EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

*Anushka Jain*
*Kainaat Arif*

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*Naina Bagchi*
*Shreya Pathak*

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*Ishita Nayak*

## ILLUSTRATION TEAM

*Adviteeya Rajvansh (Illustration and Design Head)*
*Khushi Panwar (Illustrator)*
*Nayonika Jena (Illustrator)*

# EDITOR'S NOTE

*Credits: Angie B. Morales*, Pinterest

If we were a publication that benefitted from our readers feeling hopeless from the very first page, we'd tell you about the mass displacement of Indian workers from the Gulf, of ICE detaining the people who made the "American Dream", of women in Afghanistan displaced from schools, beauty salons and media houses, of wars in Iran, Venezuela, Palestine, Congo, Sudan, of our entire world map apparently shrinking, and not in the wondrous promise of the "Global Village" that we held onto, but something much more fractured. We however, are not that publication. (Those who attended our Polpourri exhibition or the Empathy Circle will recognise that we take hope very seriously). Which is precisely why we still choose to invoke these spaces. It is not in sidestepping, but interrogating the many anxieties that these atrocities stir, that we find continuously our humanity affirmed, and are able to look each other in the eye. When we chose this theme, it was to once again, contest the boundary of the "Personal" and the "Political". We have inherited the exclusion of the "domestic" from politics through patriarchal definitions of what counts as "political." This is not merely an epistemic loss; it has enabled a dangerous tendency to take this sphere for granted, treating its erosion as an administrative concern —or worse, as collateral damage. Thus, this issue is, for lack of a better metaphor, a roof under which we may interrogate what it means to belong, what home is beyond a physical space, its loss and remaking.

Throughout our tenure and in the making of this edition we have consistently tried to shelter and nurture this reckoning. Through visual, narrative and conceptual art we have endeavoured to evoke a feeling of kinship that has transcended ideological, geographical and party lines to recognise the fire burning in each one of us in the political rainstorm of the great 2020s. Our desire has always been to invite diverse perspectives and provocations that often flit around in cacophonous whispers of our red college walls and give them a space to be inked and remembered.

I think it's fairly safe to say, we have in some capacity succeeded in that attempt. We were fortunate and thrilled to get brilliant minds to write (and draw!) for us. We hope that as you go through this issue, you share our joy in the creative ways people interpreted the rough contours of our subthemes to make up this thrilling and evocative landscape of migration, borders, refugees, displacement, citizenship and nationalism, diaspora and long-distance nationalism, globalised, hybrid and digital identities and home as a site of resistance and memory. Hopefully, this journey will be as thrilling and thought provoking as it was for us.

**Anushka Jain**
( *Editor-in-Chief*)

**Kainaat Arif**
*( Editor-in-Chief)*

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*Credits:Adviteeya Rajvansh*

# Home, Subject to VERIFICATION

*Sonakshi Verma*

(According to section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955, immigrants who have entered India between 1 January 1966 and 25 March 1971 may register for Indian citizenship under some conditions and will be granted the status of 'refugees' and not 'illegal immigrants'.)

What do we picture when we think of *home*? Warmly lit four walls where peace, comfort, and solace seem assured — a material space tied to security, family, and belonging. However, for some, home is not a place but a condition that never arrives.

I am referring to refugees and immigrants who, victimised by circumstances, are forced to pack their lives into ragged bags and cross borders, spending generations trying to build a 'home'. In this process, they grapple not only with the question of belonging but with its non-negotiable terms and conditions. This distance between home as an idea and home as lived reality becomes evident in New Seemapuri, where Bangladeshi Muslim immigrants continue to live in ways that resist finality.

Belonging in a society is often secured through visibility in the eyes of the state. This visibility is essential because it grants access to documentation, rights, and welfare which are the preconditions of social acceptance. In its absence, immigrants fall through the cracks of the state. The Bangladeshi Muslim immigrants of New Seemapuri navigate a tension between invisibility and hypervisibility. Economically invisible, their contributions to the informal sector — rag-picking, construction work, domestic labour go uncounted. Socially, they are pushed to the margins, denied dignity, and their poverty criminalised.

Yet they are hypervisible politically, projected as demographic threats within nationalist discourse,

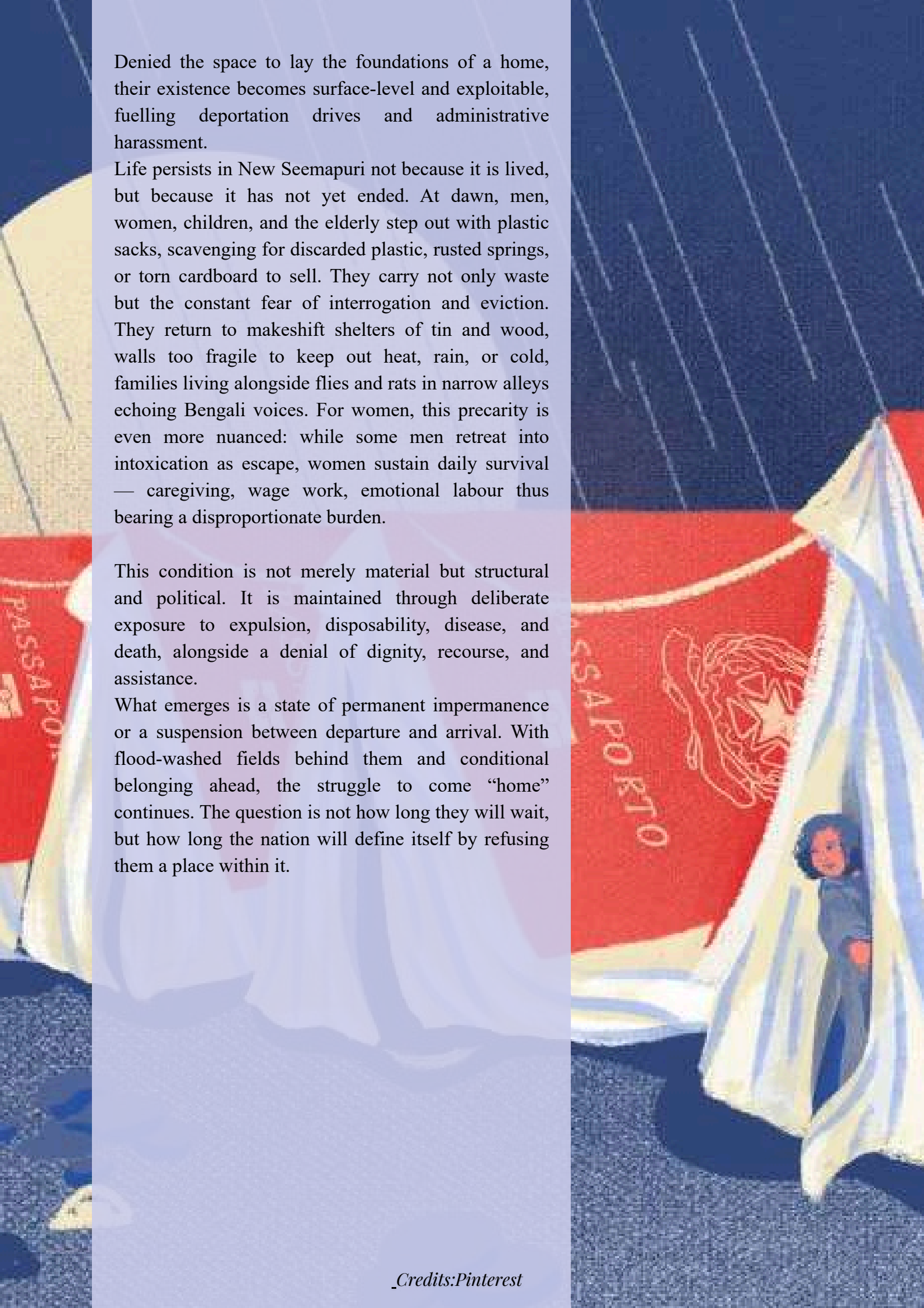
their identity reduced to "Bengali Muslim" rather than recognised as immigrants. This rationalises surveillance and containment rather than absorption. Invisibility and hypervisibility thus exist on a continuum: while legally sanctioned citizens occupy the safety of its middle, these immigrants risk falling from either edge.

Denied the space to lay the foundations of a home, their existence becomes surface-level and exploitable, fuelling deportation drives and administrative harassment.

Life persists in New Seemapuri not because it is lived, but because it has not yet ended. At dawn, men, women, children, and the elderly step out with plastic sacks, scavenging for discarded plastic, rusted springs, or torn cardboard to sell. They carry not only waste but the constant fear of interrogation and eviction. They return to makeshift shelters of tin and wood, walls too fragile to keep out heat, rain, or cold, families living alongside flies and rats in narrow alleys echoing Bengali voices. For women, this precarity is even more nuanced: while some men retreat into intoxication as escape, women sustain daily survival — caregiving, wage work, emotional labour thus bearing a disproportionate burden.

This condition is not merely material but structural and political. It is maintained through deliberate exposure to expulsion, disposability, disease, and death, alongside a denial of dignity, recourse, and assistance.

What emerges is a state of permanent impermanence or a suspension between departure and arrival. With flood-washed fields behind them and conditional belonging ahead, the struggle to come "home" continues. The question is not how long they will wait, but how long the nation will define itself by refusing them a place within it.



*Credits:Pinterest*

# The Taste of a Home I Carry

Apurva Dutta, LSR

Aloo posto. In English, it translates to “potatoes cooked in a poppy seed paste”, a description so bland and lacklustre it robs the name of its character, its ancestry, and its quiet defiance. The dish was born out of survival, out of resourcefulness forced upon Bengal during the British colonial era, when fields were seized for poppy cultivation, and families were left with the leftover seeds—waste remnants after the opium had been extracted. From this forced scarcity, this hunger, came a kind of alchemy: poppy seeds ground into a white, velvety paste, tempered in mustard oil, simmered with humble potatoes until a quiet magic unfurled in the pan. A dish born in deprivation, carrying the ghost of a violent history, somehow became my comfort, my warmth, my unassuming little source of solace.

It’s the one thing I can eat any day, in any season, and feel something loosen inside my heart. A radiant glow unfurls in my chest, like the familiar weight of someone I love resting their chin on my shoulder.
The posto paste is smooth and pale, rich with a mellow nuttiness; the mustard oil blooms sharp, golden, alive, and the spices rise in faint, teasing whispers of heat. Together, they create a flavour so singular, so unmistakably Bengali, that even now the memory of it feels like stepping across a threshold and into home. I remember once Maa even cooked a version without turmeric: she claimed she was experimenting, but I knew she had simply forgotten to add it in her morning hurry. Yet it tasted just as lovely, equally complete, and every bit as delectable—as if the dish itself knew it could survive any omission except love.

And then, when the summers came—humid, sprawling, relentless—I’d stumble home after school, skin sunburnt and sticky with dust, hair plastered to my forehead, feeling as though the heat had soaked into my bones. I’d be welcomed by a plate of rice waiting, steam curling upward. Maa would spoon aloo posto over it, the creamy paste slipping into the rice, cooling my overheated body and satiating my hunger in the same breath. We’d sit on the cool floor by the doorway, sweat trickling down our backs, sharing silence and relief between mouthfuls. In those moments, posto tasted like love, like affection, like an unforgiving world briefly made tender.

In their absence, I am reminded that food is never just sustenance.

At home, it was love served onto plates—affection that wrapped around me like a shawl, a cocoon against the cruel heat outside. Here, amid the unfamiliar rhythm of Delhi, that absence is felt most keenly, like a hollow space in the heart that only my comfort dish could fill.

Aloo posto will forever be humble, born from hardship, but to me it has always tasted like grace, like safety, like my childhood in a Bengal I did not know I would one day lose to distance. And now, in this city that feels too large, too hurried, too impatient, I find myself longing for that familiar plate, for that soft unfolding of warmth across my tongue, for that unmistakable taste of love which lingered long after the meal was gone, for the sunlit kitchen where my younger self once stood certain of her place in the world.

कश्मीरी पंडित

Art by B. Praabha (1960)

# A Forgotten Story of Rupture - Raashi Nehru

On 19 January 1990, **Hindus of Kashmir Valley were forced out of their homes after massive loot, murder and rape romp.**
After 31 years still they didn't get justice and are refugee in their own country.

# KASHMIRI PANDITS : A FORGOTTEN STORY OF RUPTURE

We often equate ‘healing’ to returning to a time and space continuum where life was peaceful, happy and ever-improving. But what does healing mean for a community that was once banished, killed, threatened, raped and assaulted, not only through empty words but statements like “Raliv, Tsaliv, Galiv” (convert, flee or die) or “Al-Safa Batte Dafa” (Drive the Pandits out)? For Kashmiri pandits unfortunately, this became an unchosen reality. Travel isn’t forbidden - but the mind forbids. It forbids going back to a home that became a site of terror - sidelined by the media, ignored by the government, disregarded by the people in power. For Kashmiri Hindus, home isn’t geography, it's a memory - a tainted memory that instills fear and insecurity.

The Kashmiri Pandit “exodus” of 1990 wasn't planned migration - it was a genocide, disguised as displacement under duress, a coercive removal under explicit threat. Some say they had an option, but really, did they? When the very foundation of your existence is threatened, your way of life questioned and conversation about your struggle becomes scarce and hushed, options are limited.

Although the Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) and Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) have varying stances - the former standing for liberation from both India and Pakistan and the latter envisaging a pro-Pakistan identity, both were equally complicit furthering armed insurgency and militancy in the valley, eventually leading to anti-hindu rhetoric. Prior to what is widely known as the ‘Exodus Day’ (19th January, 1990), various

Barbaric activities were imposed by the militants. Signboards were now green in colour (denoting affiliation with Pakistan), time was changed to Pakistan Standard Time and every Friday was now observed as a holiday for mass prayers and young muslim children protested against Hindus living in the valley. Violence in Kashmir carries names of Tika Lal Taploo; an advocate killed by assassins in broad daylight outside his own house in Srinagar, Nilakanth Ganjoo; shot and killed by unknown gunmen in Maharaj Bazaar and Girija Tickoo; raped and cut into pieces by militants. Incidents like these shook the very core of the Kashmiri Pandit community, sullying the valley’s original pride and foreclosing return.

Discussions or productions about the exodus are often reduced to “propaganda”, demeaning the struggle of the 3,00,000 pandits who fled and over 200 who were killed.

According to the 2011 census, Hindus form only 2.45% of the total population of the Kashmir valley - living across scattered colonies. While writing this piece, I acknowledge the existence of varying figures - another testament to the absence of recognition of or probe into the civilian killings (both Hindu and Muslim) in Kashmir by militants. Data remains stagnant, unupdated or inconclusive, making meaningful conversations even harder to sustain.

Any discourse about Kashmir is incomplete without mention of the Azadi movement - often understood as a call for Kashmiri freedom by the layman, and human dignity, economic equity and social justice by the Kashmiri Muslims (with regards to their suffering under the state and central government). I strongly believe that it necessitates asking uncomfortable questions— who is this azadi for? Who does it include? Acknowledging Kashmiri Muslim suffering under the state doesn’t equate to negating the Kashmiri Pandit struggle altogether. More often than not, “hum kya chahte? Azadi” is not viewed as an equal representation of Pandit agony. It's perceived as intimidation, seclusion and a demand of silence by the Kashmiri Hindu community because they should be “grateful” for rehabilitation.

The idea of going back cannot be equated to healing, for one would return as a tourist in a land that once harboured generations, memories, rituals and traditions. A place where ancestors were included in public hitlists, neighbours became enemies and culture survived in fragments, without community. A 5% reservation in higher education institutions might lead to representation but we must not stop there. What we really need is conversation and dialogue— for our voice to be heard and our struggles to be recognised.

Kashmiri Pandit children knew the word ‘refugee’ a lot sooner than any child should. Kashmiriyat survives, but in fragments - through the aroma of roganjosh, katlam, kahwah and noon-chai.

Today a Kashmiri hindu child may never walk the land of the saints, solely because the community would return as ‘tourists’ in a land they once called ‘home’.

Today the quaint streets of Habba Kadal may never know the fraternity of Kashmiri Pandits, its culturally rich atmosphere of “Shahar-e-khaas”.

Today when one speaks of the 24 Hindus lost in the Nadimarg Massacre, few will know what really happened.

Today when a Kashmiri pandit is asked where they're from, they’ll struggle to answer. For home has survived, but in memories.

Tradition is remembered, but in rituals without a place.

Today I’m told to not speak of the exodus because it will cause “unnecessary communal friction”. But can we really be content with manufactured peace and cracks in our collective moral conscience?

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# ART

# CORNER

_Credits:Adviteeya Rajvansh

FRAGMENTS OF HOME, CARRIED ACROSS BORDERS, NEVER WHOLE AGAIN.


**FEASTING ON CULTURE, WHILE ITS SOUL BLEEDS UNSEEN.**

*For everything alive needs a place to rest it's head*

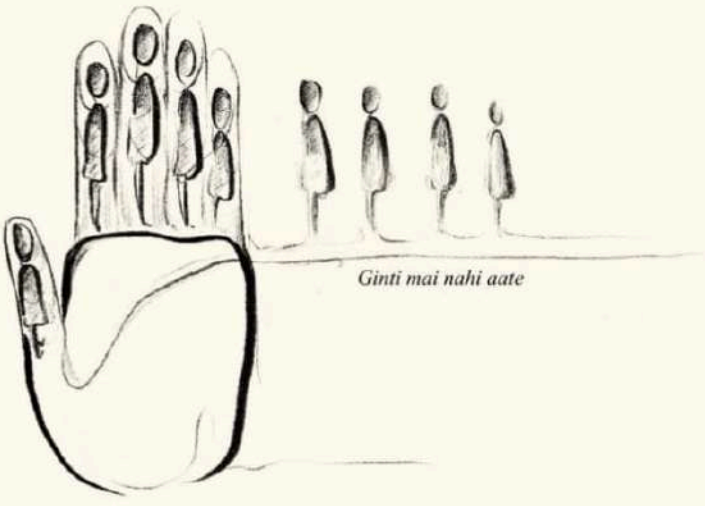
*Everything*

*and everyone*

*Moves*

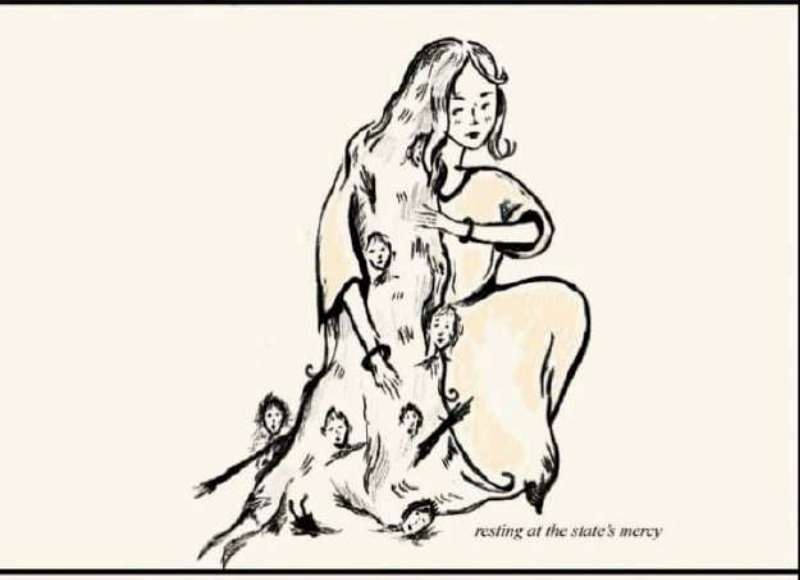
*But with every line something fluid becomes fixed*

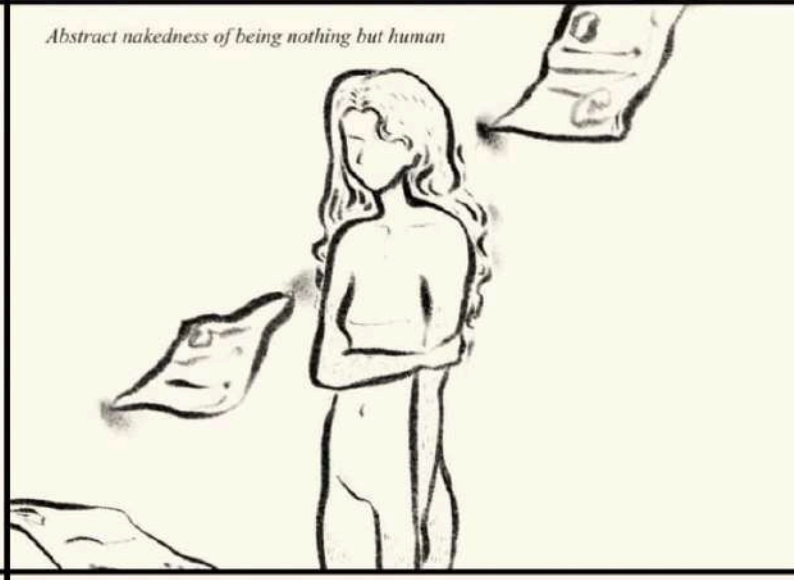
*in the nation's weave, who holds the needles and who becomes the thread ?*



*Ginti mai nahi aate*







*An illustrative conception of* ***Citizenship and Belonging***
*by Aaynisha Meghwal and Iraa Gupta*

Work by - Aaynisha Meghwal and Iraa Gupta, 2nd Year, Sociology Department Lady Shri Ram College

**About Us**

We are 2nd Year Sociology Honours students from Lady Shri Ram College for Women. We have approached these illustrations as a way of thinking and creating. Exploring ideas through art feels deeply humane to us, allowing abstract concepts to be felt and analysed.

**About Our Work**

Our work, "On Statelessness" explores the unsettling political reality that the loss of national rights is identical with the loss of human rights, as explored by Hannah Arendt in Origins of Totalitarianism. that the former inevitably entailed the latter. For when talking about ideas of belonging, what is at stake is life itself. Statelessness is not rare or accidental. It is a feature of a global political order built around exclusionary nation-states. The idea of belonging itself carries an implicit assumption of exclusion. States justify this exclusion through claims of limited resources, yet these scarcities housing, land, welfare are often politically constructed. It is therefore not truly a problem of space or resources.

The criminalisation of mobility turns ordinary strategies of survival into political crimes. Ideas of people as "aliens" or "outsiders" do not arise naturally, they are political constructions, for to move is to be human. Statelessness reveals the uncomfortable truth that humanity alone is insufficient, one needs a world, a community, a place, and a legal order in which to be human.

Stateless people become "nothing but human," yet have nowhere to enact or express that humanness.

# STUDENT ACHIEVMENTS

# DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

{ 10TH YEAR OF NATIONAL DEBATE } HELD AT DU'S HINDU COLLEGE

# LSR students win KK Birla debate

Gargi Shukla
gargi.shukla@hindustantimes.com

LSR college students accept their award. SANCHIT KHANNA/HT

**NEW DELHI:** Twenty-five teams from colleges across Delhi participated in the 10th KK Birla National Conventional Hindi Debate at Delhi University's Hindu College on Wednesday afternoon, speaking for and against the motion "The Indian Constitution is merely a weapon

the right to privacy, the JP mov ment, the basic structure do trine and episodes of press ce sorship. Students also flagge current issues such as electo bonds, the Manipur crisis an arrests under the Unlawf Activities (Prevention) Act.

The first prize was awarded Arya Dixit and Krishna Patha of Lady Shri Ram College f Women, who received ₹6,00

the two member teams

# 39वें नॉर्थ-सेंट्रल ज़ोन यूथ फेस्टिवल में लिटरेरी कैटेगरी में डीयू ने पाया पहला स्थान

वैभव न्यूज़ ■ नई दिल्ली

39वें नॉर्थ-सेंट्रल ज़ोन यूथ फेस्टिवल 2025-26 में दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय (डीयू) ने शानदार प्रदर्शन किया है। 3 से 7 फरवरी 2026 तक हरियाणा के मुलाना स्थित महर्षि मार्कंडेश्वर डीम्ड टूबी यूनिवर्सिटी में आयोजित इस यूथ


**Krishna Pathak, Arya Dixit (2nd Year)**

1. National Champion, AIU Nationals, represented University of Delhi amongst 80 universities across India at Sathyabama Institute of Technology, Chennai
2. Winner, Shantinarayan Memorial National Trilingual Debate ,Hansraj College
3. Winner, KK Birla Memorial National Debate, Hindu College
4. Winner, Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati Memorial National Bilingual Debate, PGDAV College

**Devanshi Kumar, (3rd Year)**

Selected as LAMP Fellow 2026-27, 1.43% of the total applications make it. 50/3500 applications.

**Aashima Khan(4th Year), Sakshi Kumari(4th year), Malika(4th year)**

- Paper presentation at National Seminar sponsored by ICSSR at Bharati College, Delhi University

**Aashima Khan and Megha Sharma (4th Year)**

- Paper presentation at National Young Scholar's Conclave, Gandhi Darshan, New Delhi.

AMID IRAN-ISRAEL WAR

‘A double blow’: Imports of dry fruits hit, traders in Khari Baoli tackle challenges

ANUSHKA SRIVASTAVA & SHREYASHI GUPTA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

THE TRADERS in Khari Baoli in Old Delhi, one of India’s oldest markets, stare at uncertain times. The imports of dry fruits from Iran have been hit amid escalating geopolitical conflict in West Asia. This latest blow comes at a time merchants are navigating a setback triggered by the closure of the Attari-Wagah border following tensions between India and Pakistan after the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack.

The market was already suffering losses due to closure of the Attari-Wagah border after the Pahalgam terror attack.

After a 10-year hiatus, Purana Qila’s popular boat ride makes a comeback

ANUSHKA SRIVASTAVA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 30

THE MOAT has been cleaned, boats have arrived, and a ticketing counter has been set up. Almost 10 years after it was suspended, the popular boat ride on the Purana Qila lake finally made a comeback and was opened for visitors on a trial basis after the inauguration on Monday.

A 20-25 minute ride costs between Rs 125 and Rs 150 per person. The ride starts from the Bara Darwaza side of the lake, and services are available between 9 am and 6 pm. Both two-seater and four-seater paddle boats are available.

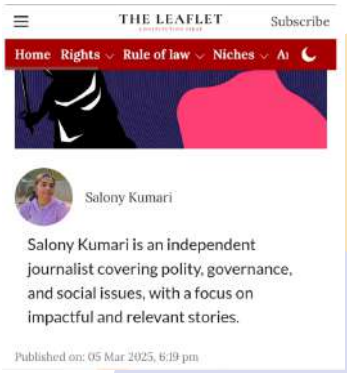
Boating resumed on a trial basis at the Purana Qila lake, Monday.

**Anushka Srivastava (4th Year)**

- Interned with The Indian Express in the City Vertical in 2025 and received 3 joint bylines and 1 solo byline in print.
- Only international fellow from a non-ASEAN country receiving a fully funded with stipend Fellowship from NUS. in the Asian Undergraduate Symposium 2025, held at National University of Singapore.

**Zakiya Rashid (3rd Year)**
Participated in National Art Exhibition, completed diploma in Fine Arts, Artwork got selected for chayos outlet

**Payal Yadav, (4th Year)**
Secured first prize in National level Essay Writing Competition by Association of Democratic Reforms.




**Salony Kumari, (3rd Year)**
Authored article for The Leaflet on marital rape laws

# Letter to home

Kanak Yadav

*My daughter*
*When you came up to me at five years old*
*and told me you wanted to be just like me when you grew up*
*Parents are usually filled with joy*
*But me*
*My heart dropped to the floor because I wasn't my daughter*
*I couldn't bear to tell you at five years old I wasn't you*
*Are too young and too spoiled to understand*
*My daughter I pray to god everyday you don't understand what it's like to be me*
*How it feels to work endless hours day in and day out*
*and still have time to spend endless nights trying to know a language*
*that doesn't even know how to pronounce you correctly*
*That tells you to go back to a country many die to escape from*
*My daughter I did not bring you here to be anything like me*
*You see the reason I push you to be a lawyer or a doctor isn't because of the money*
*it was never about the money*
*It is because we live in a system that expects nothing but less from you*
*so in this household I expect everything but less from you*
*My daughter*
*You are called first generation for a reason*
*It is because the American dream was never meant for me*
*It was always, always meant for you*
*So my daughter take my culture and our native tongue*
*and speak, learn, jump, fail, fall, speak, learn, jump, fail, fall, and get back up, my daughter*
*The best of me lives in you*
*So speak*
*-Muna Abdulahi*

This poem of a displaced person describes what millions of people feel today, who are described by many fancy terms like migrants, refugees, fugitives, exile, asylum seekers etc. The experience described in the letter reflects the fragile nature of citizenship in the modern nation-state. Before I jump into the article, let me ask a simple question first: What is citizenship? — "Relationship between an individual and a state to which the individual owes allegiance and in turn is entitled to its protection" as per Britannica dictionary but here comes the irony despite this clear definition, citizenship is far from neutral or universally accessible status

This very definition of citizenship creates a boundary that determines who is included in a political community and who remains excluded. Political theorist Hannah Arendt famously described citizenship as the “rights to have rights” pointing towards the possession of fundamental rights deeply influenced by state recognition. For individuals who are displaced, stateless or denied legal membership, this recognition disappears, leaving them outside the state framework that offers political and legal protection. So asking this question becomes important: How can the very State that claims to protect human rights also render certain individuals invisible within the political order?

Nationalism is a term that most of us would have heard since our 6th grade history books, to put simply, nationalism is understood to mean the feeling of love and pride toward one’s own country. This very nationalism plays a significant role in shaping the boundaries of the term citizenship. According to Benedict Anderson in Imagined Communities, nations are “imagined communities” formed through histories, cultural narratives and collective identities. Anderson claims that nations are formed in the mind rather than the physical definition of nations the world is heading towards. However, if nations are ultimately imagined communities, who has the authority to imagine themselves as part of the nation and who is denied that claim? And who gives this authority? To answer the question, the power to give this authority lies with the state, which means that while some imaginations of national identity are accepted, others are neglected or excluded.

So gradually a question emerges: What happens to the people who are denied belonging? Well, for the Rohingya community, a muslim minority from Myanmar it is not just a theoretical question but a lived reality. Under the 1982 Myanmar Citizenship Law, the government of Myanmar considered them “illegal immigrants” rather than citizens, due to this very reason large scale violence and military operations had taken place that forced them to flee and escape to Bangladesh and India. So, their fundamental rights are non-existent as there is no state that is accountable for their fundamental rights. On paper, they have no nationality at all, this essentially means that no country recognizes them as their citizen. Their very existence is questioned. They are forced to leave the place they called their own and find a haven in another place where they might or might not get the acceptance and terms like refugees or migrants are put upon them. In short, they are forced to ask themselves “Who they are and Where do they belong?”

Citizenship is often cited as something that gives people their rights, protection and a place to belong. However, as this article shows, it can also create boundaries that exclude certain groups of people. On one hand nationalism helps in building a community who has shared identity but on the other hand it also decides who gets to be a part of that community and who is treated as an outsider. The experiences of refugees and migrants display how difficult life can become when people are denied citizenship or forced to leave their homes.

The poem in the beginning of the article reminds us that behind these political ideas are real people whose lives are deeply affected by borders and documents. In a world where migration and displacements are increasing, it is more important to think about more inclusive ways of belonging so that everyone can live with dignity and recognition. This inclusiveness means looking beyond legal documents, it involves making communities that provide healthcare, education and safety etc. as right for all not as something limited to “citizens.” The very definition of belonging can be redefined by shifting focus from rigid borders and birth place to shared values and contributions.

If the protections of humanity are contingent on the recognition of a state, then universality is not a global reality—it is a geographic privilege.

# The Long Way Home:

## Identity, Belonging & Becoming

**Dear Reader**, imagine yourself standing at the intersection of worlds- close your eyes, and ask yourself:
What do I identify myself as?
Let your mind brim with answers. Identity was never meant to be a single note; it is a symphony. In a world both divided by difference and united by shared experiences, identity waits at a crossroads- often boxed, simplified, and disciplined, but in truth, layered, fluid, and ever-evolving.
How does one come to terms with identity when caught between two worlds? -one that we take on and one that can never be taken from us.

Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake delves into the complexities of identity through the story of Gogol Ganguli. As the child of Bengali immigrants in America, Gogol finds himself torn between his family's Indian traditions and the American culture he grew up in. The name "Gogol," chosen for reasons rooted in family history, increasingly feels out of place in his American surroundings. Seeking distance from what he perceives as an embarrassing past, he adopts the name Nikhil and reinvents himself as "Nick," blending seamlessly into New York's social milieu.
After his father Ashok's sudden death, Gogol is forced into reckoning. The weight of his earlier rejection of family, history, and meaning returns with force. He becomes more grounded and responsible, returning to the cultural practices he once resisted. The novel suggests that the most profound journeys lead us home. Yet Lahiri complicates this idea with a question: what, after all, is home?

*Credits:Pinterest*

Credits:Pinterest

Initially, identity appears dichotomous, an inevitable past pulling against an aspirational present. The plot further tightens when Gogol meets Moushumi Majumdar under parental influence, a Bengali who embodies hybridity, having lived in India, London, New York, and Paris.

Their eventual marriage in traditional grandeur seems to promise reconciliation between the past and the present. Yet Moushumi soon feels suffocated by the expectations placed on her as a Bengali wife. Her affair and the eventual dissolution of the marriage underscore a crucial insight: identity and home cannot be reduced to shared culture or tradition alone. So what if they are rooted in a sense of belonging?

Gogol's sister Sonia offers this quiet counterpoint. Her relationship with Ben, an American who loves her deeply, suggests that intimacy and belonging need not follow prescribed cultural scripts. Identity, once again, refuses a singular definition.

The symbolism of Gogol's name lies at the heart of the novel. Named after the Russian author Nikolai Gogol, the name is bound to his father's near-fatal train accident, during which *The Overcoat* played a role in saving Ashok's life. For Ashok, "Gogol" becomes synonymous with survival and blessing. Only later does Gogol come to understand that his name, though foreign in origin, carries profound personal meaning, shaped not by geography but by memory, relationship, and love. As Malcolm Gladwell observes, who we are cannot be separated from where we come from, but "where we come from" need not always be a place. Often, it is an experience.

Identity as layered and evolving resonates with Stuart Hall's seminal essay, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" in which he describes identity not as a fixed essence, but as a process, a "production" that is never truly complete. Identity is as much about becoming as it is about being. It is shaped by history, power, culture, time, and place.

Hall's ideas come alive when we look at the Caribbean. Identity was hammered out through slavery, migration, displacement, and the journeys that nobody chose.

African roots run deep in the music, language, and soul of the Caribbean, but colonial power tried to pin people down and put them in boxes, simply deeming them as 'African blacks'. Edward Said argued that those in power decide who belongs and who is pushed to the margins. That's why identity is never smooth or simple. It's full of breaks, losses, and new beginnings like Gogol, who can never be just Indian or just American. Our identities are patchworks, stitched together from past and present, always a bit unfinished.

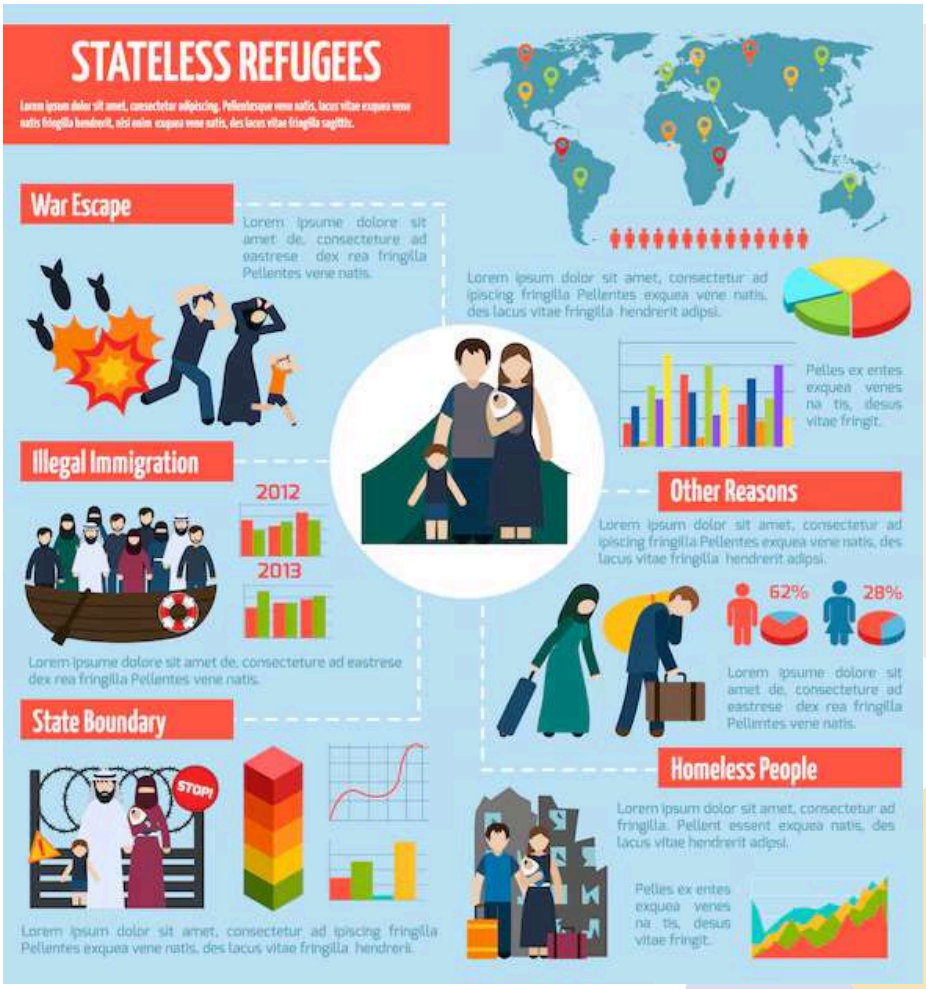
Salman Rushdie puts it beautifully. Living far from home means carrying pieces of it with you, building 'imaginary homelands' out of your memories. He describes these memories as shards of a broken mirror, never complete, but each piece shining with its own truth. In their cracks and gaps, we might discover even more depth and meaning than in any perfect picture.

Identity isn't just about how we see ourselves, but also about how others see and label us. It's shaped in conversation with the world around us. Gogol's struggle, for example, isn't just his own- it's influenced by the expectations and judgments of those around him.

*Credits:Pinterest*

Amartya Sen reminds us not to box people into single categories. In Identity and Violence, he shows how everyone moves between different roles- at work, in culture, in politics, and within families. When society forces people into one identity, it leads to division and tension. Today, as nationalism rises, those with blended backgrounds can feel out of place simply because they don't fit neatly into one group.

In contemporary society, this negotiation of identity has increasingly shifted to digital spaces. Online platforms often reward easily categorisable selves. However, hybrid, diasporic, or dissenting identities are pressured into performance. Complexity is punished and forced to simplify itself to remain visible. This leads to identity being a curated product and not an original expression.




In the age of digital capitalism, the self has also become a commodity. Human emotions, experiences, and stories are endlessly mined. Our preferences, habits, political leanings, and relationships generate valuable data for corporations, transforming identity into an economic resource. (Much like the data harvesting of personal information by Artificial Intelligence for marketing purposes). Storytelling- a beautiful and celebrated art- has become a spectacle to produce rather than authentic self-expression, with OTT platforms and influencer cultures commodifying identity for consumption purposes. Shoshana Zuboff argues that identities are actively shaped by digital algorithms, which are designed for profit. She calls this 'surveillance capitalism'.

Therefore, dear reader, in a world saturated with noise, where identities are boxed, mined, and manipulated, it becomes both difficult and necessary to recognise and protect the multiplicity of the self. To allow identity the freedom to evolve, while remaining conscious of the forces that seek to contain it, is an arduous but essential journey. After all, the greatest journeys are those that lead us home.

***Priyamvada Singh***

THE NATION

# The bedroom

**By Priyamvada Sharma**

## INTRODUCTION

The most aggressively policed borders today are not at airports or checkpoints; they are inside our homes and our societies. Borders are no longer just territorial, they exist in the spaces we call our own. Marriage as an institution has never been private; it has always been scrutinised and publicised for all of society to shame and deplore upon. Therefore, the concept of 'live-in relationships' grew out of an innate desire to be free of the shackles of marriage for some, and a hope for others to exist as they are. Yet the rise of this cultural phenomenon has once again unearthed the deeply scarred insecurities of the society that calls itself civilised; one that seeks to police the very foundation of innate human desires. The live-in relationship is threatening because it produces a home that cannot be easily governed.

## HOME AS A GOVERNABLE UNIT

The 'home' has never been apolitical – now, it's being actively reengineered. Historically regulated by family, marriage, inheritance laws and gender roles, it has served as the smallest administrative unit that the society and state wants control over. To control the home is to control the 'culture' itself – a home that does not produce the established social order is treated as a security risk. And it is within this context that marriage is considered a legible home, while live-in relationships are considered illegible homes. Legibility matters because it seeks to answer the questions of 'who lives where?', 'who belongs?', 'who inherits?' and 'who can be tracked, disciplined, and "rescued"?'. When live-in relationships challenge the very core of these arguments, they go beyond simple moral policing to asserting the proven order.

## WHY LIVE-IN RELATIONSHIPS TRIGGER PANIC

The heart of the problem lies in the reframing of live-in relationships as a threat to Indian culture and society; when in reality, it destabilizes the carefully curated systems of caste endogamy, gendered surveillance and parental control as proxy governance. It forces us to acknowledge that belonging is decided beyond the law; that citizenship does not automatically guarantee social legitimacy, and that nationalism operates through informal enforcement. A socially undesirable relationship becomes the site of societal exclusion, and threatens the very existence of what it means to have a place to call home – the anxiety is not sexual, it's structural. The modern state functions by categorising – marriage within this context converts intimacy into administrative ease. A married couple can be located, named, documented, and disciplined. A live-in couple resists this translation. It does not simply bypass the family; it renders it politically redundant.

## 'SAFETY' AS THE TECHNOLOGY OF CONTROL

However, it is the women's bodies that become the site where domestic borders are enforced. Under the guise of 'safety', landlords 'police' women, families 'rescue' daughters, and police checks normalise surveillance of intimacy. These gendered impacts of moral policing are not protection – its preventive containment. Men only pass through the system; it is always the women that are forced to absorb the shocks of safety. A home, therefore, becomes a checkpoint, a probation space and a conditional shelter.

## CONSENT WITHOUT WITNESSES

The politics of consent also come into play here. Traditional, state-sanctioned institutions like marriage have rituals, customs, documents and witnesses. It allows the society to scrutinise, police and comment under a specified framework. Live-ins challenge this very ideal – their premise is based on mutual recognition, private consent and emotional contracts – everything that the state cannot control, and which terrifies them. Consent without verification, witnesses and discipline becomes dangerous – the state does not trust the intimacy which it cannot audit. This leads us to a very unexplored yet extremely precarious position: by whose standard is consent defined – and how far are we willing to let society and the state define it for us?

## DOMESTIC BORDERS AND DEPUTISED POLICING

Over time, the state has slowly relinquished the need to surveil live-ins directly; it's now the landlords, the RWAs, the parents and the internet that does the job for them. This reveals how the state has successfully outsourced surveillance, rendering direct intervention unnecessary – when neighbours police a couple's belongings, the state doesn't need to knock. What is framed as anxiety about morality is, in fact, anxiety about losing the ability to decide who belongs where, and under what terms. Here, Ghar and Baire no longer stand apart; they seep into homes through everyday governance.

## CONCLUSION

If the home is no longer private, if belonging is conditional and if intimacy requires approval, then what remains of freedom? When the nation enters the bedroom, it is no longer guarding borders. It is producing subjects. A home that must be authorised is not a home – it is a holding cell.

# THE INDIAN DIASPORA AND (SELF) ORIENTALISATION

Naina Bagchi

Diaspora commonly ‘speak for’ their countries of origin. This is unintentional, but a function of the visibility granted by proximity to the West. Whether conscious or unconscious, willing or unwilling, diaspora turn into de-facto spokespeople. Diasporic constructions of the homeland are often reductive, stereotypical and idyllic.

Overwhelmingly, it is the most privileged groups of a deeply stratified, hierarchical society that make it through strictly-gatekept visa regimes. In the first world, embroiled as it is in the politics of race, members of the Indian diaspora now confront a new, *racialised* identity, and one largely absent back home in India. Once the Indian diaspora begins defining itself in relation to the white, Western world, it often adopts an oriental gaze to define its self-identity, and constructs an illusory ‘Indian-ness’ to go by. Diaspora adopt seemingly-benevolent facets of the oriental gaze—those that mystify instead of degrade—and adorn them as matters of both factuality and pride.

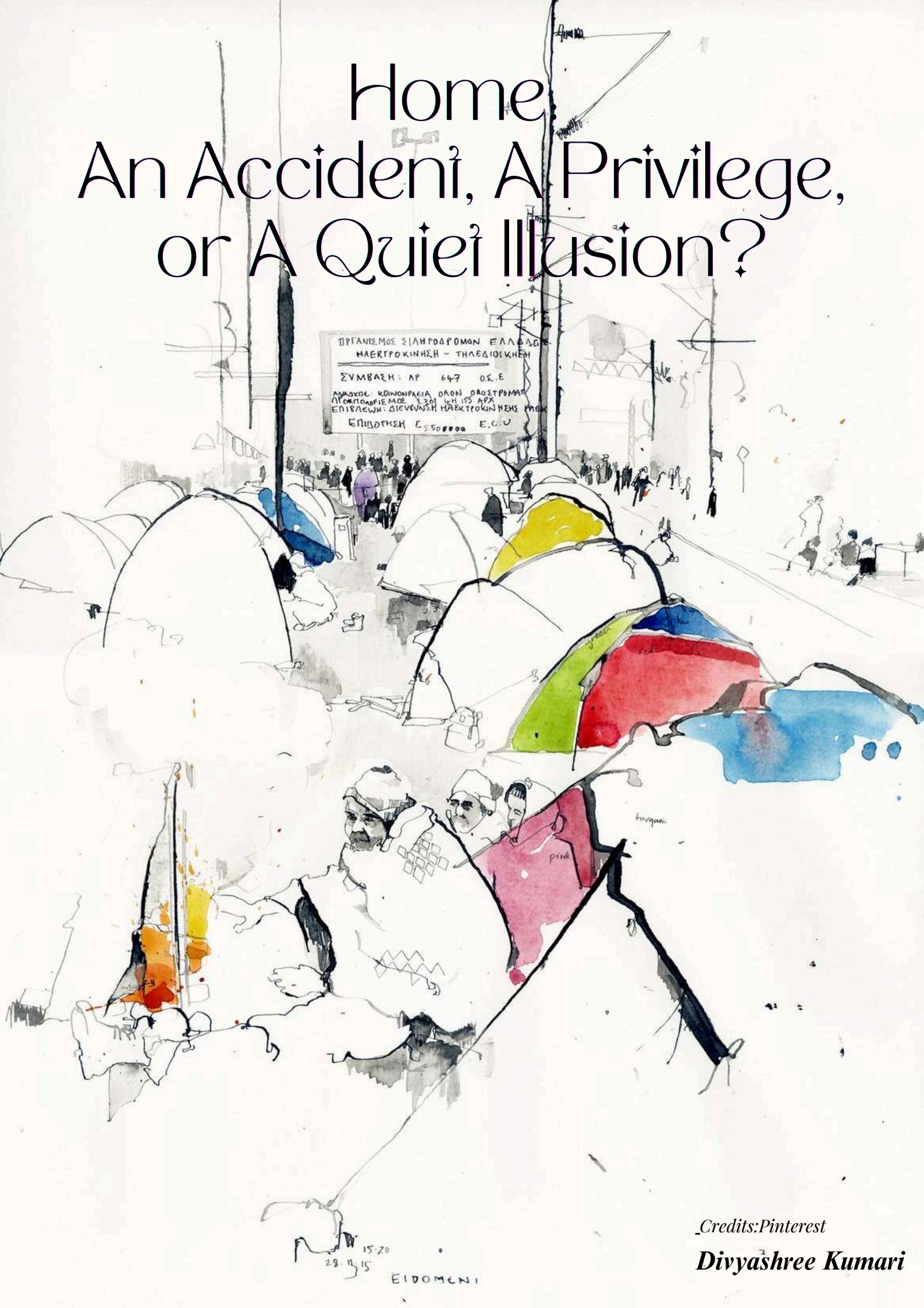
This adoption fits perfectly, and conveniently, into ethnonationalist narratives back home. Hindu ethnonationalism (Hindutva) relies on constructions of a true, unambiguous ‘Indian’ identity, and cultural markers that mystify Hinduism. Rituals, traditions, and aesthetics, shrouded under the veil of ‘the sacred’, are almost beyond questioning. Not coincidentally, the Indian diaspora displays overwhelming support and mobilisation for Hindutva back home. Organisations like the Hindu American Foundation have garnered a sizable support base amongst Hindu diaspora students, academics, and professionals; their advocacy efforts include, in 2021, opposing the inclusion of caste as a protected category by a California university’s anti-discrimination policy.

My hypothesis is that the frequent confluence of diaspora identity assertion and diaspora support for Hindutva isn’t a coincidence. Both rest on self-orientalisation for the White, Western gaze, to beget acceptance, backing, and validation—monetary, institutional, or otherwise—for an identity defined solely in relation to the West.

To anyone from a third-world ‘homeland’, diasporic lenses, when turned towards us, often ring hollow. There is little mysticism, or deification, possible of the mundane as ‘exotic’, when one is actually living amongst the signs and objects being deified; the subjects of diaspora mysticism. As a child, I often wondered why I felt disconnected from narratives of ‘India’ which would recur in ‘Indian’ literature. It was only later that I realised that this construction of ‘Indian-ness’ was deceptive in its one-dimensional nature. Even still, my background and upbringing allows me to see myself in conceptions of ‘India’ more than those on the borders and seams of the country. My own disconnection is therefore emblematic of an urgent, pressing problem with diaspora literature, writ large.

The antidote to what has been, in my opinion, a disproportionate veneration of narrow (and often, covertly ethnonationalist) diaspora narratives is to uplift, publicise and engage with Indian narratives from the homeland, particularly ones that challenge and question the notion of a true, prediscursive ‘Indian-ness’. This self-orientalisation can be remedied by paying attention to literature—stories, art, words—coming from the seams of India, that is open and unflinching, inviting readers into an ‘India’ that isn’t narrow, ‘sacred’, or untouchable, but bright and welcoming precisely in its variegated colours.

# Home: An Accident, A Privilege, or A Quiet Illusion?

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***Divyashree Kumari***

Ever wondered what exactly “home” is?

For some, it is their mother’s meal waiting under a familiar roof, the smell reaching you before you even enter the room. For some, it is her gentle caress that absorbs the harshness of the outside world. For others, it is a quiet corner where one can lie on a cushion and imagine a future— a career, a city, perhaps even a would-be life partner without fear or inhibition. Sometimes it is your father filling out an examination form for you, correcting your mistakes while updating you about the day’s headlines. Sometimes it is siblings fighting over the last biscuit in an ornate tin, until one woman inevitably intervenes as the peacemaker.

In these small, almost forgettable rituals, home feels simple. Stable. Given.

It shapes how we see ourselves. It builds a certain confidence, the kind that tells you it is safe to dream. It gives you the desire to achieve, not merely for ambition’s sake, but to return one day and say, “Look, I made something of what you gave me.” Achievements feel heavier, more real, when there is somewhere to return to. Belonging makes success meaningful.

But I have started to feel that the importance of home is realised most sharply when we imagine its absence.

We often assume that having a home is a right. But is it truly a right, or is it an accident?

We do not choose where we are born. Urban or rural. Prosperous or precarious. Into stability or uncertainty. These decisions are made before we exist.

And yet this single, arbitrary fact quietly determines the quality of education available to us, the healthcare we receive, the networks we inherit, and the dignity we assume as natural.

To exercise rights, one must first exist. But to exist meaningfully, one must belong.

And what if belonging itself is conditional?

I began thinking about this while reading about China’s hukou system, a household registration structure that categorises citizens at birth as rural or urban. This classification is not symbolic; it determines access to public goods. Urban registration brings education, healthcare, and employment benefits with relative ease. Rural registration often comes with structural limitations.

Migration does not necessarily free one from this. A rural citizen may move to a city for work, live there for decades, build a family, yet remain excluded from its welfare systems. Public goods must be purchased privately, often at costs that are impossible to bear. Movement, then, is not aspiration. It is compulsion. Survival disguised as mobility.

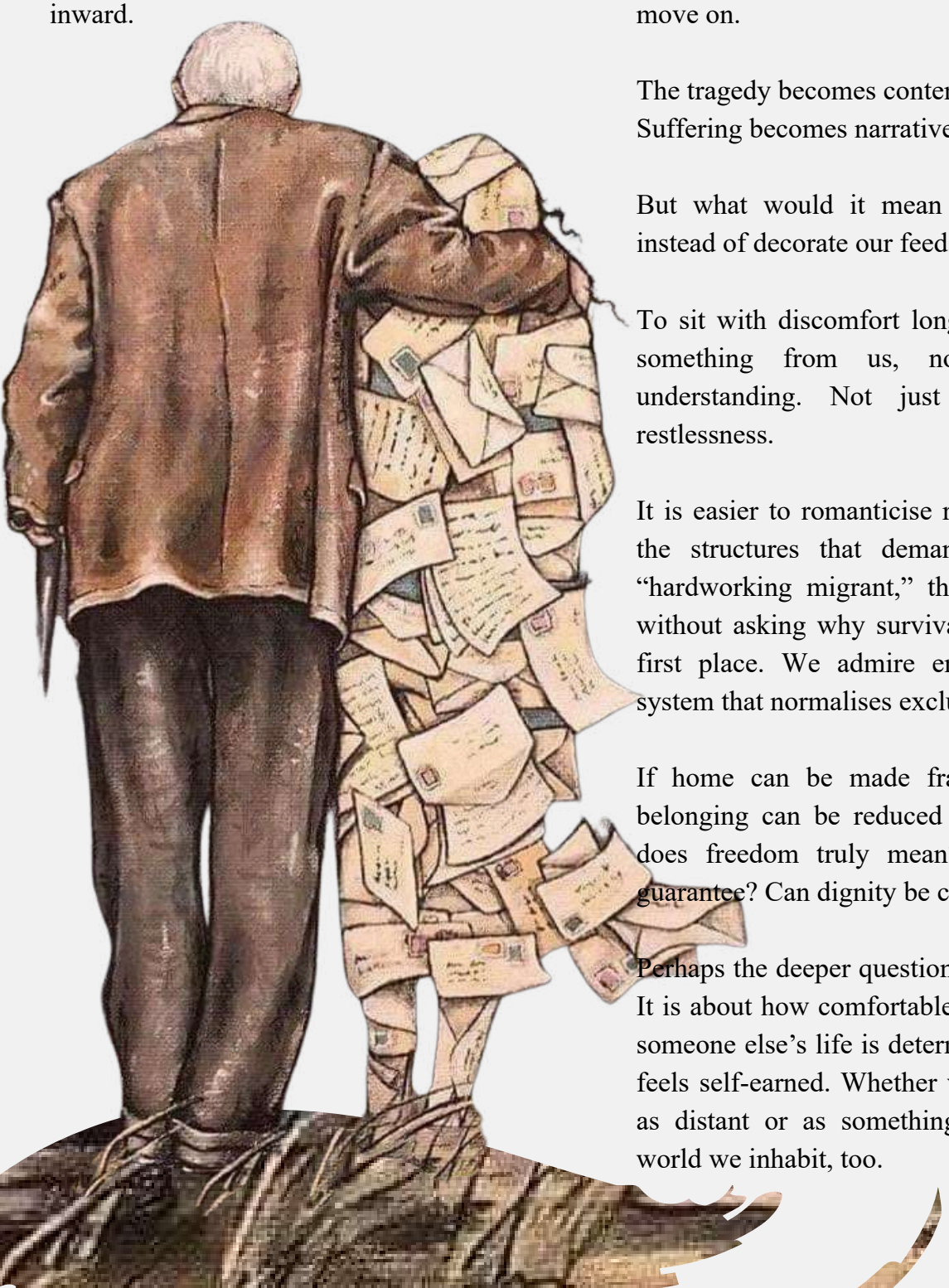
The 2003 case of Sun Zhigang; a recent graduate who had relocated to Guangzhou, was one that deeply unsettled me. Arrested for not carrying identification, he was severely mistreated and later died in detention. His death did not just expose a brutal system; it revealed how fragile belonging becomes when legality overrides humanity.

I was troubled not only by the policy, but by the emotional terrain it produces.

Imagine being regarded as temporary even after building a life somewhere.
Imagine falling in love across rural-urban lines and realising that even intimacy is shaped by bureaucratic categories.
Imagine knowing that no matter how hard you work,your birthplace follows you like an invisible stamp.

Home, then, is no longer warmth.
It is classification.
Documentation.
Permission.

And this is where my discomfort turns inward.



**I have ne**ver had to prove that I belong where I live. I never had to calculate whether my identity card would determine my dignity. I did not earn this stability; I inherited it. That realisation unsettles me. It makes "home" feel less like a natural entitlement and more like a quiet privilege.

Yet what unsettles me even more is how we, as spectators, consume such stories.
We read about displacement. We scroll past images of migrant workers walking highways. We share posts about injustice. Grief today is often aestheticised filtered into timelines, captioned with poetic outrage, circulated for momentary empathy. We feel a brief surge of sadness, perhaps even anger. And then we move on.

The tragedy becomes content.
Suffering becomes narrative.

But what would it mean to let grief interrupt us instead of decorate our feeds?

To sit with discomfort long enough that it demands something from us, not just sympathy, but understanding. Not just awareness, but moral restlessness.

It is easier to romanticise resilience than to question the structures that demand it. We celebrate the "hardworking migrant," the "self-made individual," without asking why survival had to be heroic in the first place. We admire endurance, but ignore the system that normalises exclusion.

If home can be made fragile within a nation. If belonging can be reduced to paperwork, then what does freedom truly mean? What does citizenship guarantee? Can dignity be conditional?

Perhaps the deeper question is not about China alone. It is about how comfortable we are with the idea that someone else's life is determined by birth, while ours feels self-earned. Whether we see structural injustice as distant or as something that quietly shapes the world we inhabit, too.

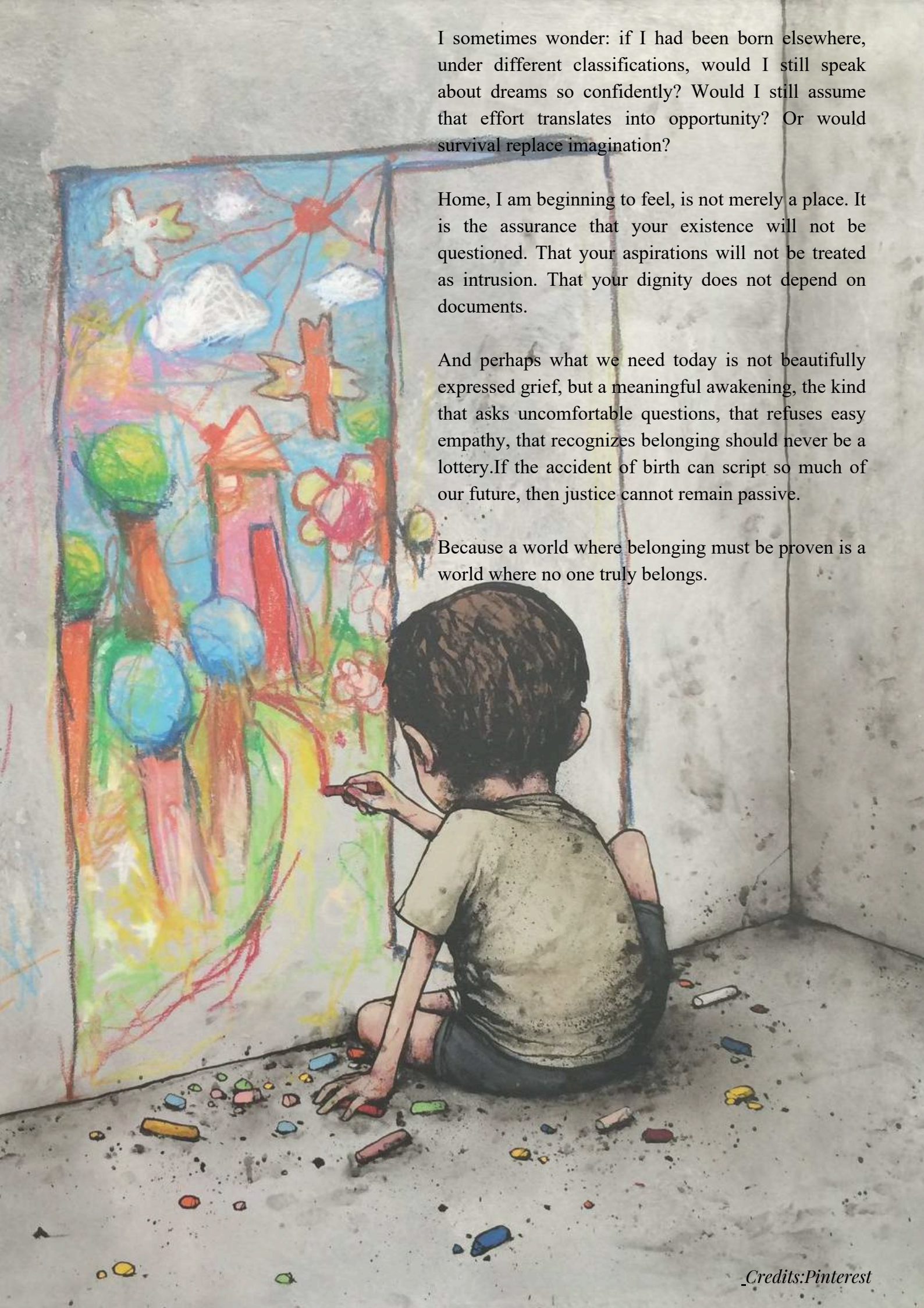
*Credits:Pinterest*

I sometimes wonder: if I had been born elsewhere, under different classifications, would I still speak about dreams so confidently? Would I still assume that effort translates into opportunity? Or would survival replace imagination?

Home, I am beginning to feel, is not merely a place. It is the assurance that your existence will not be questioned. That your aspirations will not be treated as intrusion. That your dignity does not depend on documents.

And perhaps what we need today is not beautifully expressed grief, but a meaningful awakening, the kind that asks uncomfortable questions, that refuses easy empathy, that recognizes belonging should never be a lottery.If the accident of birth can script so much of our future, then justice cannot remain passive.

Because a world where belonging must be proven is a world where no one truly belongs.



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# Pitched tents

## A Form of Permanence in Mortal Tenure



*Srijita and Chandrani*

**Home: Channelised completeness amidst the notion of comfort.**

**People say home is where the heart is, but sometimes the gravity of such heartily closeness fails because the establishment of your voice is not recognised and to prompt changes without the fear of the roof slipping away. With uncertainties reigning, overshadowing one's identity it is difficult to contain their peace of mind. The agony that carries upon being called an outlaw in the land where their foundations breathe is unbearable. When triggered by an inferiority complex, even the constitutional safeguard seems to be an illusion although its umbrella is gigantic, but it appears torn . The plethora of heritage symbols, melodies which till yesterday they claimed as their own suddenly undergoes decomposition– a national failure. Distinct cultures become victims of inescapable uniformity, amongst all the ideas of "Ghor" (home) erodes.**

**Directing our argument towards contemporary affairs, it is clearly visible that the belongingness of a person has taken the form of contestation in public. Belongingness refrains to be a private, inner reflection of an individual, its thorns have now spread into the political arena. The dichotomy presents itself with a question — is it symbolic of a mass murderer or serves as a conservative technique of propaganda? The question 'Who is a citizen?' and 'Who is an outsider?' is a burning topic blurring lines between secularism and reflects upon communal angles.**

**Religion is being used vehemently as a weapon to strip people off, snatch their familiar land on which they walked, bombing their homes and crushing them down . This kind of contamination is acknowledged all around the world, one instance of which is 78 years old Partition of India where the Mountbatten Plan was successfully executed but the great divide brought into memory horrors and showcased extreme violence, hatred burnt people with slight differences ultimately giving rise to forced uniformity and suppressing discrete customs and heritage.**

**Indeed, the debate on citizenship calls for justification under the law of the land with proper documentation. India is dealing with such a crisis where the masses are required to divulge identity papers and get verified under the Special Intensive Revision exercise which is applied to smoothen the 'legacy data' issue and identification of the original voters of India and is required to be presented to claim citizenship. But this can be undertaken without instilling violence and loathe against the migrants and refugees. The exodus must be secured with protection instead of unwarranted retaliation assisted with hate.**

**Home becomes a distant memory — the place which has been a witness to all the untold struggles, stories and smiles, followed by the refusal to submit to a foreign culture becomes the cause of innumerable deaths, which they claim as death in the name of nationalism. The retrospective memory of this was during the partition of India,where hundreds of people defied to identify with the foreign culture, in this case Pakistan.**

**Yet many attempt to adjust while compromising on collective comfort as they get pushed deep into the slaughterhouse where the eyes of the government prey upon the newly found victims. The successors of these immigrants experience diasporic hybridity — the complex, fluid identities formed when individuals or communities are uprooted from their homeland and navigate life in a new, often inhospitable, host society. They straddle the boundaries of different cultures , navigating the culture of the new country while tracing the old standards of their living , the good continuance of relationship with the land from which they were forced out can still happen by either physically visiting the country or based on an imaginary knowledge that they cannot return. Diasporic groups also acknowledge that they may never be accepted by the new nation and hold onto the remaining memories of their old land.**

**Hence the immigrants, refugees and the displaced people claim that life behind the dusty tent cloth is a life with no stain. However, in the end, it boils down to the perpetual struggle of trying to fit in a land so unknown and the inevitable anger against the country which snatched everything that belonged to the displaced.**

**The question that lingers in the contemporary world filled with repeated attempts to enforce a sense of belonging on both citizens of a country and its immigrants is whether that is a new highlight to establish uniformity and break the shackles of revered culture and additionally pollute the concept of home: something to live and to die for.**
**All 'they' ask of the world is 'এই অন্ধকারে পিঠ যখন দেওয়ালে ঠেকেছে, তখন তো একটা দেওয়ালেরও দরকার, তাই না ?' (When in this darkness my back is pushed against a wall, the necessity of its presence for my back to be pushed against comes to life.)**

# THE LOUDEST NATIONALISTS I KNOW HAVE NEVER STOOD IN A QUEUE HERE

*Ishita Nayak*

The loudest nationalists I have ever known have never stood in a queue here.
They have never stood outside a government office at eight in the morning, clutching a file thick with photocopies that may or may not be accepted. They have never had to fight with a clerk over a spelling mistake that determines the legitimacy of their existence to the state. They have never had to learn the dance of waiting—how to stand, how to beg, whom to pay off, and when to leave. Their nationalism is always easy, always packaged in Instagram stories and YouTube videos shared from the comfort of their own sense of belonging.

Distance does something to love. It polishes it. It takes the rough edges of lived reality and replaces them with symbols: flags, anthems, slogans—easy to display, harder to analyze. From here, the nation is fragmented, negotiated daily in lines that move slowly, if at all. From afar, it is coherent, unified, unquestionable.

Long-distance nationalism thrives on this disconnect. It is a politics that is not informed by proximity but rather by memory—selective, sometimes frozen. The idea of the 'home' that is remembered from abroad is never the actual idea of the 'home' that currently exists. It is a construct of the stories of childhood, of the nostalgia that is inherited, of the culture that is preserved like a museum piece. The messiness of the present—the economic insecurity, the bureaucratic cruelties, the social marginalizations—does not make the transcontinental journey. What arrives is the idea of the nation that is purified of all contradictions.
This is not to suggest that the diaspora does not belong. Belonging is not a zero-sum game, nor is it necessarily geographical in nature. However, there is a world of difference between belonging and authority.

Long-distance nationalism often tends to conflate the two, to the extent that the former is mistaken for the latter, and the louder the moral certainty, the more it is insulated from consequence.

Benedict Anderson, the political theorist, famously described the nature of nations as "imagined communities." What the concept of long-distance nationalism shows is the way in which imagination can become powerful simply by moving around unchecked. The imagination of the nation is enhanced by digital platforms in which certainty is rewarded over complexity and outrage is rewarded over hesitation. The algorithms do not care if the person lives with the consequences of the politics they advocate; they care if the content works.

This performance is also closely linked to the idea of privilege. Take, for instance, the words we use to define ourselves: Expatriate versus Immigrant. The former carries a sense of choice, a sense of cosmopolitanism, a sense of movement as aspiration. The latter carries a sense of necessity, a sense of labor, a sense of scrutiny. Both words define movement, but only one movement is celebrated. Similarly, there are hierarchies within diasporas, based on class, caste, religion, race, that determine which voices will be amplified and which will be silenced. Not all distance is created equal, and not all diasporas will be heard in the same way.

Distance also acts as a buffer. It insulates nationalism from the negotiations that define life here. The lines outside ration shops, outside the passport office, outside the visa office, are not accidental. They are the sites where citizenship is exercised and tested. They are the sites where the idea of the nation is delayed indefinitely. To stand in line is to feel the state not as idea, but as apparatus.

Nationalism that does not go through this apparatus is free, untainted, and completely unaccountable.

This asymmetry is accentuated in digital spaces. Diaspora voices tend to dominate the conversation around the homeland in these spaces. Outrage travels faster than nuance; certainty is more shareable than doubt. Nationalism is thus performed in these spaces —asserted through profile pictures, hashtags, and declarations of pride. What is missing is not love but risk. There is little risk to speaking loudly from afar; little risk if the words spoken harden into policy back home.

Long-distance nationalism is not only about the exercise of power but also about the search for meaning. Much of the nationalism expressed by the diaspora is born out of loss—losses resulting from the forced departure from homes, losses resulting from the fracturing of identity. Nostalgia can thus serve as a survival strategy—a way to locate the self amidst dislocation. The risk lies not in the nostalgia but in the politicisation of the same —when nostalgia is used to silence dissent and an idealised past is used to discipline the complex present.

Who, then, is allowed to speak for the nation? The question is not rhetorical. The answer is given every day in platforms, policies, and performances. Voices from outside are taken as representative, authoritative, even exemplary. Voices inside, particularly those from the margins, are dismissed as un-patriotic, un-grateful, even suspect. Proximity begets a strange kind of legitimacy: close enough to own, distant enough to be safe.

I find myself, inevitably, back in the queue. The dance of waiting that characterizes much of public life here. The recognition that one does not merely declare one's belonging but negotiates it constantly, even painfully.

To love a country from a distance is not wrong.To love it loudly, without waiting in its queues, without living through its silences, without bearing its burdens— that is a kind of nationalism that demands applause but not accountability.

Maybe, though, belonging isn't measured by decibel or display. Maybe it's measured by endurance, by the capacity to wait, to negotiate, to absorb the slippage between promise and practice. The loudest nationalists I have known have never waited in a line like this. The quietest have, every day, holding files, memories, and hopes that advance, if at all, slowly, unevenly, never together, never for everyone at once

# "MAJI YAKIPANDA, WATU HUHAMA"

**When the waters rise, people move**

*Divyanshi Singh*

If you had asked the 4th grader me what I understood by the title, I would have taken it to mean what it shows in the Moana movie: that water rises to give people a way to move. Still, now that I've been studying climate change since 5th grade, there is no doubt that I now look at the title without the innocence I once had.

Climate change at present is everywhere; not a single aspect of life has been untouched by it. Different natural resources have been affected by it, reshaping human life in turn. Among these, I focus specifically on water. The very first chapter of my social science book was THE WATER. Water, which has been called the lifeline of humans, is essential for life on the planet. The same water that provides life to the living beings of this planet has reached such a level of degradation that it is destroying the lives and livelihoods of the same beings. The displacement and destruction caused by various forms of water have left a scar on humans as a whole. They no longer look at water as something that accompanies them through life, but as something from which they must safeguard themselves. In this shift, home itself becomes unstable. What was once a space of safety, memory, and belonging is slowly transformed into a site of risk, something people are compelled to abandon in order to survive.

In this article, I trace a journey across regions where water, altered by climate change, has begun to determine who gets to stay, who is forced to leave, and what becomes of home when survival is at stake. We'll begin our journey from the once-thriving high-altitude Buddhist settlement in Samjung Himalayas, defined by slow, deliberate rhythms of yak herding and barley harvesting beneath ancient cliffs, and then we will move to the vast web of rivers, swamps, islands, and floating markets in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. From here, the journey moves northward to experience the northern lights and the rich native culture in Alaska, and finally, we will end our voyage in the expectation of witnessing the world's second-largest wildlife migration in South Sudan. The only thing that you need throughout this whole journey is to be wide-eyed.

This global crisis becomes most tangible when we begin with places where home has existed for generations, yet is now slowly disappearing."It is the place of our origin. We wish to go back. But I don't think it will ever be possible."

The above-mentioned statement has been said by one of the residents of Samjung Village in the Mustang region, west of Kathmandu, Nepal (AP News), which aptly showcases the helplessness of the locals when confronted by nature. The region is facing water shortages, unpredictable weather, and narrowing agricultural opportunities, which have caused families to migrate and to look for their new homes in entirely new conditions and environments. Samjung's story reveals how climate change does not merely displace people physically, but it also severs their relationship with origin, ancestry, and the idea of return. Once a vibrant village famous for its culture, it has now become a classic case of climate change. The reason behind the drought is not only water, but also turning a blind eye to the earlier predictions that have now turned into reality, leaving no way out other than leaving their homes.

While Samjung represents displacement born of scarcity, other regions face the opposite crisis, where excess water becomes just destructive.

"It was paramount to identify alternative water sources, the value of water sources, and the link between groundwater extraction and land subsidence," said the deputy head of the governance of land subsidence and groundwater management for the Mekong Delta project. The statement perfectly captures the vulnerability of the authorities towards "natural" phenomena.

. As found by the University of Warwick in its research, it is clear that the human-induced factors have led to land subsidence and related challenges, which are being faced by the low-lying cities around this delta. However, the region whose unique and vibrant culture was centered around water did not consider that very water(Mekong Delta) its heart and thus, is now on the verge of abandoning it with a ‘sinking’ heart.

If rising waters threaten homes in the Global South, melting ground poses an equally devastating challenge in the far North.
“In my future and our youth’s future, I picture our community being completely relocated,” Eriel Lugt, an indigenous activist from Canada’s arctic region (UN news). Eriel has said these words because the Alaskan and the Arctic region are encountering permafrost thaw, which has turned the once clear waters of salmon rivers into an opaque orange, rendering them unrecognisable. Permafrost thawing, in its simplest terms, means the melting of the permafrost that contains a mixture of organic material, plants, and dead animals that have been frozen for ages. This condition has already resulted in the relocation of the residents of the villages such as Nunapitchuk, Tuktoyaktuk, leaving youngsters like Eriel with little claim over what they call their own.

The consequences of these shifts are most severe where political instability and climate vulnerability intersect. “The climate crisis is worsening in South Sudan, and over 2,000,000 people are internally displaced due to flooding and drought,” said the Minister of Environment and Forestry, South Sudan.
You must have seen many statements like the one mentioned above, a lot in the last few years, frequently, and the reason must also be predictable (due to heavy rains and rising water levels), but as the years pass by, the consequences are no longer predictable. The thought that the ones who are displaced must also have thought of climate change as something in the far future, but now are at the forefront of the calamity, shows how it’s just a matter of time before one finds themselves at the most vulnerable edge of the crisis.
Now that we have completed this journey of ours and have seen various faces of water, it must not be so difficult to put ourselves in the shoes of those who have and are facing the disastrous consequences of something in which their contribution was a drop in the bucket.

At this point, it becomes difficult to speak of solutions in the familiar language of afforestation, reducing greenhouse gases, adopting renewable energy, making use of the 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle), etc., which we memorised in childhood. We have now passed those classes and that stage on the climate cycle where the mentioned ways can help us tackle something that is threatening the very existence of humans. Thus, at present, we can only try to postpone the calamity as far as we can from mankind. We have to implement the plans and policies in real time because, as said by Barack Obama, “ We are the first generation to feel the effect of climate change and the last generation who can do something about it”. What is urgently required is political accountability, where states and global institutions are held responsible for protecting communities whose homes are rendered uninhabitable. Now, it is in our hands to safeguard us from becoming the last generation of Homosapiens on this planet.

Water will never be the same as time progresses for humans. It has always been a life-and-livelihood-establishing resource; it is we humans, because of us, that have made it one of the reasons people have to leave their homes, where their souls reside. Every civilization that once started its journey with the help of water is the one that is on the verge of collapse because of the same resource for livelihood establishment.

The last and the sole way to prevent the catastrophic outcomes can be summarized in three words: Tunza mazingira yakutunze ( protect the environment so it can protect you). Until then, home will remain something millions carry not in land, but in memory.

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# EVENT Log

# Department Of Political Science

1. Inaugural Session of the Department
   - Date & Venue: 25 September 2025 | USR
   - Objective: To introduce students to the intellectual foundations and relevance of political science
     - Key Themes:Rise of social sciences in the context of globalization
     - Critical thinking as a tool for transforming opinion into knowledge
     - Importance of contextual and historical analysis
     - Role of empathy in civic responsibility
   - Key Outcome: Established an intellectually rigorous tone, encouraging analytical reasoning and socially conscious engagement

2. Workshop on Indian Constitutional History
   - Date & Venue: 28 August 2025 | NCH
   - Objective: To enhance understanding of constitutional evolution through interactive learning
     - Key Activities:Pre-discussion assessment of student knowledge
     - Guided exploration using digital resources (PACT)
     - Post-discussion evaluation exercises
   - Key Outcome: Strengthened conceptual clarity through participatory and tech-enabled pedagogy
   - Highlight: Learning through self-assessment and guided discovery

3.The department further explored global and epistemological questions through panel discussions. The session on India–U.S. Relations examined shifts in foreign policy, trade tensions, and strategic autonomy, while the discussion on Indian Knowledge Systems presented alternative frameworks rooted in indigenous traditions. The Pre-Polpourri session on India–Ireland Relations expanded this global perspective by focusing on trade, diaspora, education, and multilateral cooperation, highlighting both historical linkages and contemporary partnerships. Themes of identity, representation, and justice were central to other sessions. The talk on the Gendered State and the Green Revolution critiqued agrarian policy through a gendered lens, exposing structural inequalities, while the session on Ambedkarite Art demonstrated how visual culture and affect shape political consciousness and marginalized identities. These discussions extended political inquiry beyond institutions to lived social realities.

4. The workshop on Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health adopted an interactive and inclusive approach to address stigma and gaps in awareness, promoting informed and empowered decision-making. Overall, the events reflected a consistent focus on dialogue, critical reflection, and social responsibility, fostering a learning environment that connects academic inquiry with real-world concerns.

# Event Log

**Empathy Circle**
**Friday, 3rd October, 2025**

The Poletariat organised an empathy circle aimed at challenging the helplessness and apathy often felt by our generation as we scroll past conflict, violence, and war after war on our phones. At the pre-event held on 1st October, 2025, members of the Poletariat team gathered around Nescafe to sing traditional songs of protest and resistance, and distribute heart-shaped notes with snippets of poetry, piquing the interest of curious bystanders. At the empathy circle, attendees sat cross-legged as they listened to snippets of poems from conflict zones including Palestine, the Middle East, and Northeast India. Then, attendees wrote letters addressed to an imagined reader in a conflict zone—a reader who was exactly like them, with the same hopes, dreams, aspirations, and interests, and only one incidental, distinguishing factor: geography. The letters were read out, collected, and attendees left the empathy circle with calls-to-action for aid, and a renewed sense of humanity and awareness, in their hearts.

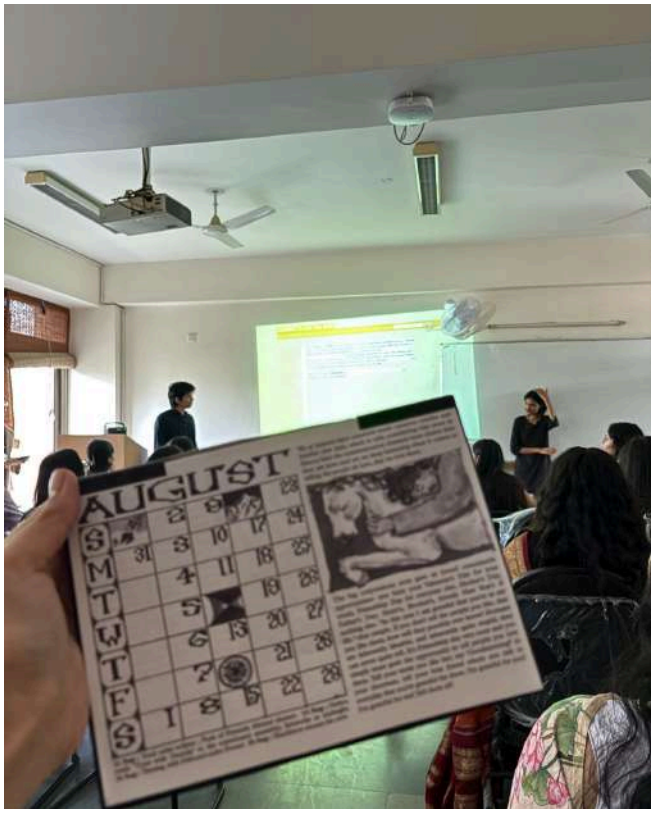
**Reading Circle: All Quiet in Vikaspuri, Sarnath Banerjee**
**Tabeer x The Poletariat**
**Friday, 21st November, 2025**

The Poletariat, in collaboration with Tabeer, the Art and Discussion Club of the Department of English, held a reading circle based on Sarnath Banerjee's witty, colourful graphic novel 'All Quiet in Vikaspuri'.

A work of dystopian fiction set against the backdrop of a Delhi ravaged by fictitious 'water wars', the novel hits at looming, painfully contemporary fears: water scarcity, ecology, the unsustainability of fast-paced urban planning. Banerjee also adds a magical realist, absurdist lens to the adventures and mishaps of his characters. The novel made for a prescient, incisively analytical, and yet emotional discussion, with attendees at once charmed and roused to action by its delightful, winding plot. The reading circle left all those who were present with food for thought on ecology, urban detritus, and the idiosyncratic power of the graphic novel-form.

**Zine Making Workshop**
**Delhizine x The Poletariat**
**Wednesday, February 18, 2026**

The Poletariat, in collaboration with Delhizine, a student-run zine collective, held a zine-making workshop that aimed to sensitise and galvanise attendees to the extraordinary, accessible power of 8-page folding paper zines. The session began with a presentation by Delhizine on the ethos and origins of their collective, from a small, formless idea to the international venture it is now. The presentation drove home the sheer malleability of the idea of the 'zine' as a conduit for anything under the sun, be it an experience, a story, a feeling, a complaint, or an attempt at encapsulating a human being. Finally, the hosts distributed paper, pen, ink, and book snippets amongst attendees, demonstrated the simple origami required to make one, and put forth the prompt "I wish everyone cared more about…". The session ended with attendees sharing what they had written and drawn in their zines, leaving everyone with a sense of newfound connection to each other and to the idea of radical, democratic creativity.



**Exhibition: Hopes for the World**
**The Poletariat x Books and Documentaries Review Club, Department of Political Science**
**Wednesday-Thursday, February 18-19, 2026**

The Poletariat, in collaboration with the Books and Documentaries Review Club of the Department of Political Science, organised an exhibition on the theme ‘Hopes for the World’, as a part of the annual academic meet of the Department of Political Science, ‘Polpourri’. All attendees at Polpourri, and at the college, were free to walk in and visit the exhibition at any time. The ethos of the exhibition was to bring together art which inspires with its tactility: those things which can be seen, touched, heard, and felt. The exhibition reflected a choice to consciously acknowledge a backdrop of deepening conflict, crisis, and inequality in the world—yet, to reject the despair that accompanies it, with this rejection serving as not merely weightless ‘hope’, but conscious political practice. The exhibition awed and delighted attendees, representing a uniquely tactile, memorable facet of Polpourri.


# মায়া নগৰী

# (Maya Nogori)

Divyanshi Gogoi

As a child, I was told that Delhi was the city of magic. It was where people with dreams, small and big, came together to take a shot at life. Drowned in teenage angst, I yearned to leave my hometown and start afresh. Delhi became the object of my fascination, and to some extent, I started romanticizing it in my head. I mean, what good is a city if you can't romanticize it? I spent hours scrolling through Pinterest boards and nostalgic Twitter posts about Delhi, trying to understand why it spoke to so many people. I read Delhi by Khushwant Singh cover-to-cover, unable to grasp how a city could be so harrowing and so beautiful at the same time. You can imagine my elation, then, when I received the news that I was going to pursue my undergraduate degree from the University of Delhi. I remember thinking, I'm going to be a real adult now. I'm going to navigate the big, bad world on my own. I'm going to do my own laundry. I'm going to nurse myself through a fever. I'm going to try and see if Delhi likes me.

A few days after I moved in, my roommate sheepishly told me that she did not speak Hindi. I looked at her and said, that's okay. You'll learn. I spent the rest of the semester translating for her. Whenever her classmates sent important voice messages in the group chat or the Blinkit delivery *bhaiya* called her to confirm her address, she looked to me for help. Over the months, she has picked up a few words here and there, but full sentences still give her a hard time. She still can't make sense of the Hindi that her professors sometimes use in their lectures, but she says she's trying.

In class, we hardly talk about the Northeast. I'm always in two minds about mentioning it, because I don't want people to think, "Oh, she's from the Northeast, so all she can talk about is the Northeast." I don't want to be put in a box. But no matter how hard I try, I always end up speaking about it.

I always end up connecting the professor's argument with an example from the Northeast. My roots remain my reference point for almost everything.

In group settings, I've started joking I'm from China. It helps ease the tension.

Back in high school, I came across Moushumi Kandali's book "Black Magic Women", a collection of short stories capturing the myths, superstitions and discrimination that Northeastern people are forced to navigate as they interact with the rest of India. It was through that book that I first learnt about the objectification of the Northeastern female body in the mainland. I didn't think much of it then, but Kandali's words returned to me when I saw the now viral clip of a woman from Malviya Nagar shouting "Northeast people are shit!" and slutshaming two Northeastern girls. The controversy reminded me of the first (and last time) I boarded the general coach of Delhi Metro and the sheer discomfort I felt. What did Delhi men see when they looked at me? Did they see me as a woman, just an ordinary woman wearing a dress with a slightly deep neckline? Or did they see me as a Northeastern woman, shameless and promiscuous, tempting them towards me with my deliberate choice of dressing? I wonder if it's a third thing, I wonder if they saw me as a person at all. In a recent conversation with Kandali, she revealed how she was horrified by the brutal reality of this fetishization during her time in Delhi. *Arrey ye toh Northeast ki ladki hai, ye toh de hi degi.*

My roommate told me the other day that I was sleep-talking in English.

Sometimes, I fear that I'm losing my language. A loved one sent a writeup in Assamese to me once, asking me for my honest opinion. I sat down with the Google Doc, read every word aloud just to see how they felt on my tongue..

I re-read sentences I didn't understand. I noted down my favorite lines, hoping to use them as writing prompts later. I never used them. I never sat down to write in Assamese. I kept telling myself, I will, eventually. I'll read some books in Assamese and then begin this important writing endeavor. I never started.

A friend told me that my Assamese sounded "laminated". What does that mean?

Last month, I tried draping *mekhela sador* on my own. I was reminded of the number of times I had told my mother, "You'll teach me how to drape it, okay? I'll learn it from you before I have to do it myself." I never learned. On that day, all I had was my mother's mekhela sador and a Youtube tutorial video. I was ashamed of myself, the way I was second-guessing every step. The way my hands didn't move the way my mother's always did. When I finally managed to drape it with a little help from one of my PG didis, I looked at myself in the mirror and thought of how cruel the passage of time could be.

I really like Delhi. I like it more than I will ever admit. Sometimes, as I sit in the women's coach of the metro, I smile to myself for no reason. I like giving up my seat for an elderly lady. I like when a girl helps another out with her eyeliner. I like squinting my eyes and trying to gauge the titles of the books that people read on the metro. I like it when a group of girls enter a rather quiet coach and it suddenly comes alive with their laughter. When I go monument-hopping, I am spellbound by their sheer scale and beauty. I like reading who commissioned them or in whose memory they were built. I like it when families ask me to click their photographs. I admire the gardens. I like how the Mughals were so attached to their gardens.

Whenever I say I'm from Guwahati, people are quick to ask, "You must really miss it, no? I've heard Assam is so beautiful."
How do I tell people I don't recognize Guwahati anymore? It's gloomy all the time because of the dust. The dust has become a part of the city. I don't see my favorite trees on the way to school anymore. Every day there is a new flyover being constructed. They say development comes at a price, and I think I'm paying with memories. There are people paying with their blood, their livelihoods, and their children's futures. The Guwahati I grew up in is slowly fading away before my eyes, and what I'm left with is this concrete jungle that's trying to be someone it never was.

The Portuguese word *saudade* is often said to be untranslatable, but roughly it means a melancholic longing for something that has been loved and then lost. I feel that way about Guwahati. The city survives. It has gotten flashier. It stays up a lot longer than it used to. The people are still kind. They still laugh. The fish markets are still busy. There are new cafés coming up as we speak. The Sunday Reading segment of The Assam Tribune is still popular. Kids still play football, some in the alleys, others in the newly built private turfs. The annual Assam Book Fair continues to make record sales. Bihu continues to bring people together. Durga Puja pandals still attract thousands. Neighboring Shillong continues to be the number 1 summer vacation spot; although in recent years it has become as hot as Guwahati. Achurjya Borpatra, Tanmoy Saikia and Shankuraj Konwar's recent hits still play in people's weddings.

Zubeen's dead, though. I think that changes everything. I think that's what triggers this sentiment of saudade in me. I, like every other Assamese, struggled to come to terms with the news of his death when it first reached me.

When friends said things like, “I saw your Instagram story. Who was Zubeen?”, I didn’t know how to answer them. A loved one wrote in his farewell post to Zubeen: in the bigger scheme of things, tumiye amar Arijit Singh, amar Shaan, amar Beatles - music starts and ends with you. But I don’t know if that answered everything. In my mind, Zubeen was Assam. He encapsulated everything I loved and hated about Assam. He was too poetic, too passionate. Sometimes, he lost control of himself. He said things that weren’t always nice. When he sang, it was as if he was put on Earth to do just that and nothing else. Zubeen never held back. He wasn’t afraid to stand his ground against the scheming political elites and the who’s who of the government. Everyone had their own Zubeen story. People would kill for him, but most importantly, he would kill for them. We’d taken for granted that he’d always be there; we’d assumed that he’d either be singing or going viral on social media for some atrocious statement or mentoring the younger generation of music artists or trying his hand at another movie. I don’t think any of us imagined an Assam without Zubeen, because frankly, it wouldn’t be Assam then.

The day after Anjel Chakma got killed by a bunch of racist goons, I called my mother from the metro station. I was telling her about my day, thrilled about the prospect of exploring the city on my own. She told me to lower my voice and not sound too excited, because “they don’t even need a good reason to kill kids like you these days.”

Ever since the Hallyu wave gained momentum and Indians started fetishizing everything that was remotely Korean, I’ve grown suspicious of the “Northeastern Baddie” epidemic on the internet. Whenever I see influencers addressing racial discrimination faced by Northeastern people with arguments like “Northeast people are so beautiful. They have such good fashion sense! Did you know that they treat their women like people? They even have 100% literacy!” I wonder why mainlanders can’t like us simply because we’re human beings. I wonder why we have to fit a certain aesthetic or score some moral brownie points for them to accept us.

The first friend I made in Delhi befriended me not because I was from the Northeast but because she thought we were compatible. Her name’s Khushi, and she brings me homemade food from time to time because *“Tujhe maa ke haath ke khaane ki bohot yaad aati hogi na?”* When college reopened this January, she gave me a New Years’ greeting card saying, “I hope, years from now, when you think of Delhi, you think of me.” My other good friend, Gauri, insists that we meet every day, even if it’s only for 5 minutes, since we’re in different departments and don’t have the luxury of attending classes together. She says things like “awesome sauce”, which I find endearing. When we go on walks together and talk about life, I’m reminded that humans are simple beings. We look for connection wherever we go, even if it’s in a completely alien place. They say people make a city, and when I look at Khushi and Gauri, I know it’s true.

I also know it’s true when I look at my school friends, some of whom I’m lucky to share Delhi with. When I’m with them, I rediscover the joy of cursing in my mother tongue. Watching them chase their own dreams while I try to chase mine, in a city where millions of dreams fail to materialize every day, I’m reminded of us as children. Who would have thought we’d make it this far, still holding on to each other, still believing, despite it all?

Sometimes, I sit on my bed and wonder if I have what it takes. I wonder if people before me have sat on their beds and wondered the same.

I wonder if my parents did the same, when they moved away from the comfort of their ancestral homes to a strange city where the promise of infinite possibilities was both exciting and intimidating. And as always, I go back to James Baldwin, my seer, my truth teller, who said, “For nothing is fixed, forever and forever and forever, it is not fixed; the earth is always shifting, the light is always changing, the sea does not cease to grind down rock. Generations do not cease to be born, and we are responsible to them because we are the only witnesses they have. The sea rises, the light fails, lovers cling to each other, and children cling to us. The moment we cease to hold each other, the moment we break faith with one another, the sea engulfs us and the light goes out.” As the months pass and Dilli slowly reveals its secrets to me, I realise that its magic lies not in its grand promises. It lies in its silences, those interstices, those in-between moments when I am suddenly reminded that somewhere, in another time altogether, a heart beat the same way as mine did now. That someone was afraid and hopeful, the way I am now.


# STATE BHAVAN

# BANGA BHAVAN

**A place where mishti meets mild inflation.**

**The MVP sweet –**

**Mishti Doi**

In West Bengal locals might get it for ₹25, but here in Banga Bhavan it's clearly upgraded to "Delhi price with Kolkata nostalgia".

Still worth trying.

Thick, caramel-ish, comforting.

Proof that some things survive migration, inflation and Delhi rent.

The Simple Classic –

Baingan Bhaja + Rice

Yes, it's oily.

Yes, it's salty.

Before a non-Bengali declares it "overcooked", take a breath and practice a little culinary multiculturalism.

This isn't bad cooking , this is Bengal being Bengal.

That oily, salty baingan bhaja mixed with plain rice slowly melts together.

Almost like the political theory debate of melting pot vs salad bowl ,

except here the oil negotiates the coalition better than most governments do.

The Chubby Diplomat –

Roshogolla

Cute. Round. Slightly dramatic.

Basically the soft-power ambassador of Bengal sweets.

Tasty, but could be a little more spongy

a texture review that might resonate with the governance style of the Mamata Banerjee-led All India Trinamool Congress government:

soft, popular, but occasionally lacking structural bounce.

The Unexpected Duo –
Mutton with Sweet Rice

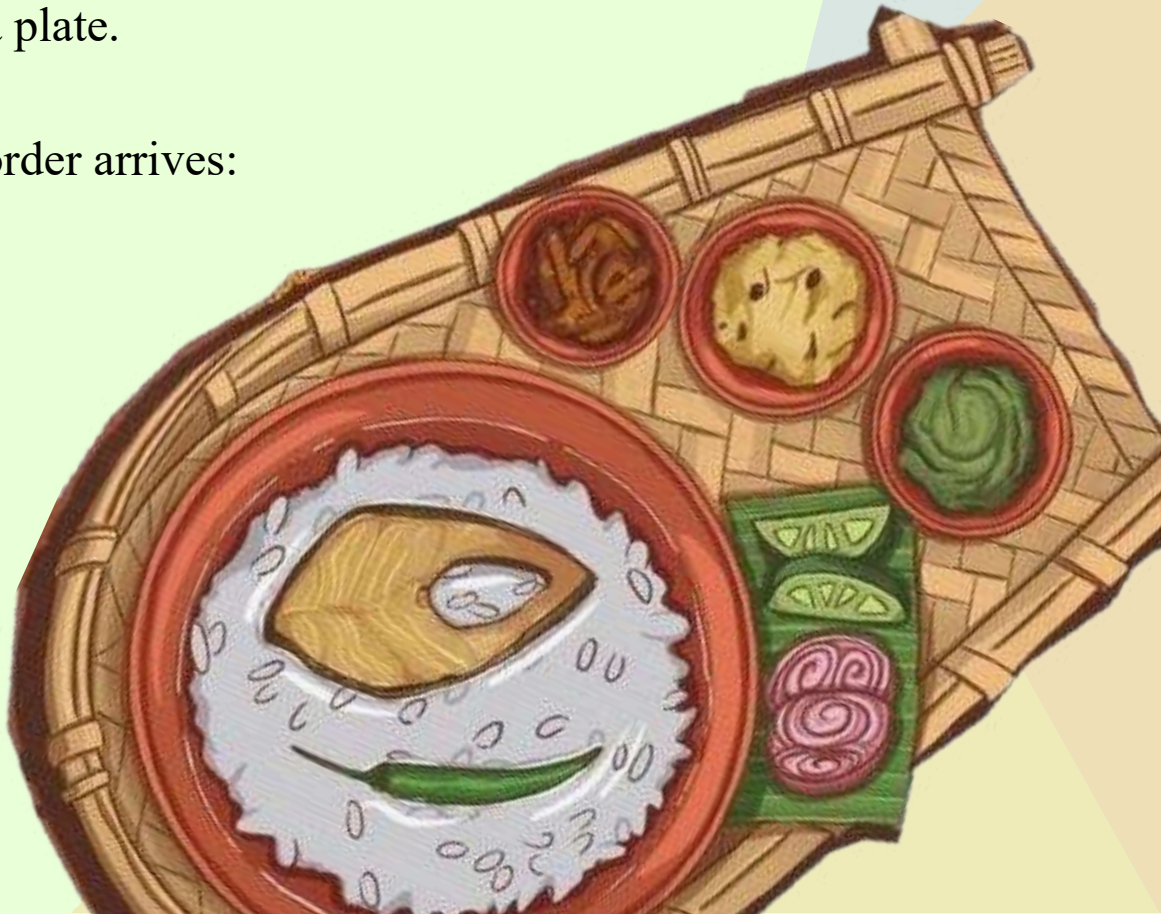
Sounds innovative… or slightly confusing.
But take a bite.
Bengal has always been comfortable mixing sweet, savoury and political ideology in the same plate.
Turns out flavour coalitions sometimes work better than political ones.

The Identity Question –
Fish

At first glance it sounds obvious Bengal without fish is like politics without slogans.

But give it a bite anyway.
Because somewhere between cultural pride and cultural appropriation debates,
Bengalis will still remind you that fish isn't just food here , it's identity politics served on a plate.

A song until your order arrives:
Ei poth niye chol



# RAJASTHAN BHAVAN

"A place that will never say - ghee khatam"
(P.S. they act like the inflation is a fairytale)

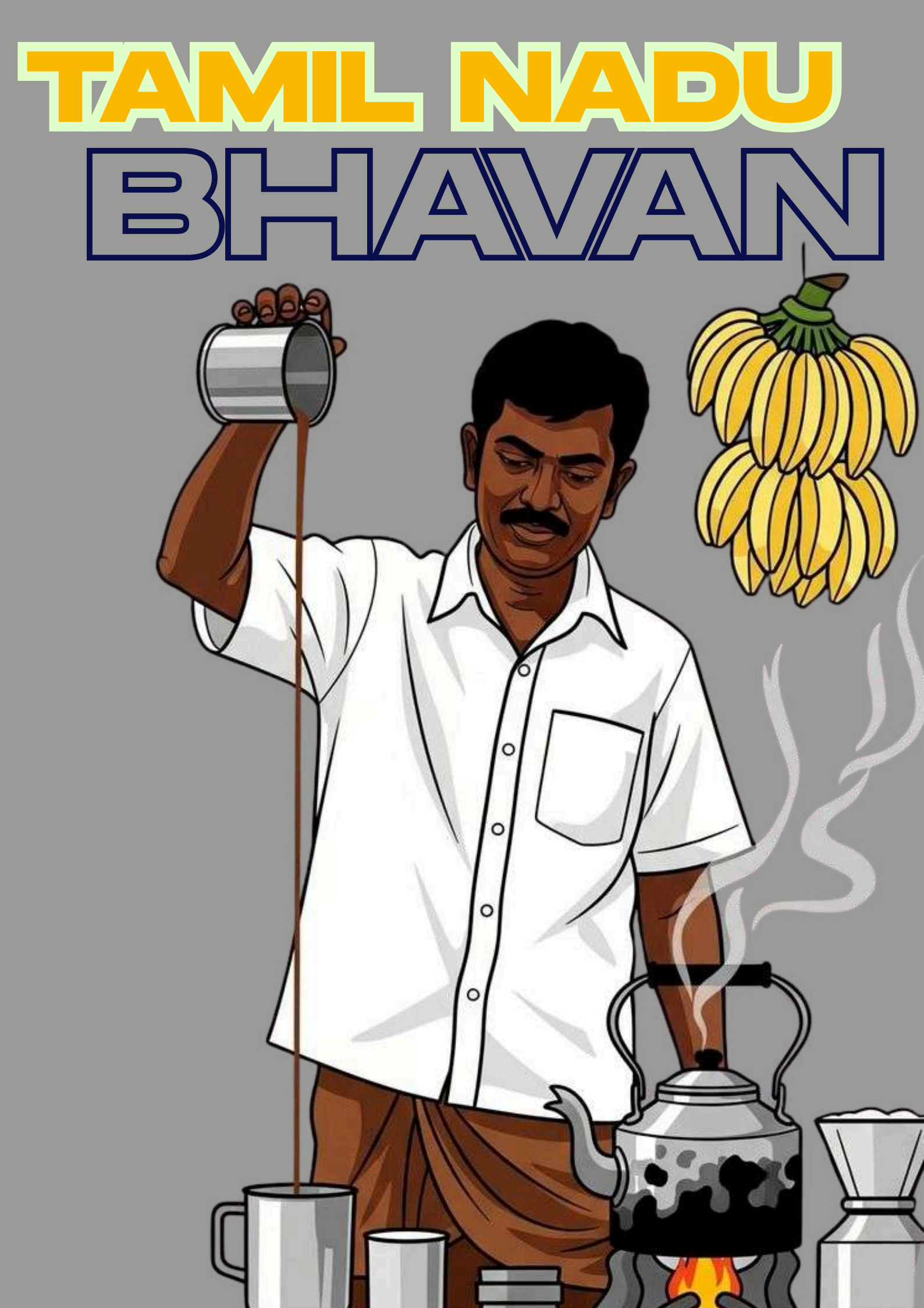
The MVP dish -
Daal baati churma the trio platter putting you to beauty sleep with a side of buttermilk. Pro tip - never skip garlic chutney thinking you can't handle the spice, you are gonna regret the missed experience!

The Chhupa Rustom-
Sev Tamatar
The OG lesser known tangy sabzi paired best with a classic bajre ki roti reminding every DU baisa of her Rajasthani home!

Thali ki qawwali -
Here's a song for your foodie Instagram story!

Sundar Gori by SAZ

# TAMIL NADU BHAVAN



A place where dosas arrive larger than your plate and disappear faster than your self-control!
(P.S. the filter coffee here could wake up half of Parliament.)

The MVP dish –

Ghee Roast Dosa
A perfectly crisp dosa shimmering with ghee, served with sambhar and chutneys that could easily start a flavour revolution. One bite in and you suddenly understand why South Indians take dosa so seriously.

Local advice - rotate your dips like a tasting flight, coconut chutney, tomato chutney, sambhar… repeat till the dosa mysteriously disappears.

The Chhupa Rustom –

Curd Rice
The most deceptively simple comfort dish on the menu. Creamy, cooling and quietly addictive, seriously the kind of plate that balances out all the spice and somehow makes the entire meal feel complete.

Thali ki qawwali –

Here's a song for your foodie Instagram story!

Unakkul naane

# BIHAR BHAVAN

A place where ghee flows freely - inflation clearly hasn't reached here yet.

The MVP dish –
Litti Chokha

The litti is just like your heart - nonchalant.
Hard and crispy outside but soft inside once you actually break it open.

Give your fingers a little satisfying strain and divide it into two parts - no problem if you gerrymander it slightly.
Now pour ghee into it swiftly, just like some populist leader casually bringing the communal card everywhere.

But remember - divided litti doesn't taste that good alone.
United with aloo chokha, baingan chokha and that glorious ghee, it actually stands strong.
Unity clearly works better here than in politics.

The Chhupa Rustom -
Champaran Mutton + Rice

Champaran what? Rajkumar Shukla?
Na na… not that Champaran.

Here it's slow-cooked Champaran mutton, spicy, earthy and best paired with simple rice.

ANow battle your social anxiety and try the no spoon challenge.
Eat it with your hands.
Messy? Yes.
Authentic? Also yes.
And somehow - it tastes better that way.

Add-ons –
Aloo ka Bhujia and Sattu ka Sharbat

Stir the sharbat properly before drinking.
Like revising everything in the last 5 minutes before an exam — that final stir is what saves you.

Without it? The taste… and probably the marks… both suffer.

Khane ke saath gana –
Perfect song for the story while the thali arrives:
“Railiya Bairan / Saiyan Mile Larkaiyan” – by Malini Awasthi

# LADAKH

A place where Delhi's AQI suddenly becomes a distant memory.
(P.S. five minutes in and you'll start planning your retirement saying "I'm moving to the mountains".)

The MVP dish –

Veg Thukpa and Veg Momos combo
A Himalayan comfort bowl with dumplings on the side, basically the edible version of a warm blanket after a long DU day. One spoon in and suddenly the noisy Delhi traffic outside quiets down and the warmth of the flavours melts any baddie down (beware )

Local advice - do not underestimate the chilli sauce. Add a little first… then add more when your overconfidence kicks in.

The Chhupa Rustom –

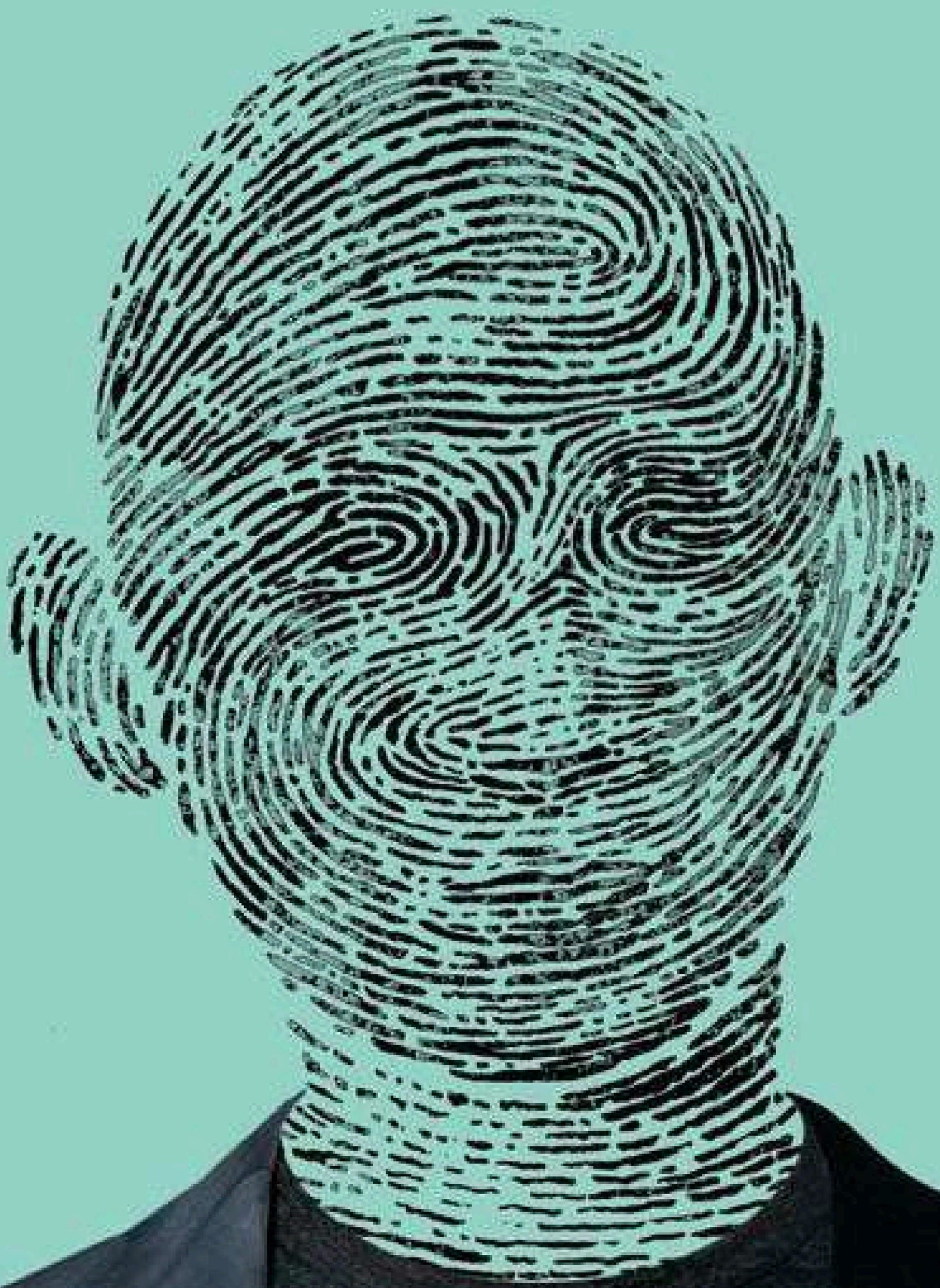
Skyu (Ladakhi vegetable stew)
Soft handmade wheat dumplings floating in a hearty vegetable broth which is simple, comforting and deeply Ladakhi. It's the kind of dish that doesn't shout for attention but quietly ends up being everyone's favourite by the end of the meal.

Thali ki qawwali –

Here's a song for your foodie Instagram story!

Safarnama – Lucky Ali

# What is an immigrant identity in contemporary times? And has this identity shifted in the last few decades?



*Trisha Rath*

For ages, people have crossed political boundaries. Some have crossed them for employment or education, others for safety and settlement, and yet others for the promised dream of a better life. While the rate, nature, and cause of such immigration has varied across centuries, very little has been able to hinder this process. As a result, immigrant communities have increasingly formalised themselves, have gained political and socio-economic prominence, and are now important stakeholders in decision-making across the world. While perceptions of immigrant and diaspora communities differ across regions and continue to change with changes in governments, it is undeniable that such communities have become powerful actors in contemporary global politics.

With the role of immigrant communities having been established, the concept of an immigrant identity emerges as an issue of contention. What does it mean to be an immigrant? What does it mean to associate yourself with a diaspora? What do you call home? Which culture is yours, and who has claim over it? What rights are given to you? And more importantly, what rights do you give to yourself? These questions have been the topic of much scholarly work, global agenda-setting, and political invoking – at the same time, and more importantly, they have been the reality of millions of people across the world. For children growing up as "others" in their own country, for teenagers moulding their tongues to Western accents, for white-collar workers increasingly being reduced to diversity hires, these questions form the foundation of their lives and the pivot of their existence in their host country. This article seeks to explore what an immigrant identity is, how it forms and evolves, and how immigrant identities have shifted in the last few decades.

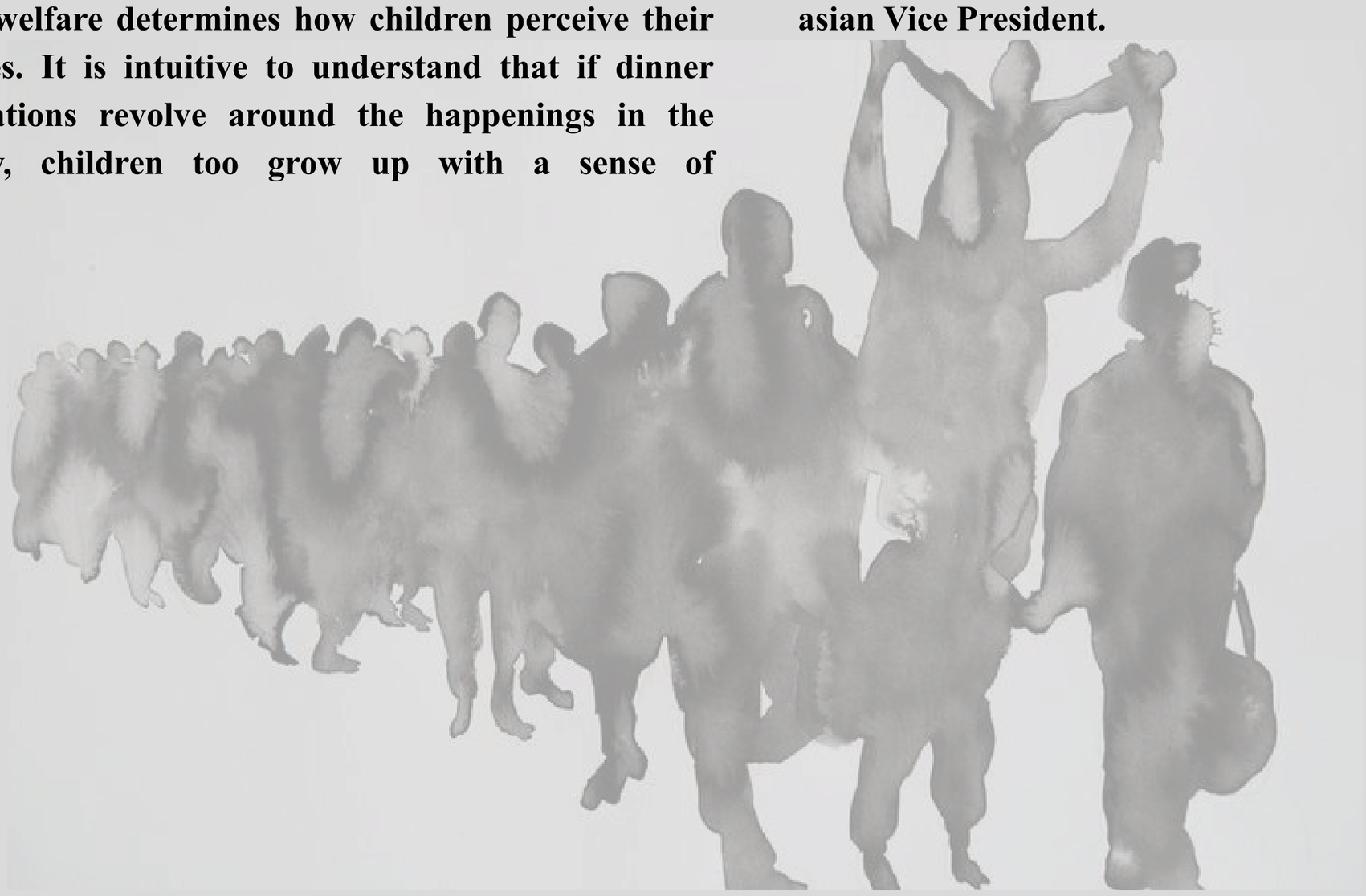
Generally, an immigrant identity refers to how immigrants view themselves in the larger context of their country of origin and their host country. This is shaped by personal and familial circumstances as well as the larger socio-political context of their times. Whether a family chooses to celebrate the culture of their home-country, whether they actively involve themselves in its politics, whether they seek to contribute to its economy and welfare determines how children perceive their home countries. It is intuitive to understand that if dinner table conversations revolve around the happenings in the home country, children too grow up with a sense of belongingness.

Conversely, if their early immigrant experience is shaped by a fundamental disconnect from their country of origin, children find it difficult to associate with their home countries as they grow up.

At the same time, the socio-political conditions in host-countries also shape immigrant identities. In developed nations with established diaspora communities, the celebration of immigrant identities is louder, brighter, both expected and accepted. When democratic, tolerant governments are in office, immigrants feel safer expressing themselves, associating with the culture of their origin, and raising their children to be proud of both their countries. On the other hand, in countries where immigrants are dismissed or frowned upon, and where governments have anti-immigrant leanings, immigrant families are more conscious. Particularly in Western countries, children are conditioned to be more conforming to dominant cultural norms — to not take lunches from home because oriental cuisine is laughed at, not wear traditional attires because they will be alienated, and to fit in the best they can, because anything else is an invitation to be bullied.

In contemporary times, immigrant identity formation is driven by more than just immediate circumstances and contexts. Political discourse, media portrayal, cultural assimilation and appropriation, and representation in positions of power have all become important factors. This is especially visible in how political campaigns are being conducted in countries that host powerful immigrant communities.

In the 2024 USA Presidential elections, Kamala Harris positioned herself as the Democratic nominee and launched her election campaign around better economic opportunities, social inclusion, political participation and overall citizen welfare. Her campaign was underscored by her historic firsts in her past tenure – the first female, black, and south-asian Vice President.



She talked of the incessant racism and undermining her mother faced post immigration to the USA, and the sidelining that she herself had to endure. She talked about barriers to entry for immigrant women, being pressured to fit in, and having to earn belongingness in American society. Her messaging revolved around the fact that the system was inherently unfair to immigrants – but it was possible to succeed despite this flawed system. She centered her campaign around what it means to be an immigrant and why she, as an immigrant woman who has climbed the ladder to political success, should be elected as the President of the United States. While Harris lost the elections to Trump, her messaging resonated with the immigrant communities in the States and around the world. Harris became an example of a woman who beat the odds, inspiring millions of others to try to do the same.

A few months ago, Zohran Mamdani's campaign for the New York mayoral elections came to the spotlight. He adopted an approach that was different from Harris'. While Harris talked about beating the system and adapting to it, Mamdani's campaign talked about making the system adapt to immigrants. He portrayed himself as just another ordinary immigrant whose life, struggles, and successes was the same as those of his community. His campaign highlighted housing rights, labour laws, and language access policies that placed immigrants at the centre. Instead of Harris' individualistic framework, Mamdani said identity was a shared condition and the formation of a positive immigrant identity was not possible with a broken system. His campaigns were multilingual and multicultural, integrating all elements of his immigrant upbringing into his bid for office. He campaigned extensively to change narratives surrounding immigrants. Instead of advocating for immigrants overcoming barriers, he talked about how immigrants already exist and belong in public spaces and barriers to entry should be systematically eliminated. Mamdani came to power with significant electoral support, inspiring other immigrants to be proud of their countries of origin while still claiming their place in their host countries.

The difference between Mamdani and Harris' campaigns show how immigrant identities have gradually started to shift in the USA in particular, and the West in general. Instead of being forced to assimilate into the culture of the host-country's cultures, diasporas have reclaimed assertiveness. Dominant narratives have now become of ownership and belongingness instead of hesitance or skepticism. Despite the rise in far-right conservatism globally, immigrant communities have continued to unite and organise against anti-immigrant rhetoric. While events such as increase in raids by, and funding to, ICE have posed threats to immigrant communities, global support for these communities has never been stronger. It is in the face of such oppression of diasporas that immigrant representation and solidarity has assumed heightened importance.

# Cartographies of Belonging

- Shreya Pathak

# Cartographies of War

The rivers of Bengal don't stop at borders. Ganga and Brahmaputra may become Padma and Jamuna, but the river continues to carry the heart and soul, blood and sweat of the people living on both sides, surpassing the carceral borders of ‘citizenship’ to reveal an eerie parallel in marginalization.

The Muslim immigrants of Bangladesh currently residing in Bengal and Assam and the Hindu minority in Bangladesh share a common history of culture, colonialism, language, and persecution. In Bangladesh, entire neighborhoods come together for Durga Puja, where one can hear the sounds of conch shells and Shyama Sangeet; while in Bengal, the aroma of hilsa fish in mustard gravy lights up every kitchen during Eid. Bengali nationalism was once the binding force in both communities, with the demand for independence running in the veins of every Bangladeshi.

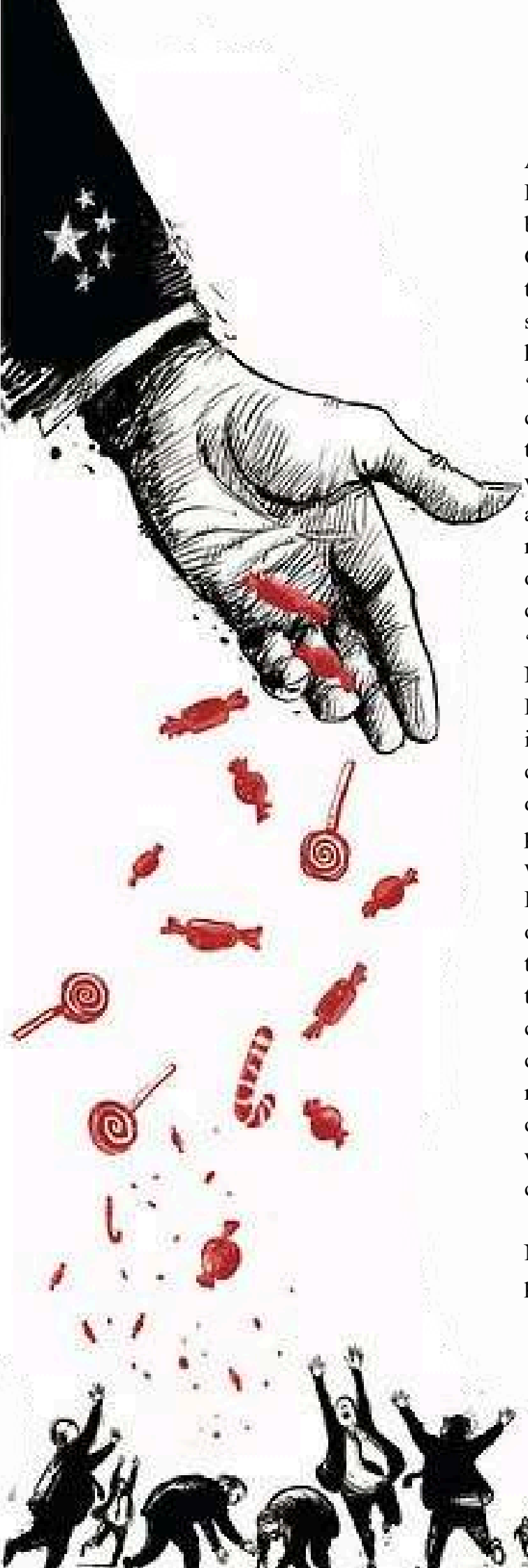
However, the soft romance of culture cannot override state-sanctioned violence. The division of India and Pakistan and the Bangladeshi Liberation War of 1971 pushed the people into a state of vulnerability and terror in a way that cultural commonality could not mitigate. Thus, Bangladesh became an Islamic state and India, a culturally Hindu one. Amidst this redefining of borders and tests of citizenship lingered families that had been stripped. People who had long lived together, holding tightly to their idea of home and culture, had been ultimately betrayed by the very weight they believed their culture carried. All bonds of unity broke in the face of guns and war

Two communities, both vulnerable, but one deemed a refugee and another an infiltrator. Perhaps, the state has stripped down all aspects of identity to religion. The very nationalist culture that we boast to hold us together fears heterogeneity, even in the ones most vulnerable. Millions of Muslim voters have been removed from the 2nd revision of SIR recently, right before the Bengal elections. A community of Urdu-speaking Muslim migrants from Bihar moved to Bangladesh after 1947 and became stranded Pakistanis after 1971. Their perceived pro-Pakistan views and linguistic differences led to their marginalization and incomplete repatriation. They live without any national identity, trapped through no fault of their own. Just a label of Bangladeshi is enough to deprive multi-generational families living in India of their citizenship by a state that fosters disenfranchisement for votes and profit. The other side of the border is criminalising Hindus. Violence, past tensions, and social pressures have driven some to leave, while public executions and oppression continue to spread fear amongst them. Questions of belonging and tests of loyalty challenge both groups in their society.

After all this talk of culture and persecution, I feel like a petulant child, unable to understand the intricacies of war that make us indifferent to persecution on one side while bleeding out for the other.

# CULTURE INDUSTRY : Does Capitalism Ruin Culture or is it a Myth ?

*Nandana Ghoshal*



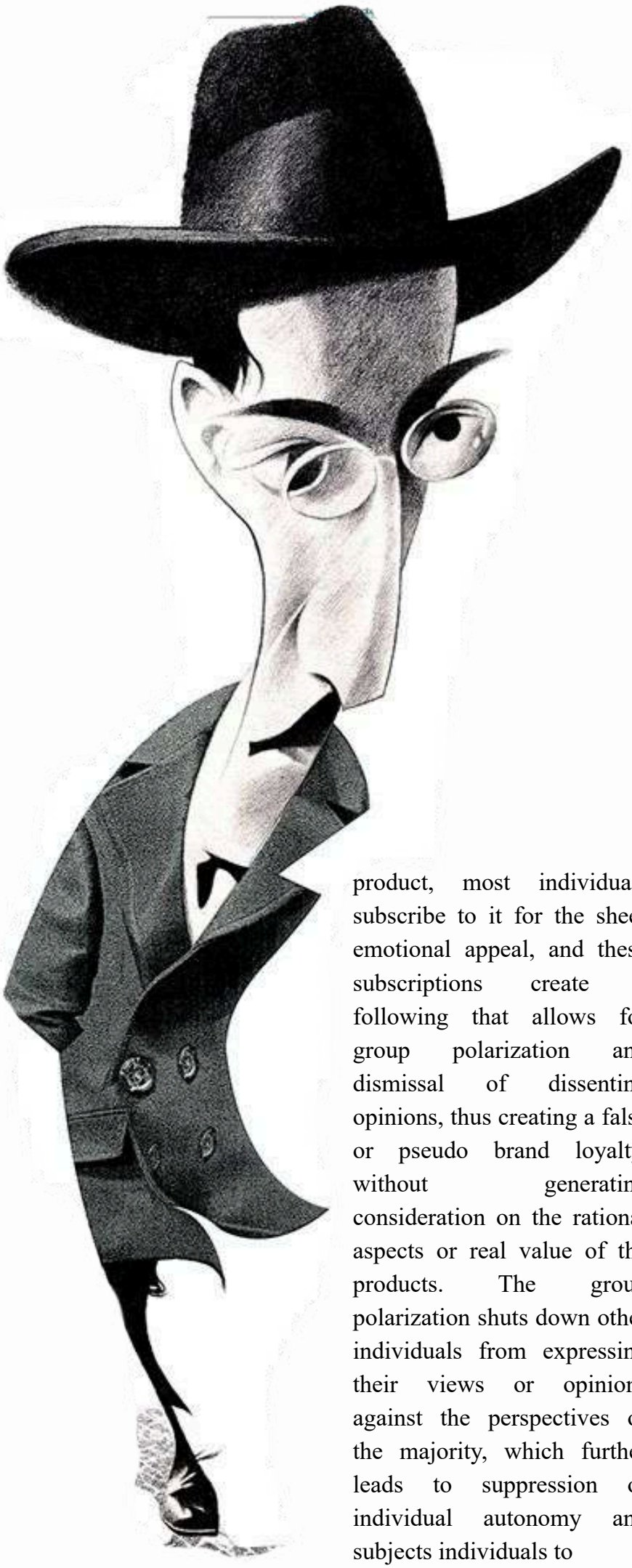
According to my understanding, Adorno and Horkheimer's concept of Culture Industry is apt and can be applied to the dating current situation of tech savvy Generation Z with reference to social media( Instagram, tiktok, profiles and facebook, interactive profiles and social networking sites- SNSs) and influencer culture( harking on the psychological phenomenon of the 'bandwagon effect' - herd mentality, following challenges and being influenced by several mindless trends which may or may not be relevant – basically a way of demonstrating an external facade of conformity and compliance to the global, international- or local, regional trends, so as to ensure social validation, sense of safety- security, group belongingness, and being considered as an active part of a ' larger whole'-- 'something bigger than the individual' phenomenon. Now, first and foremost, reflecting on Adorno and Horkheimer's concept of Culture Industry, it is imperative to grasp the understanding of the complicated- complex issue of discussion and deliberation, through a brief insight into theoretical perspectives and interpretations. The culture Industry was a concept propounded by Adorno and Horkheimer(1947), as a critique of the general features of cultural globalization( the homogenization of culture, the exertion of 'soft power' of a dominant culture and the decrease in global importance of indigenous cultures) arising as a negative outcome of Capitalism - capitalistic Market forces and ideas( emphasizing on market forces, more consumer freedom, greater Market choices, opportunities and options, leading to widespread consumerism, commercialization of culture).

Now, when we speak of culture, we actually refer to popular perception of artistic,

creative, elements– including writing, books, literature, prose, poetry, paintings, films and music and anything else reflecting creative pursuits, broadly classified under the domain of "art". According to the concept of Culture Industry– culture itself has become a replica or a prototype of the Industrial, capitalist mindset– an institution, organization reflecting capitalist ideas and principles. In the contemporary world, the originality, ingenuity, credibility and authenticity of art has become diluted due to the widespread consumerism(banking on the tastes and aesthetic choices and perceptions of consumers and simultaneously producing for the masses- majority without genuinely attempting to ascertain the creative potential or general value of the product or to cater to tastes out of the ordinary), commercialization( to make art more commodified– focusing on the commercial–" hip, hot and happening", popular aspects of a product or work of art for example - taking attractive models for photoshoots, or sexualizing perfume advertisements and adding irrelevant, meaningless, item songs in films just to increase the element of objectification considered appealing to masses, due to the sheer psychological effect of sexual motivation), lack of critical thinking( shallow, less depth, production of art just for sense pleasure without real intellectual value, superficial in nature) with a focus on profits, lucrative advantages and benefits reaped by certain sections of the society. The art produced, need not be authentic, original or credible as long as it is popular and accepted by the majority of masses, again an aspect of group polarization– the dynamic of self and the other. Virtual cultural products must create a demand among consumers to sustain the basic market forces of demand and supply, as according to the principles of capitalism (for instance, the demand for expensive labubu soft toys, as meaningless as it may sound, is unfortunately a reality. Other examples include the demand for IPhones which people by flaw consider a mark of status, wealth and affluence). The artistic - cultural trends are variable, dynamic, transient and rapidly change over periods of time, these are never permanent or constant, reflecting the fickle aspect of the Culture Industry. For instance, individuals, today, who prefer pop, lighter, softer music over metal- slash, Gothic, punk or emo subculture music, might after a few days or months later vibe with alternative genres of music. Similarly with body type trends, aesthetic ideals change over time--slim to slim thick to curvy to gym- athletic aesthetic. Looking into dressing choices and aesthetics, we witness a distinct variety– from ' old money' to ' flamboyance', from ' soft girl aesthetic' to ' dark feminine- femme fatale vibes'. However, it is important to notice that, despite the transience of trends, we witness conventional- predictable consumer behaviour, in the sense that the majority are well versed with the rapidly changing trends and tend to follow these trends blindly, religiously almost without question, sound logic or use of judgement or reasoning. These reflect the demerits of virtual culture. Conformity to the accepted virtual- cultural expectations and norms, further reflect the intentions and objectives of the consumers to ' be accepted', ' to fit in', ' to be considered a part of the group'-- all phrases roughly corresponding to the socio-psychological need for validation. If we ask ourselves( the majority of the population), 'how many critically acclaimed films have we watched or plan on watching, lately', the answer would almost invariably range from ' a few' to ' quite a few'.

On the contrary, if we reflect on the following question–' which are the popular shows that we binge watched or plan to, on Netflix or other streaming platforms', the answers will generally be more varied, ranging from ' many' to ' quite a lot'. This reflects the negative aspects of ' culture Industry'. The emphasis is not really on quality, but on the quantity and mass perceptions that destroy the real beauty or authenticity of art or for that matter ' culture'. Frazier's music title ' Capitalism kills Culture' reflects the main idea- theme of the argument. This slow deterioration of culture and art goes unnoticed and ignored due to the sheer focus on overindulgence and overconsumption of mass produced media, goods and products.

When we delve deep into aspects of social media and the influencer culture, we witness a similar trend, especially with reference to Generation Z( the most technologically advanced- developed Generation, coexisting with artificial intelligence, experiencing changes in patterns of relationships, education, lifestyle and quality of life). Now, influencer culture, as the name suggests, revolves around the phenomenon of " mass appeal" – or creating an impression that pulls or attracts general crowds of people. Most individuals do not think clearly or critically while subscribing to dominant trends, for the sake of validation, conformity as well as purposes of rest and recreation. This makes it easier for the spreading or dissemination of false information and ideas and rapid adoption by clueless and ignorant masses of people, further disrupting the authenticity of culture. For instance, when an influencer suggests a product, for example a skincare



product, most individuals subscribe to it for the sheer emotional appeal, and these subscriptions create a following that allows for group polarization and dismissal of dissenting opinions, thus creating a false or pseudo brand loyalty, without generating consideration on the rational aspects or real value of the products. The group polarization shuts down other individuals from expressing their views or opinions against the perspectives of the majority, which further leads to suppression of individual autonomy and subjects individuals to

adoption of dominant trends for conformity and to ensure the avoidance of conflict and confrontations. In terms of the global Market, we witness a sense of standardization in the sense that the media and cultural products are broadly similar in nature, cater to masses of individuals with similar sense tastes and mindsets, while neglecting the general needs of the dissenting individuals( who prioritize critical thinking, rationality, logic, reasoning, invest substantial thought behind consumption and develop finer tastes for aesthetic experiences). As for homogenization of culture as we have experienced as a result of the process of globalization, a dominant culture generates a " soft power" and commands authority over the culture Industry– an international phenomenon. An unpopular opinion, I feel that ' macdonaldization' or basically the dominance of ' Macdonalds' or ' Burger King' in the fast food Industry represents the tacit ' soft power' of the United States Of America, in impacting popular perceptions and simultaneously the ' Culture Industry'. Similarly, in case of Japanese Anime, Korean pop Culture as well as Indian Yogic Practices. However, the homogenization leads to a general disregard and neglect for indigenous, regional and local cultures and increase in commercialization and consumerism disrupts traditional forms of artistic expression, value of finer goods - aesthetic experiences, authenticity of culture and connection to cultural roots.

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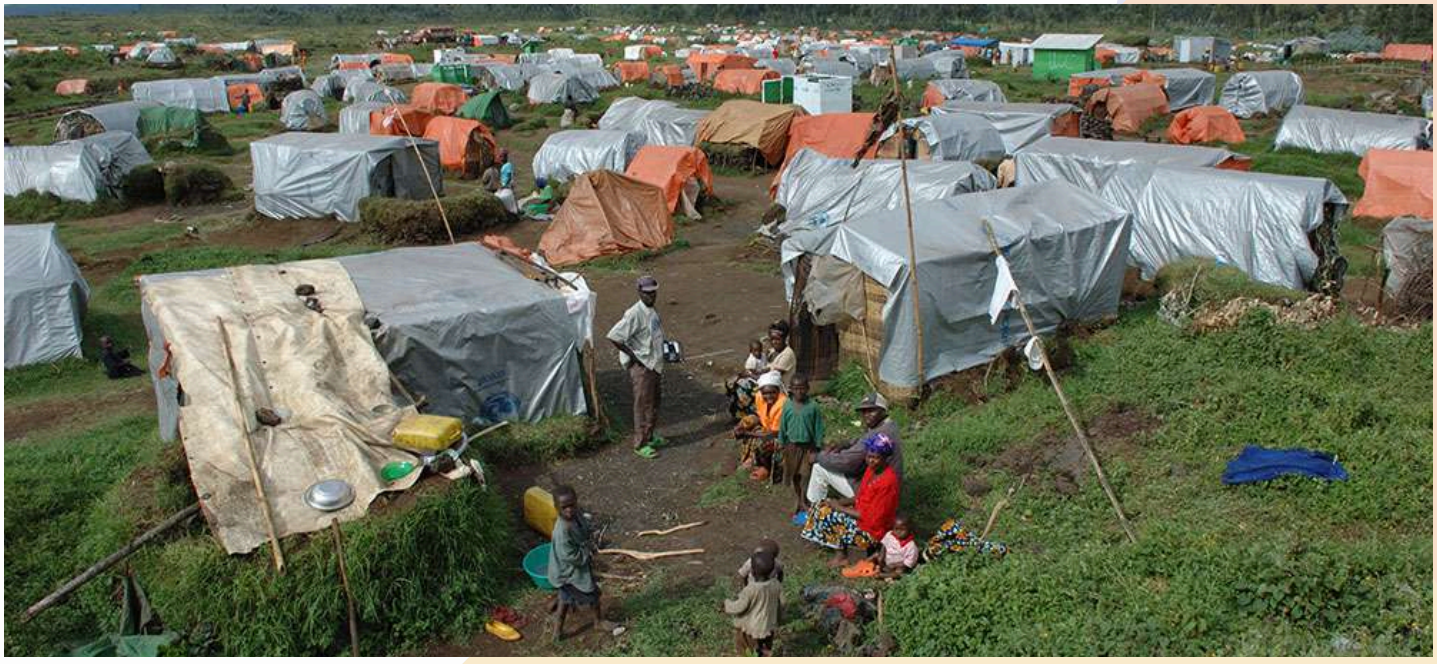
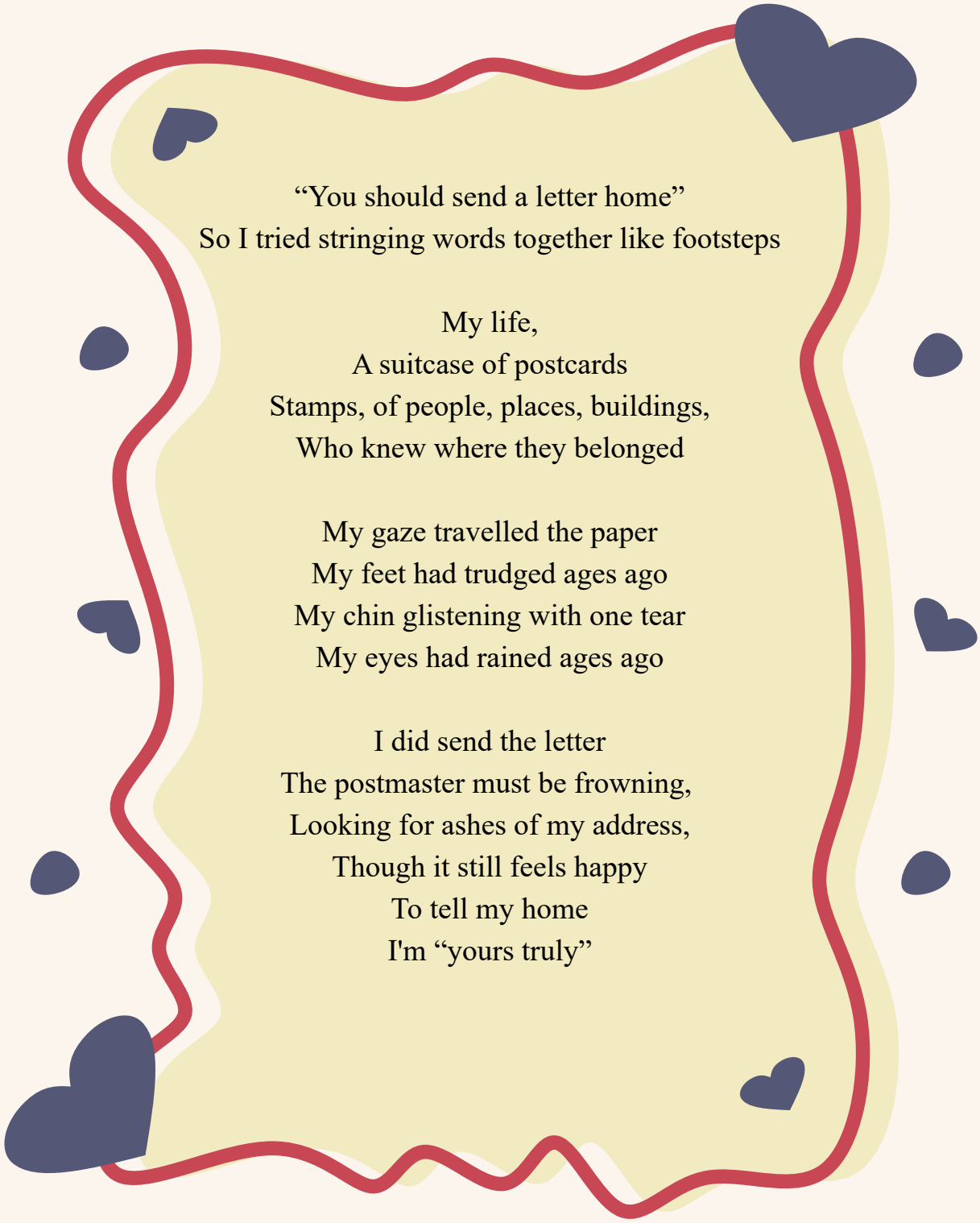


# Yours Truly

## Rupashi S Baghel

Theme

Going home is not just about knocking a familiar door but also revisiting memories, people and a place that marks belonging and identity. What about people who could only hear about their home and stayed devoid of togetherness?



"You should send a letter home"
So I tried stringing words together like footsteps

My life,
A suitcase of postcards
Stamps, of people, places, buildings,
Who knew where they belonged

My gaze travelled the paper
My feet had trudged ages ago
My chin glistening with one tear
My eyes had rained ages ago

I did send the letter
The postmaster must be frowning,
Looking for ashes of my address,
Though it still feels happy
To tell my home
I'm "yours truly"

# *Left Behind but Not Left Out: Women and the Politics of Home*

*Navya Kumar*

Migration is a process that forces people to leave the comforts of their home, travel to a foreign land, and earn a stable livelihood for survival. But once you leave that home, who is left behind within the four walls of that comfort? It is often your family—your loved ones, your children, and your parents. Migration happens for a multitude of reasons, some of the most common ones being the need to earn a better income, attain stability, and overcome the lack of opportunities in the native area.

The idea of leaving partners behind, especially women, has been influenced by culture and socially established gender roles, where men are seen as the sole breadwinners of the family and hence the ones that are to venture out for better opportunities. This essay is written with the intent to mainly touch upon the lives of these partners, commonly referred to as "left behind women," and the implications male out-migration has on them

.For better focus, the essay is restricted to the Indian context, particularly rural-to-urban migration. It has been observed that one of the implications of male out-migration on left behind women is greater autonomy, including a greater say in the decision making process, mobile autonomy, a sense of self-determination, and financial autonomy. However, although this may seem like an empowering factor, it comes with its own caveat. One study by Sonale Desai and Manjistha Banerji suggests that this improved autonomy is contingent on household structure

. Women who live with extended family members do not enjoy any tangible benefits from male out-migration, as senior male or female relatives often take over authority, limiting any redistribution of power. In contrast, women in nuclear households experience a noticeable expansion of responsibility, which translates into a greater say in a host of different matters.

Carrying this forward, and focusing particularly on women residing in nuclear households, another important outcome is food insecurity. Research indicates that out-migration alters household dynamics and impacts food security in households led by women. Women who are left behind assume leadership and decision making positions, which can boost their independence but also make them more responsible for handling household and agricultural duties.

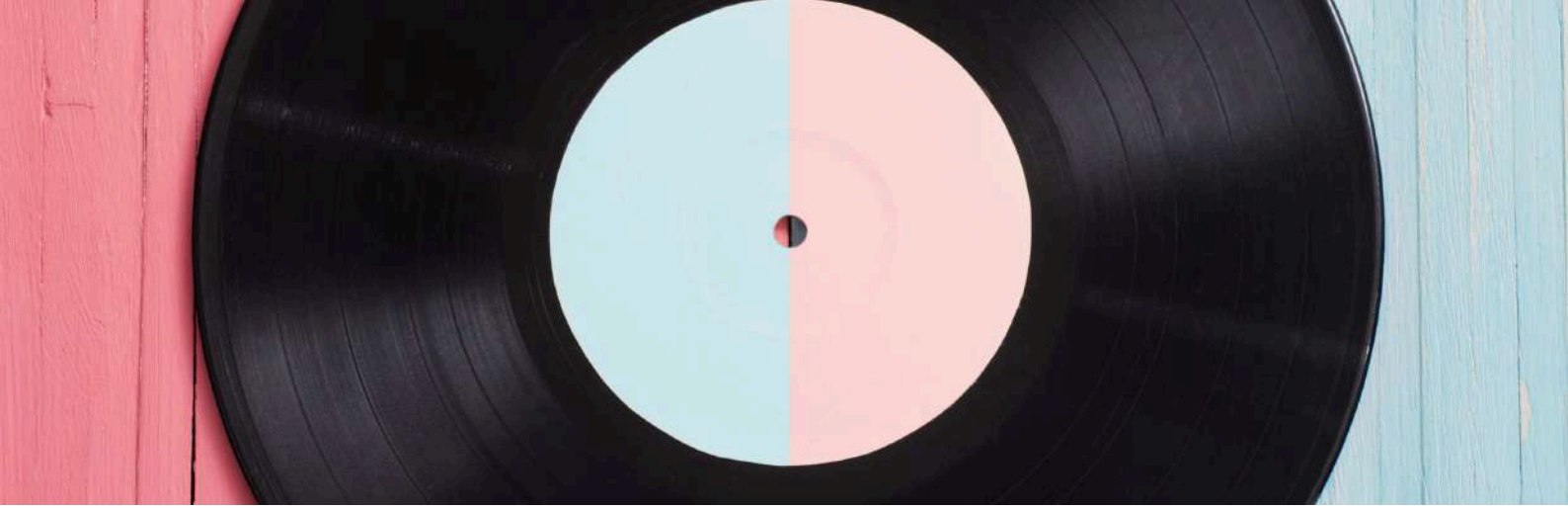
These women frequently experience gender-based disadvantages that decrease household food security results, demonstrating how migration interacts with structural injustices and gender norms to affect who has access to resources and food in rural households.

Increased workloads for women in domestic and agricultural labour are another cost of economic advances. In order to support household requirements, women living in nuclear households are more likely to be employed, which increases their negotiating power. Conversely, for women in extended families, reduced pressure due to remittances often mutes any empowering effects of migration.
One of the last factors, and perhaps the most important component commonly witnessed by left behind women regardless of family arrangement, is loneliness.

According to studies, out-migration has had a profoundly detrimental impact on the mental health of women who have been left behind, a sense of desperation emerges. Therefore, even while financial strain may compel partners to split up, the mental health of those who remain is severely damaged, and they have little or no support networks to deal with this emotional suffering which is often heard in the refrains of folk songs.
In general, a variety of circumstances, including family structure, remittance availability, and prevailing gender norms, determine whether out-migration has a good or negative effect on women's general well-being. The loneliness and desperation that women experience because of separation, however, is a recurring topic that transcends these distinctions.

***The Forgotten by Sam Nieves***

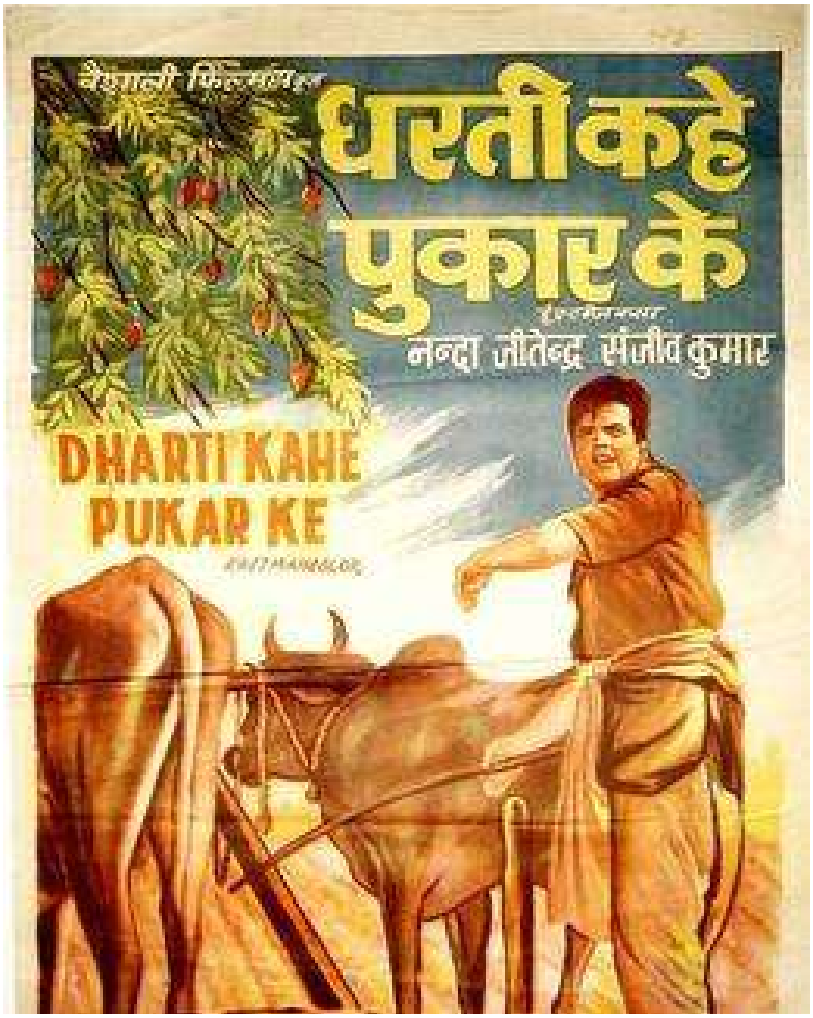
# Song Recommendations




## "YEH TERA GHAR YEH MERA GHAR"

Film: Saath Saath

This song captures the essence of homecoming not as a place, but as two people creating a life together from scratch with hopefulness. This song describes a life where love brings the home together, even if it is a humble, simple abode.
The song highlights middle class struggle and emphasizes equality and partnership. Home here has no walls, but warmth and returning to each other after life's struggles.




## "DHARTI KAHE PUKAAR KE"

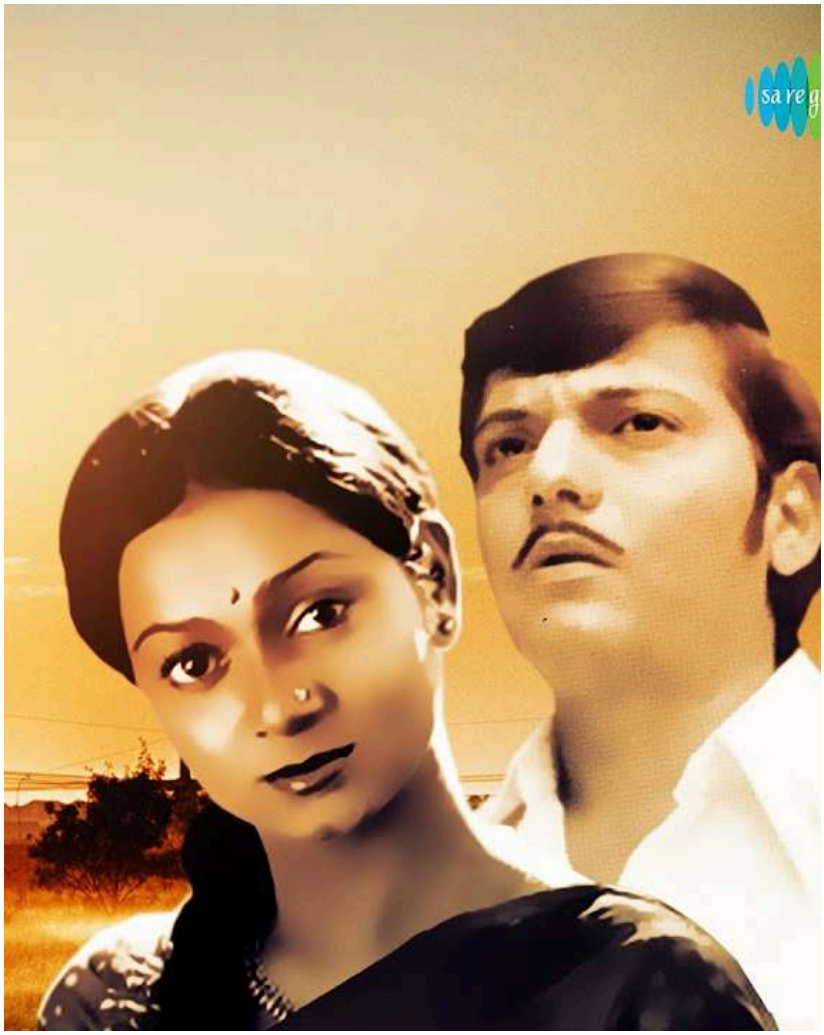
Film: Do Bigha Zamin

This song represents the deep emotional pull of one's roots, especially during forced migration. It portrays the pain of leaving behind land and identity in search of survival. Lines like "Dharti kahe pukaar ke, beej bichha le pyaar ke" and "Apni kahani chhod jaa" suggest the earth calling its people back.
The song reflects the constant longing to return to where one truly belongs, even when life pushes you far away.


## “PANCHI NADIYA PAWAN KE JHOKE”

Film: Refugee
Theme: Borders, displacement, love beyond boundaries

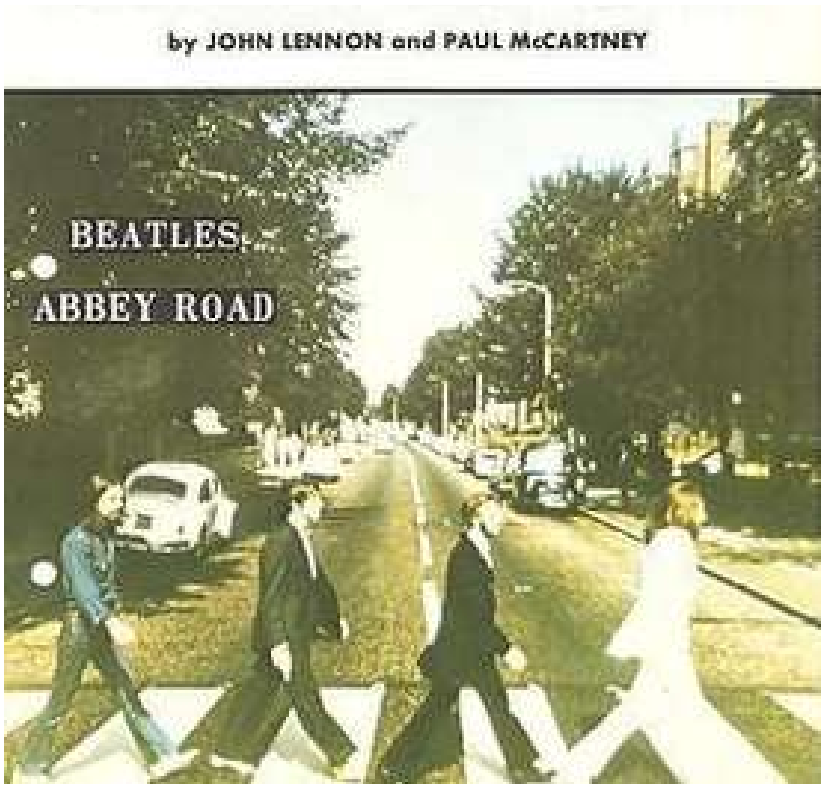
This song questions the man-made borders and suggests that humans, like nature, are meant to move freely. Lines like “Koi sarhad na inhe roke” and “Sarhadein insaano ke liye hain” highlight this idea. The song portrays homecoming as emotional union, where being with someone you love makes every place feel like home, regardless of borders.



## “EK AKELA IS SHEHER MEIN”

Film: Gharonda
Theme: Urban loneliness, isolation, search for belonging

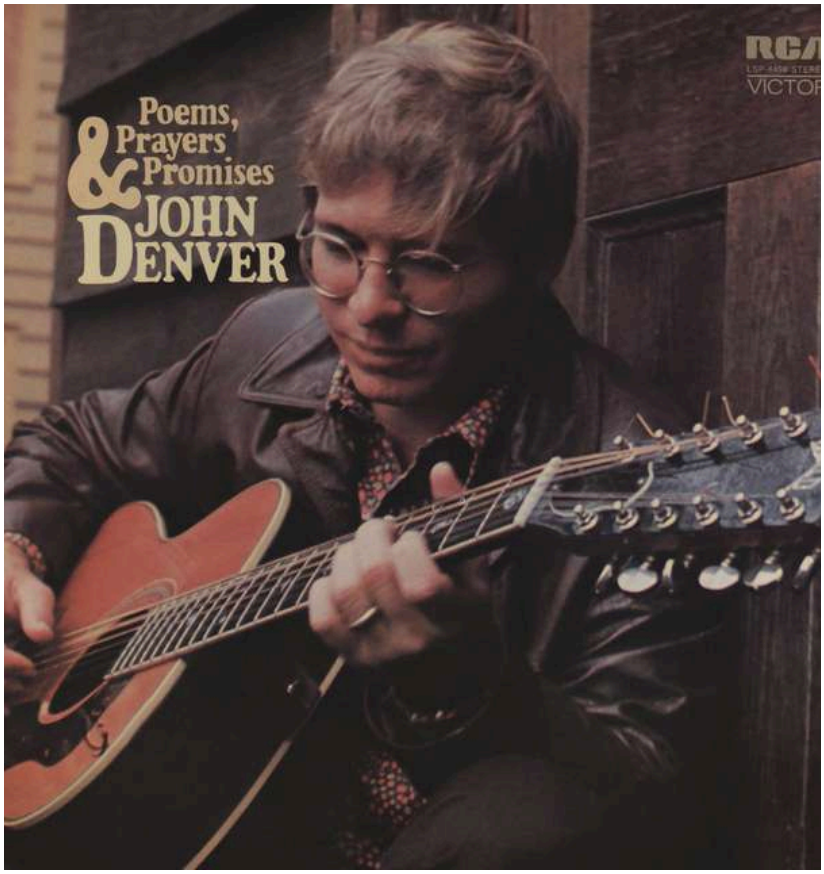
This song presents the absence of home rather than its presence. It reflects the loneliness of city life, where one feels lost despite being surrounded by millions. Lines like “Ek akela is sheher mein” and “Aab-o-daana dhoondta hai” show both emotional and physical survival. The song speaks of a longing for a space or person where one feels seen and safe. It highlights how, without connection, even a crowded city feels empty.




## “GOLDEN SLUMBERS — THE BEATLES”

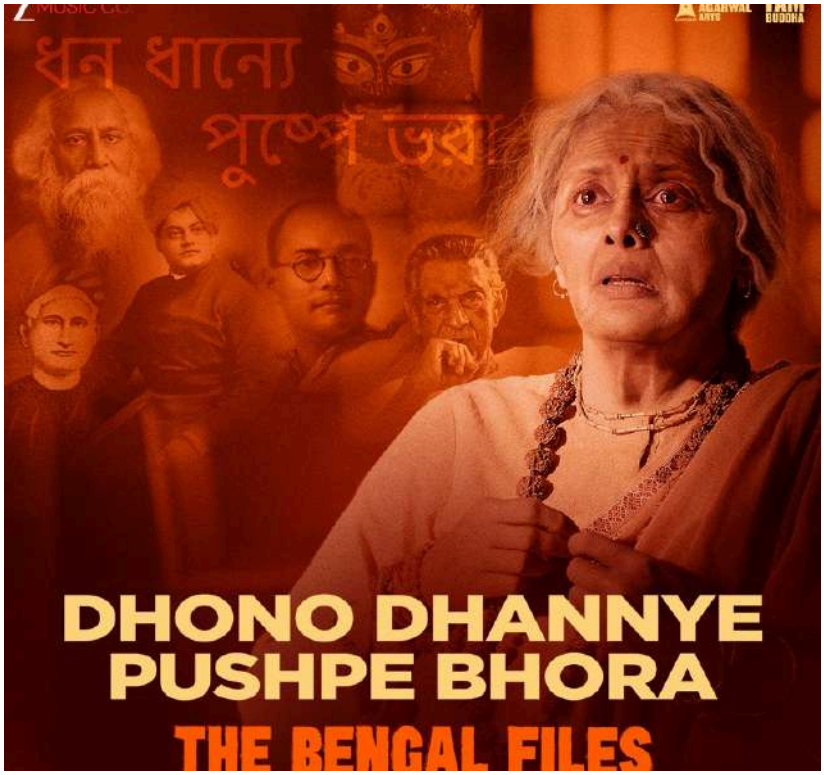
Album: Abbey Road
Theme: Emotional homecoming / comfort

“Golden Slumbers” originates from a 17th-century lullaby poem by Thomas Dekker, later adapted by Paul McCartney into a deeply emotional composition. Released in 1969 as part of the Abbey Road medley, the song transforms a gentle lullaby into a powerful orchestral piece. The repeated idea of “getting back home” evokes nostalgia, childhood innocence, and reassurance.




## “TAKE ME HOME, COUNTRY ROADS — JOHN DENVER”

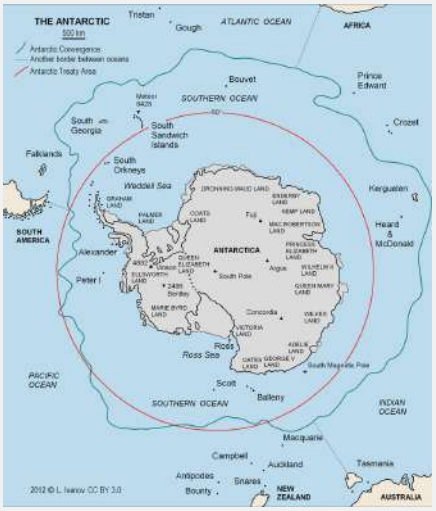
Released in 1971, “Take Me Home, Country Roads” was written by John Denver along with Bill Danoff and Taffy Nivert. Interestingly, the song was inspired before Denver had even visited West Virginia, proving how imagined landscapes can feel like home. The song captures a deep emotional pull toward belonging, memory, and identity tied to place. Its vivid imagery of roads, mountains, and rural life creates a sense of peaceful return. For listeners, it represents migration, distance, and the universal desire to reconnect with one’s roots, making it one of the most iconic homecoming songs globally.




## “DHONO DHANYE PUSHPE BHORA — DWIJENDRALAL ROY”

Composed during colonial times, it reflects pride in the land’s natural abundance as filled with grains, wealth, and flowers. Unlike personal homecoming songs, this piece expands “home” into a collective identity tied to culture and nation. It expresses gratitude, reverence, and emotional belonging to one’s roots. In the context of homecoming, the song shifts the idea from returning to a place to honoring and recognizing the value of one’s homeland itself.

# 2025 WRAPPED




**A – Accelerated Antarctic ice-loss**
**(alternatively: Antarctic ice melting will probably kill the planet but people won't stop making AI-animated reels)**

New studies and reports in 2025 showed that Antarctic ice was melting at an accelerated, non-linear rate with the ice-floor dropping to one of its lowest levels by March, 2025. 2025 was the third consecutive year of severely depleted Antarctic ice. The dangers posed to Antarctic biodiversity and marine life, global sea levels, and global economic supply chains continue to rise as a result of unmitigated climate change.

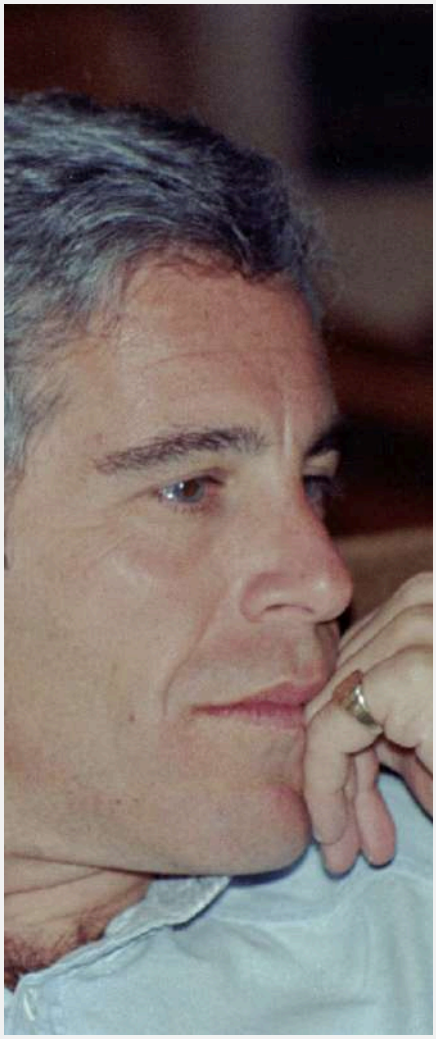
**B – BRICS increased de-dollarisation push and deepened energy alignments Newly inducted BRICS members, including Saudi Arabia and UAE, started formal participation in BRICS meetings in January, 2025. Post this, members collectively started pushing for trade in local currencies and reduced dependence on US dollar settlements. Oil-exporting nations also strengthened their ties with BRICS nations, allowing the possibility of non-dollar oil trade in the future. While de-dollarisation remains early-stage, a collective push by an objectively strong coalition of nations looks promising.**

**C – Chinese aggressions around Taiwan reached dangerous levels**

After consistent military advances in and around Taiwan for years, Chinese aggression increased significantly in 2025. In January, China conducted joint drills around Taiwan simulating strikes and encirclement. It crossed the unofficial line of separation and established troops closer to Taiwan. In December, China launched its biggest-ever drills near Taiwan, ostensibly preparing for total blockading of Taiwan, disruption of trade, and prevention of foreign aid or intervention.

**D – Donald Trump's policies disrupted globalisation and international integration efforts (alternatively: Donald Trump's neo-colonialism and imperial policies destroy all semblance of global cohesion and parity)**

Trump launched universal tariffs on countries in 2025, which increased economic burden and trade costs and dismantled global progress towards free and fair trade. He disengaged from the UNFCCC, undermined the Paris Agreement, and moved towards fossil-fuel-friendly policies. He withdrew from the WHO, accusing the world's biggest health organisation of mishandling the COVID-19 pandemic. He criticised European NATO allies, urging for encouraging greater defense spending. His policies created global uncertainty, economic disruptions, and disproportionate pressure on developing countries.



**E – Epstein Files released by the US Department of Justice**

**(alternatively: Epstein Files barrage raised questions about public acceptance of capitalist big-shots)**

After delaying the release of the Epstein files for years, the DoJ finally published the Epstein Files in December, 2025. Although still heavily censored, the Files named hundreds of known figures, from politicians, to film stars, to academics and scholars. Details hinted at cannibalism, sexual assault and human trafficking, and the existence of an island where no rules existed because the invitees had power and fame. The Files continue to be released, and while those accused continue to deny involvement, public backlash has come swift and strong.

**F – France saw nationwide "Block everything" protests**

In September, 2025, France saw large-scale protests against budget-cuts and general political instability. The protests were triggered by over 40 billion dollars cut from the national budget by the Bayrou government, primarily from pension and healthcare funds. This move was seen as an attack on civic and public welfare, and prompted barricades, protests and rallies all through the country. While Bayrou's government later collapsed due to a no-confidence vote, protests have continued at a smaller scale in pockets in France.


**G – Greenland's sovereignty endangered by the USA's hints at annexation** In 2025, Trump hinted at "taking over" Greenland, an autonomous territory of Denmark. After unsuccessfully trying to purchase Greenland during his first presidency, Trump initially refused to rule out military use in his probable attempt at annexation. This was followed by Denmark and eight NATO allies deploying forces to defend Greenland. Trump subsequently threatened launching a trade-war against the EU if they supported Greenland. However, due to the cost of such consequences, a military or trade war remains out of the picture currently.

**H – Humanitarian crisis worsened in Gaza**

Israel's blockades of the Gaza strip intensified in 2025. Food, water, fuel, and other necessities were restricted or outrightly blocked from reaching the Palestinian population in war zones. In August, famines were officially declared in several regions in Gaza. Many hospitals were bombed during airstrikes, and remaining ones were overcrowded while being short of supplies and equipment. Over 90% of Gaza's populace was reported to have been displaced at the end of 2025.

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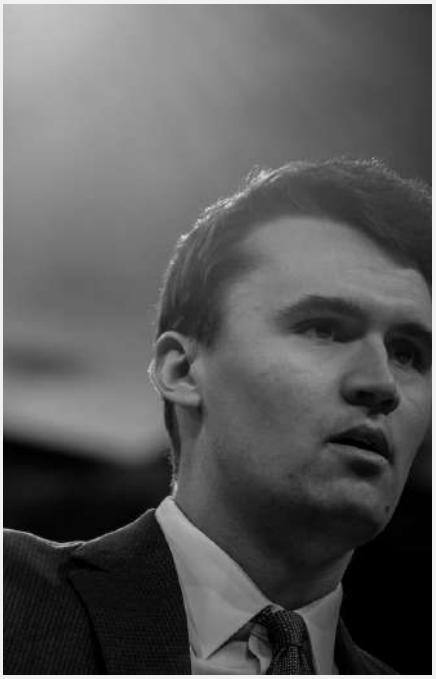
**I – ICE escalated immigration enforcement through arrests, detainments and raids** The USA Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) cracked down on immigrants (mostly, but not exclusively, undocumented) in 2025. It increased surveillance and raids, detained children and elderly in inhumane centres with no accountability for their safety and wellbeing, and worsened public perception for all American immigrants at large. ICE funding also saw an unprecedented rise, with over 45 billion dollars sanctioned by the government alone – all while departments of education, health, and DEI have taken significant budget cuts.

**J – Japan elected its first female Prime Minister, known for her conservative and protectionist policies**

In October, 2025, Japan elected Sanae Takaichi as its first female Prime Minister. Known for her hardcore right-wing views and seen as a successor of former PM Shinzo Abe, Takaichi came to office on the claim of strengthening Japan. Since then, she has advocated strongly for military modernisation, tightened immigration, and a hawkish foreign policy towards China and Chinese aggression.



**K – Kirk killed by gunman while addressing a University rally**

**(alternatively: MAGA supporter who advocated for unrestricted gun rights dies because of his own follies)**

Charlie Kirk, a prominent social-media personality who supported the MAGA Movement, was shot dead while addressing a debate at Utah. Kirk was shot in the neck by an armed gunman, and was pronounced dead on-the-spot. His death was followed by an outpour of support from the far-right movement and Trump explicitly calling for an end to "political extremism".


**L – Legal battle around Temporary Protected Status (TPS)** intensified The new US government sought to terminate or restrict the TPS provision, which allows refugees from crisis-hit countries to stay and work legally in the United States without fear of deportation. The National TPS Alliance questioned this arbitrary termination in court, saying that thousands of migrants would risk losing legal status and be rendered homeless. Courts debated the issue multiple times, with the verdicts going back and forth, leaving migrants with an uncertain future. Similar battles continue to be fought in the United Kingdom and European Union.

**M – Migration and forced displacement crisis improved in Syria**

Hundreds of thousands of people from Syria had been forced to migrate to neighboring countries in the Middle East during the oppressive, conflict-ridden regime of Bashar-al-Assad. With the overthrow of the Assad regime, Syrians are cautiously optimistic about returning home. Countries like Turkey and Lebanon, who host millions of Syrians, have adopted accommodative policies to allow Syrians to return and come back if necessary without fear of losing shelter and safety.

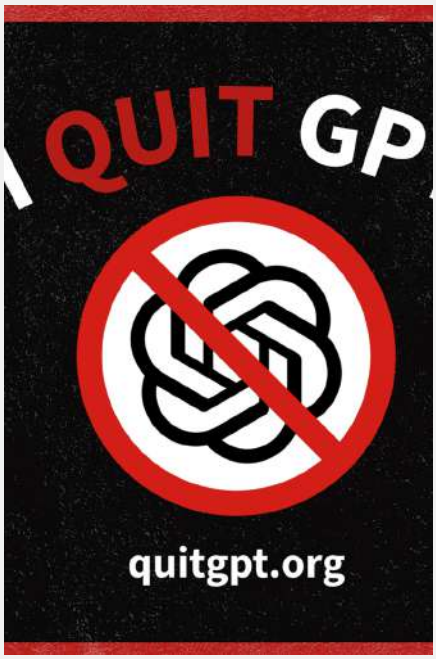
**N - Nepal witnessed massive anti-corruption protests led by Gen Z**

In September 2025, thousands of Nepalese Gen Z protestors took to streets in order to vent their frustration with systemic corruption and lack of political accountability, partially triggered by the

flagrant display of wealth by Nepalese political elites and their children on social media. The nationwide movement saw 76 recorded deaths, mostly victims of police violence, and culminated in the resignation of Prime Minister K.P Sharma Oli.

**O - Operation Sindoor triggered fresh India-Pakistan tensions**

In response to the April 2025 Pahalgam terror attack which killed 26 civilians in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir, the Indian government launched a military campaign called Operation Sindoor on 7 May 2025 with the objective of punishing “perpetrators and planners of attack”. Indian missile strikes mainly targeted terrorism-related infrastructure facilities of Pakistan-based militant groups Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba in Pakistan and Pakistan-administered Azad Kashmir, resulting in a four day military conflict that ended in a ceasefire between the two historical rivals.




**P - Pope Leo XIV succeeded late Pope Francis as the head of the Roman Catholic Church**

In a historic first, Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost became the first American to become the head of the Roman Catholic Church, succeeding Pope Francis. Prevost chose the papal name Pope Leo XIV, in honor of Pope Leo XII, who established modern Catholic social teaching and promoted workers' rights. In the wake of his papacy, Prevost hasn't shied away from speaking up against the ills of nationalism and the violence that accompanies human greed, while also holding strong anti-AI and pro-immigration views.

**Q - Quit GPT movement gained momentum owing to mass surveillance fears**

On February 27 2025, ChatGPT competitor Anthropic refused to give the Pentagon (U.S Department of Defense) unrestricted access to its AI for mass surveillance of American citizens or producing AI weapons that kill without human oversight. Within hours, Open AI (ChatGPT's parent company) swooped in to accept the Pentagon's corrupt deal, with its President Greg Brockman and his wife later donating $25 million dollars to MAGA (Make America Great Again) Inc. In early March, a #QuitGPT movement was launched online, urging users to cancel their ChatGPT subscriptions and quit its usage because of ethical concerns.

**R - Resurgence of far-right parties in Europe strengthened anti-immigration policies**

In 2025, the far-right in Europe made major strides, reflecting a cultural shift in the face of immigration debates, economic insecurity and political dissatisfaction. While the Alternative for Germany (AfD) emerged as the second largest party in the Bundestag, the far-right Chega party achieved 22.8 percent of the vote in Portugal's May 2025 legislative election, marking an important year for the radical right. Adopting a "civic nationalist" narrative, far right leaders like

Georgia Meloni and Viktor Orbán are styling themselves as defenders of democratic values against immigration to broaden their appeal beyond traditional voters.

**S - Sudanese civil war continued to worsen the humanitarian crisis**

.Over 30 million people continue to be caught in the crossfire between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), with the conflict entering a deadlier phase in 2025. The United Nations has described it as the world's largest humanitarian crisis, with a death tally ranging between 40,000 to 250,000 people and more than 14 million people facing displacement within Sudan and its neighboring countries.

**T - Taliban-India relations improved**

Four years after cutting all ties with Afghanistan, Indian foreign policy saw a dramatic twist when Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi made an eight-day visit to the country, marking the Taliban's highest-level visit to India since capturing power in 2021. The visit was marred by a press conference that excluded women journalists, an event which received immense public backlash given the Taliban's reputation concerning women's rights back home. The event was also widely interpreted as an attempt at restoring India-Afghanistan relations, especially in the backdrop of worsening India-Pakistan relations.

**U - United Nations Climate Change Conference or COP30 took place in Belém, Brazil**

The year's most anticipated climate conference, COP30, took place in Belém, Brazil, from 10 to 21 November 2025, with an agreement calling for a tripling of funding by 2035 for developing nations to protect their citizens from the heightening impact of the climate crisis, and for stepping up support for workers and communities in the transition to clean energy and a green economy. It was, however, marked by controversies surrounding the construction of summit infrastructure in the Amazon, the absence of big shot leaders like the US President, and intense fossil fuel lobbying.

**V - Venezuelan Opposition leader Maria Corina Machado was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize 2025**

**(alternatively: Trump finally wins his Nobel Peace Prize)**

A staunch opponent of former Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, Maria Corina Machado's Nobel Peace Prize win came amidst major political crises in the small Latin American country. The Norwegian Nobel Committee honored her "for her tireless work promoting democratic rights for the people of Venezuela and for her struggle to achieve a just and peaceful transition from dictatorship to democracy". Machado's win, however, turned controversial when she

dedicated her award to US President Donald Trump, with many arguing that her political stance was in fact manufacturing consent for US military intervention.

**W - World Economic Forum saw world leaders and CEOs deliberate over the need for increased mutual cooperation**

The 55th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum took place in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland from 20 to 24 January 2025 on the theme "Collaboration for the International Age". It addressed geopolitical shocks and the need for cooperation amidst changing power dynamics. A key report was published on the future of jobs in an increasingly technological age, as leaders deliberated on the way forward. Analysts, however, noted the absence of G20 leaders and general disconnect from the larger public.

**X - Xi Jinping capped off an important year for China**

Marking the completion of China's 14th Five Year Plan, Xi Jinping highlighted 2025 as a breakthrough year for Chinese semiconductor chips and AI amid intensifying competition with the US. Domestically, he strengthened party oversight in areas like technology, finance and security. He continued a deep anti-graft, pro-discipline campaign to ensure political loyalty and efficiency within the CCP. Externally, Xi Jinping has maintained a commitment to reunification with Taiwan, asserting that it was "unstoppable".

**Y - Yemen marked a decade of civil war amid deepening humanitarian crisis and volatile security situation**

According to the World Report 2025 of Human Rights Watch, Yemen remains one of the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. In March 2025, US launched Operation Rough Rider against Houthi targets in Yemen, later joined by the United Kingdom. The Houthis then went on to launch strikes on Israel, in an act of solidarity with Palestine, which was met with resistance by Israel, US and the UK. Warring parties continue to obstruct the passage of humanitarian aid, crack down on women's rights, commit serious violations against children and cause large scale displacement across the territory.

**Z - Zohran Mamdani won the New York mayoral elections defeating former Governor Andrew Cuomo and Republican Curtis Sliwa**

**(alternatively: MAGA fears the imposition of Sharia law in New York after Zohran is elected Mayor)**

In a historic juncture of modern American politics, Zohran Mamdani, a social Democrat with immigrant roots, was elected as New York City's 112th mayor on November 4, 2025. His victory

marked the beginning of something hopeful in the heart of America's most beloved city. His campaign was mostly catered towards ordinary New Yorkers, promising to resolve the cost-of-living crisis and relying on grassroots and social media campaigning instead of corporate funding. In early November, President Trump threatened to withdraw federal funding for New York City should Mamdani be elected mayor. However, Mamdani's election was met with utmost enthusiasm across the world as his smiling, amiable face emerged as a beacon of hope in the ever polarizing world of today's politics.

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