



Literary and Debating Committee  
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*The Lost Stories*  
NLUJA ASSAM

# THE LOST STORIES

*NLUJA Assam*

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National Law University and Judicial Academy, Assam.



# *The Lost Stories*

NLUJA ASSAM



Literary and Debating Committee  
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# Letter from the Chief Patron

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I am beyond delighted to present to the readers the third edition of “The Lost Stories, NLUJA Assam,” the literary magazine of National Law University and Judicial Academy, Assam. This magazine is a labor of love, compiled by the dedicated efforts of the Literary and Debating Committee NLUJA Assam and the Lost Stories Editorial Board, showcasing the incredible talent of aspiring writers from several universities across India.

'Lost Stories' plays a crucial role in unlocking students' creativity. By providing a dedicated space for artistic expression, it liberates students from the constraints of their legal studies. Through themed prompts and various art forms, it encourages them to venture into uncharted imaginative territories. Having their work published fosters confidence and a sense of community, ultimately enriching their personal development and the cultural vibrancy of the institution. Through this magazine, students have found a platform to share their thoughts, emotions, and perspectives with a wider audience. The vivid array of stories, poems, essays, and artwork illuminates the diverse minds and experiences of the young talent within the legal community. It is a celebration of their unique voices and a testament to the power of creativity in fostering a well-rounded and empathetic legal education.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Editorial Board and all the contributors for their exceptional work. Their dedication and passion have made 'The Lost Stories' a captivating read, one that not only showcases the literary prowess of its contributors but also fosters a sense of community and camaraderie among young writers.

As this magazine continues to evolve with each subsequent issue, I am filled with hope and excitement about its expanding reach. I believe that 'The Lost Stories' will continue to inspire and engage readers far and wide, leaving an indelible mark in the world of literature and arts.

*- Prof. (Dr.) V.K. Ahuja  
Vice-Chancellor, NLUJA Assam*

# Letter from the Patron

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I am pleased that the third edition of the magazine “Lost Stories” put together by the Literary and Debating Committee of NLUJA Assam is finally out. The magazine with its abundant creativity has a special place in the heart of the University. Every stroke of pen and brush that has been a part of this magazine has its own unique and enticing charm which lets us take a peek at our artistic edge aside from the constant academic hustles of students. This magazine has its own wide outlook on all topics starting from paintings to written expressions of life. Besides the extensive variety, the magazine offers innovation on the takes of students on a bunch of the latest and the most contemporary topics around the world which can be a great source of enrichment for minds all over the country and further. I hope this magazine grows every year with newer editions that we can look forward to. I wholeheartedly congratulate all the contributors and the editorial board of the magazine.

*-Gunajit Roy Choudhury, ACS  
Registrar, NLUJA Assam*

# Note from the Faculty Advisor

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*“The more you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.” - Dr. Theodor Seuss Geisel*

With the release of the third edition of “Lost Stories,” I would like to congratulate one and all who contributed to it. I believe the tradition of literature has a unique way of capturing the essence of our thoughts, emotions, and experiences. This magazine serves as a testament to your passion for academic excellence. The journey of crafting and sharing literature is a profound one and I hope it continues for the students of NLUJA Assam.

*-Dr. Thangzakhup Tombing  
Assistant Professor of Law, NLUJA Assam*



# Note from the Editorial Board

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The Editorial Board for the third edition of “Lost Stories,” released under the aegis of the Literary and Debating Committee, NLUJA Assam would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone involved in the creation of this student literary magazine.

In the delicate pages of this magazine, we aim not merely to display artistic endeavors, but to weave a tapestry that embodies the very ethos of intellectual exploration, inventive expression, and contemplative introspection that characterizes our academic milieu. Each article, artwork, and fictional narrative has been handpicked, not merely for its aesthetic appeal, but for its resonance with the core of our literary aspirations.

Our endeavor to curate this medley of diverse expressions surpasses the bounds of mere compilation. It is a concerted effort to establish an avenue that not only forges connections but also fuels collaborative efforts, creating a space where shared passions can be kindled, united, and celebrated. Through “Lost Stories,” we aspire to create a conduit for readers to not only consume, but to actively participate in the dynamic discourse of ideas and creativity.

With a sense of achievement, we present to you, our cherished readers, this collection of exceptional pieces. Just as a constellation is formed from individual stars, this edition of “Lost Stories” brings together a constellation of diverse talents, viewpoints, and emotions. It is our ardent hope that this compilation, building upon the legacy of its predecessors, will not only captivate and entertain but also stimulate introspection and dialogue.

In the boundless realm of written expression, brushstrokes of artistry, and flights of imagination, we continue to nurture and perpetuate the rich literary heritage of our institution. As you delve into the pages of “Lost Stories,” may you find not only entertainment but also a source of intellectual rejuvenation, fostering a deeper connection with the world of ideas and creativity.

# Foreword

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Sensitivity and empathy create literature when the writer's mind sees the world around him from a different perspective. The writer undergoes those moods and feelings when he or she makes it a personal statement in a poem or a story. When the horizon expands, the writer becomes sensitive to the world around him. The happenings around them either enrage him or bring about a feeling of compassion. The writer wants to share the burden of the protagonist of his creation.

Likewise, good lawyers feel for society, and especially the wronged ones, and take up their issues on a larger platform. Delivering justice is the end of both a committed writer and lawyer.

This has found expression in the works of the law students of NLUJA Assam in the form of their literary journal "Lost Stories" going into the third edition.

I wish the venture all the best.

*- Swapnil Baruah  
IAS Officer (Retd.)*

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# Indian Moms

Written by Shrey Goyal  
Student, National Law University and Judicial Academy, Assam

## *An Indian Mom*

*will give you the plump cottage cheese,  
reserving the wilted vegetables for herself.  
She will then harp about how the capsicum has been  
her favourite part all along,  
her eyes towards the ground.*

*She will smear your roti in ghee,  
against your doctor's strict instructions;  
and laugh it off as a mistake each time.  
She will know of your hunger better than yourself;  
scolding you the entire while,  
her wrinkled hands guide bites of inimitable food to your mouth,  
her chai wasting away, forgotten, on the bedstand.*

*So, I hope you will forgive me,  
if, when I hear of deities and gods;  
and their mythical deeds and legends,  
their grandeur and their magnanimity, and I think of my  
mom.*

*I have no other frame of reference.*



# Journey

Written by Vinayak Gupta  
Student, Himachal Pradesh National Law University, Shimla

*The sand softly crunched beneath me as I walked along  
A path filled with people so many yet so many people forlorn  
Time progressed and so did I, and walking on I found  
Lonely, I wasn't yet alone, I was even with walkers abound*

*A certain few had walked the sands with me from the very start  
I had to bid them goodbye midway, even as it broke my heart  
Humming as I tread my path, sometimes I stopped to turn  
To see my notes being echoed in another traveller's sojourn  
Knowing it was passing fortune, we held one another's gaze  
Each beheld the other's warmth but in a momentary daze  
I turned around to see if I could trace the journey I'd taken  
But not just mine, it seemed everyone's tracks had been forsaken*

*The sands beneath me chose not to bind any of my steps  
But I feel privileged to leave even a singular smile behind.*



# Petrichor

Written by Shivendu Jaiman  
Student, Himachal Pradesh National Law University, Shimla

*Hold the door, hold the door,*

*Woodlands joyous in full bloom, rain-fed earth's lavish perfume.*

*for the earthly, spritely, petrichor.*

*Soil heartening with a bit of drama,*

*Penetrating the soul with purity divine,*

*nonchalantly brewing nature's finest aroma.*

*even a whiff makes your very being shine.*

*Not a smell, but rather a splendorous spell,*

*oh petrichor, with jubilation you make my heart swell.*


# Grandma's Lullabies

Written by Saikh Md. Sabah Al-Ahmed  
Faculty of English & Social Sciences, Don Bosco School, Panbazar, Guwahati

*July rains;  
The spitting July rain,  
When tiny tadpoles leapfrog to life.  
The smoky sky above  
Obscures its pristine blue blanket – slowly,  
As the clouds above melt, I then remember Grandma's lullabies.*

*We used to shiver,  
As the deafening thunder roared outside.  
We jumped on to Grandma's lap;  
Her frail body shook,  
As we all jostled for comfort zones around her;  
Our droopy eyelids slowly dropping curtains,  
As we all go into a trance,  
And Grandma's lullabies took us far away into fairyland;  
Long before we get embalmed  
By her mystical tales in her wobbly voice.*

*The July rains have stopped now,  
It's November, and we had just bade autumn goodbye.  
The clear blue sky has now managed  
To pierce itself through its thick smoky blanket of clouds;  
I search for Grandma  
But she's not there on her moth-eaten bed.*



*It's July again, and I can still hear her  
Humming those lullabies somewhere far away,  
I yearn to be in her lap,  
As the thunder roars once again,  
Pelting hail on our supine roof.*

*I hide myself under a blanket  
And lay motionless until I realise it's daybreak.*



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# When I saw my Mom's Marksheet

Written by Srushti Joshi  
Student, Maharashtra National Law University, Nagpur

*Maybe one day, my daughter will shuffle through my files of degrees and mark sheets Just like I do, when I shuffle through my mom's files.*

*And she too might wonder, why did I get lost in this world, When I could have done Wonders.*

*Why did I settle for so little as a husband and kids?*

*Why did I take pride in Introducing myself as a mom of two instead of a lawyer?*

*Why did I put down her dreams?*

*before mine, and why did picking her up from her dance practice, Mattered to me more than my meeting with clients when her baby brother was born, she will wonder Why did I land up at such a place.*

*And she will strive, for an education better than mine, to stand on her feet. To not get lost in this wheel of patriarchy, marriages, and having children.*

*And she will work her way through, and rebel.*

*Rebel against everything and get and go up a pedestal. And never get down.*

*And I too shall never push her into the wheel of patriarchy, marriages, and having children.*

*And end this cycle of having her daughter shuffle through her files, wondering where another brilliant woman was lost with her birth.*



# Mothers and Daughters - An ode, a reproach

---

Written by Tesu Prakash  
Writer

*Mothers and daughters are complicated creatures,  
Mothers and daughters have complicated relationships.*

*There's a lot of love, garnished heavily with the weight of expectations,  
fantasies, jealousy and  
unspoken regrets.*

*There's a lot of "I never got the chance to grow my wings so I'll make sure  
you grow yours,"*

*But there's also the "I never tasted the skies so God forbid I let you loose and  
lose you forever."*

*There's also the dream project to turn up a perfect wooden masterpiece out of  
a complicated  
human being - you have to run for President, win a beauty pageant, cook a  
seven-course meal,  
dance like everyone's always watching and through it all maintain the  
facade of gentleness  
because what is a woman if not sweet.*

*There's a wishing star that falls every time a daughter wishes her mother  
understood her more,  
and a mother wishes she could be her daughter's main girl.*

*But the star collapses every time, for there are also unanswered questions,  
unspoken secrets, lies to flout tradition, lies to save one's sanity, fake smiles  
and a lot of silence, punctuated by a lot of instructions, values and lessons to  
squeeze out all the air of comfort*



*There's a lot of generational misunderstanding about the whole of womankind, a lot of brainwashing to feel guilty of being a woman, to focus exclusively on the male gaze, the patriarchy, the spirit of surrender and sacrifice and compromise because what is a woman if not a meek goddess afraid of her own power.*

*There's a lot of trauma in the air but also a lot of shared heritage, a lot of coming to terms with the changing world, coming out of the exclusive brain fog of both smothering culture and toxic modernity, of both the kingdom's legacy and the queen's myth.*

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*There's a lot of slow growth, evolution and metamorphosis, things core to the feminine throne.*

*There's a slow coming home beyond conflicts, and comfort beyond concepts and cults, a coming of home of the feminine spirit that rests and blooms in the cycle of life between the mother and the daughter.*





# A Life Beyond Death

Written by Aadithya J. Nair  
Student, The National University of Advanced Legal Studies, Kochi


*Death is the end of it all they say  
It is scary and it brings darkness on its way  
It closes our eyes and shuts our world out  
Yet it fails to cast a shadow on our soul that scampers about*

*Death is the end of the moral life of course  
Yet not the closure on our thoughts and ideas that we endorse  
The fables of our morals live on relentless  
With such force of thought that no one can suppress*

*Let us be remembered for more than mere flesh and bones  
Let us carve our mark beyond just mortal remains on rock solid stones  
Let us live life as it were to never end  
To no one's hegemony or tyranny shall we bend*

*Let us hold true to our values and beliefs  
Let us set aside pointless sorrow and grief  
Let us live with no fear to die or fade out of sight  
Let us stand up for what is the truth and what is right*

*Death is a mere hinge on our mortal existence  
It is not a curb on our thoughts or sense  
Let death ride its course and take our body away  
However, our soul and beliefs it shall not sway*



*Death is a stranger that consumes only the corpse that is cold  
It cannot break the spirit of those who speak out bold  
Death cannot consume the flames of a burning mind  
It collapses into a heap amidst the intellectual grind*

*Death and life are a cycle for the human  
It will not maim the soul that refuses to be outdone  
Death takes us beyond mortal lives  
Yet we persist; yet we strive*

*For the world is too small for the fury of our thought  
It shall not contain or consume all that we sought  
Freedom of thought shall rein through like a storm  
It shall persist and preserve in a definite form*

*Death is not the end of us  
If we refuse to yield to mortal cry and fuss,  
We shall live longer than we exist  
We shall breathe fire into world of cold and mist*

*Death is not the parting  
For we are only starting  
Let us live on  
As we arise to a new age of dawn*





# Green as Glass

Written by Yuvraj Singh Walia  
Student, Himachal Pradesh National Law University, Shimla


*The spotlight is on Crystal today,  
All eyes glued on her, all heads turned her way.  
Standing in her burning hot red coat, she glistens,  
Soon disappearing in the smoggy smoke emissions.*

*Now the spotlight is on the trapeze hanging above,  
Onto it, a young girl with the eyes of a dove.  
Nervous, scared, trapped like a rat,  
Praying to not ruin her act.*

*And when the 'Entrance of the Gladiators' starts playing,  
As gracefully as a scarlet macaw, she starts swaying.  
Swift twists, turns and twirls with mid-air acrobatic kicks,  
She pulls out all her coolest tricks.*

*But as soon as her eyes set on the gaping mouths below looking her way  
She tumbles down and loses her sway.  
The air around is now bluer than a bruise,  
Filled with rage, hatred, and heart-stopping boos.*

*Amidst the deafening commotion and the ringmaster's frown,  
She wonders who's the acrobat and who's the clown.  
The tigers, the elephants, and even the chimps seem to laugh with disgrace,  
As she tries to hide her red-flushed face.*



*Running in shame back to her vanity,  
She has lost it all, all her sanity  
With heart weighing heavier than sorrow,  
She wishes to see no tomorrow.  
If death, dismay, and destruction are to remain,  
She shall never breathe fresh air again.*


*But as her eyes once again meet,  
This time the eyes of a dove so sweet,  
The spotlight is back again on her,  
Focusing on the person sitting in front in shades of blue.*

*And as she places her hand on the glimmering glass,  
Softer than satin, greener than grass,  
The girl she sees, in all transparent honesty,  
Castigates her for the travesty.*

*In failing to realize the strength within,  
Failing to fight, failing to win.*

*But once you truly find yourself and the epiphany strikes,  
You steer clear of your self-induced poison fights.*

*And such is the beauty of the reflection you see,  
That paints you in the coolest shades of glee.  
Now remembering her true worth, she lifts her head with pride,  
With the glow and glimmer of a soon-to-be-bride.*



*When tonight folds and morning comes knocking on her door,  
She'll be oh so ready to put on a show and through new heights soar.  
Her cold plastic heart is now a crystal glass,  
And just like glass so clean, so green.*

*She promises to do away with her spirit-polluting fiends,  
And yes, there still will be cracks on this crystal inside her chest,  
But just like clean glass, she'll shine the best.*

*And though the circus now comes to an end,  
There will be a new beginning again.  
Newer than life, purer than the water in the river,  
Just like the girl in her hope-sustaining mirror.*

*The mirror that hangs on her dresser's walls,  
The mirror that embodies her heart-way halls,  
The mirror that shines and gleams so clean,  
The mirror she now paints in green.*

*For green is the color of renewal, the color of life,  
Earth's mother, nature's wife.*

# Dancing to our own Drums: Embracing Existentialism

Written by Prakriti Vyas  
Student, Amity University, Raipur


*We are dust and stars,  
Fleeting cosmic travellers.  
Yet each moment is a chance,  
To love, to create, to dance.*

*To discover and explore,  
To find beauty in the unknown.  
To be true to ourselves,  
Even in the face of the unforeknown.*

*Existentialism is not a curse,  
But an invitation to dig deeper.  
To find our own purpose and reason,  
And live a life that's richer.*

*Though we're made of stardust,  
We have a purpose here on earth.  
To love, to learn, to grow,  
To discover our own worth.*

*So let's embrace the journey,  
Find joy in every step we take.  
Let's dance to the rhythm of our own drums,  
And create a life that's truly great.*



*Existentialism offers us a gift,  
The chance to find our own way.  
To live authentically and honestly,  
And make the most of every day.*

*So let's embrace the mystery,  
And find purpose in the unknown.  
In the search for meaning,  
We can create a life that's our own.*



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# Dupattas and Ropes: A Critical Analysis of Hangwoman by K.R. Meera

Written by Aadithri Shetty  
Student, Jindal Global Law School, Sonapat



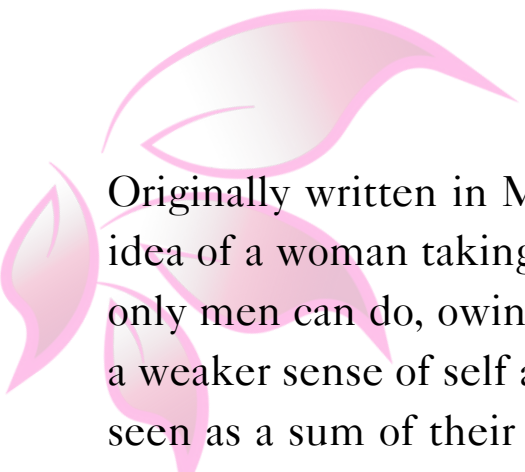
“It is not women who fear history; it is history who fears women. That’s why there are so few of them in it” (189).

“Hangwoman” portrays Chetna Grddha Mullick’s journey to becoming the world’s first female executioner, thus continuing on the career path of most of the men in her family line before her.

The book showcases her journey from being subjugated as her father’s daughter, to being subjugated by the man she loved, to struggling to find a balance between those two identities. Ultimately, she rejects both to be an independent woman who makes her own choices without any external force of influence.

While following this storyline it discusses the idea of death in an extremely peaceful but also powerful, almost poetic light. Alongside these main themes it also subtly touches upon some important as well as controversial themes of tradition and culture, class conflict, the bureaucracy of the government, capital punishment and sex work. The book beautifully entwines the life stories of Chetna’s whole family line with what she is going through at that moment, thereby describing her exact thoughts and emotions even better. It is extremely well written and has the intended effect on the reader.

The whole book gives the reader a sense of ethereality and fantasy with its callbacks to her family history and the parallels it draws between her and her female ancestors, while sharply jerking the reader back into reality with the experiences that she has as a modern Indian woman.

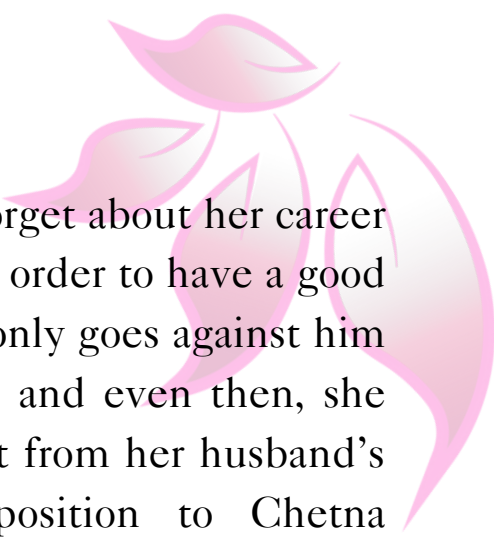


Originally written in Malayalam, the book is about the ground-breaking idea of a woman taking a career as an executioner. It is seen as a job that only men can do, owing to women being emotionally weaker and having a weaker sense of self and willpower. This, combined with women being seen as a sum of their sexuality and maternal caring nature, furthers the patriarchal notion that women are not capable of doing this job.

Chetna is pushed towards this line of work by her father, who tells her and the rest of society that she is more than capable of hanging criminals, but later in the novel he reveals that he has no belief in her and was just capitalising on the controversy and novelty of her contradicting the aforementioned stereotype (396-397). She gives into the power dynamic of being the meek daughter of an Indian household at first. She then falls in love with Sanjeev Kumar Mitra who manipulates her emotions with promises of marriage and romance to achieve his goal of getting ahead in his career and unceremoniously dumped her whenever she does not prove useful to his work.

These two men seem to be opposing forces in her life and at first, she rejects her father to follow Mitra, only to realise later that he too has selfish intentions and is using her. The book ends with her accepting her own identity and needs and growing into her own as a woman descending from a line of strong women, with unique and beautiful stories, not being subjugated by the men in her life.

While the male forces in her life obviously oppose her sense of power, the women in her life too are seen to resign to the helplessness of their gender. Her grandmother says, “If women want to stand up straight, they should be willing to bend occasionally” (393).

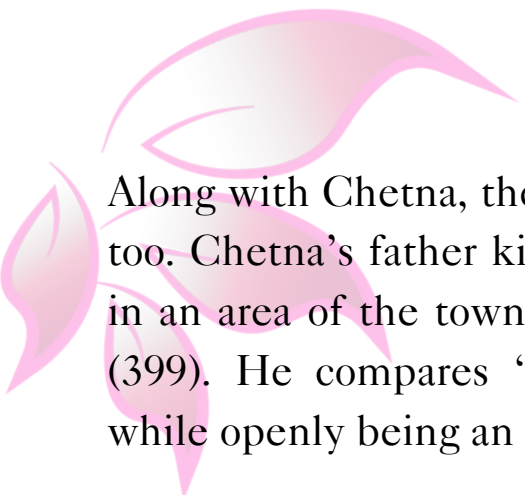


Her mother and multiple other women tell her to forget about her career and find a good wealthy and caring man to marry in order to have a good life (342). Her mother, while defiant of her father, only goes against him when matters of Chetna's life are being discussed and even then, she feeds into the same patriarchal ideas, only different from her husband's money-making plans. Everyone's principal opposition to Chetna becoming an executioner seems to be that no one will marry her. Even Jatindranath, even as she is preparing to hang him, requests her to marry his brother because neither of them will find anyone better due to their circumstances (392).

The patriarchal characters, while encouraging stereotypical femininity, seem to smother any idea of female sexuality as a woman's choice. Chetna is objectified by almost all the men she meets. She is repeatedly harassed and molested but usually does show the men their place, except for when the aggressions are committed by the man she loves.

“A bird with its feathers on fire cannot feel worried about women's power and self-respect, I was convinced” (158). Even the man she is about to hang, refuses to see her as a threat and sexualizes her by asking to see her repeatedly because he finds her beautiful. Her bosom is continually used as a symbol of her femininity, displaying the manner in which she processes her emotions in relation to her sexuality and womanhood. It is used to abuse and hurt her by her perpetrators throughout the book. Her femininity is the root of her strengths and weaknesses, also being the very thing that makes her prey to men.

Towards the end of the book, she says her breasts have turned to stone, symbolising how she has now grown stronger, unmoving, and unemotional towards the opposite sex.



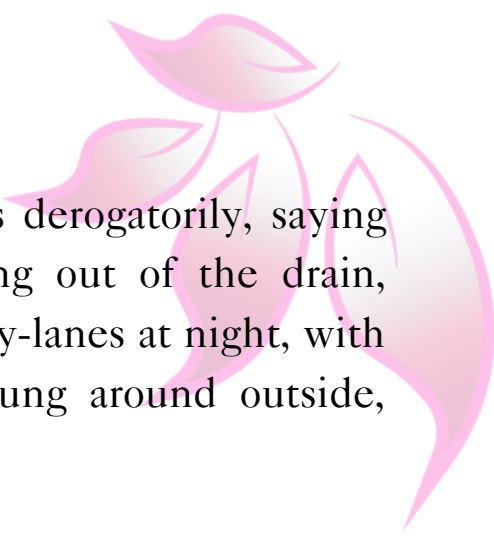
Along with Chetna, the other women in the book are sexually oppressed too. Chetna's father kills her aunt simply for the reason that he saw her in an area of the town that he thought reflected badly on her character (399). He compares "loose women" to thieves and murderers, (381) while openly being an adulterer himself.

The book also indirectly talks a lot about class differences. Chetna and her family are poor while Sanjeev Kumar Mitra is relatively rich, and this distinction is seen in almost all their interactions where gender is not the focus of their power dynamic.

Sanjeev Kumar Mitra is seen as living in a wealthy area and not having experienced Bengali culture much. He also seems unaware of the role that the lower classes currently play (201). However, there are instances of him deliberately acknowledging his privilege in a manner that is demeaning to Chetna and her family.

For example, he takes Chetna to an expensive jewellery shop (which he also plans to steal from) and tells her, this is not a place where your baba can enter (220). He tells Chetna a story of how he was poor during his childhood, before becoming a successful journalist. Thus, he becomes a symbol of class mobility in the book.

There are multiple mentions of sex work in the book, whether in the form of the prostitutes that Chetna's father goes to, or Trailokya devi, Mitra's mother. There is a stark contradiction in the manner in which the theme of sex work is treated.



On one side, the protagonist refers to sex workers derogatorily, saying they were “Like insects and cockroaches crawling out of the drain, innumerable women came out of the narrow dark by-lanes at night, with painted lips and heavily rouged cheeks. They hung around outside, surrounding lone men” (235).

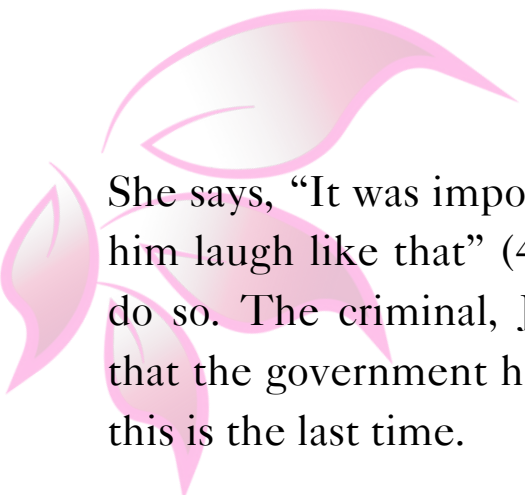
On the other end she describes Trailokya devi as beautiful and almost goddess-like in her appearance and mannerisms. Sometimes sex workers are seen as cheap, dirty and vulgar, but at other times they talk about traditions like “The statue of Durga is made out of the soil taken from a beshya’s doorstep. That is because the ego of the man that crosses it unravels and falls to the ground there” (432).

This also to some refers to the dichotomy of female sexuality being worshipped but also being looked at as impure. Mitra himself is ashamed of his mother’s identity and disowns her to the extent of telling everyone his mother died. However, his mother’s presence makes him uncomfortable and this shows her power over him rather than her being the victim.

The book artfully balances the ugliness and beauty of the idea of death. It ranges from talking about death in the aspect of something as rational as government policy and as scientific as bodily functions, to something as fantastical as warriors and deities dying in stories of times older than Christ. It questions the practice of capital punishment, with the age-old argument that criminals are still human and no one is ever beyond reform.

The protagonist is not alien to this. Although herself making a career out of the process of state sanctioned execution, she is seen to be sympathising with the very man she goes on to hang.





She says, “It was impossible to believe that he was a criminal, if you saw him laugh like that” (413). She even hugs him when he requests her to do so. The criminal, Jatindranath, is humanised further when he says that the government has killed him four or five times, and he’s glad that this is the last time.

At some points she mildly disagrees with the process, stating: “Only much later did the complexity of the practice strike me: the policemen stood guard, protecting one whom the government had hired to extinguish the life of another human being. Once I learned that the procedures of democracy included many such absurdities, I lost both the pride and the unease” (232) After carrying out the execution, she feels the sense of power that one feels of carrying out justice by taking a wrongdoer’s life, finally understanding why her ancestors had so much pride in their profession (415).

Sanjeev Kumar Mitra is a symbol of how the media capitalises on these kinds of emotions and feeds off of them to stay in business, the “paparazzi” aspect that looks for content to create “trauma porn” which gets them more viewership. Chetna talks about how he tried to take photos of her disabled brother, without asking for consent, stating, “The camera leapt greedily on the bed and, like Kali with her dreadful long tongue, licked him dry” (248). She sees some ants eating a fish head and says that Mitra looks like a corpse eater ant, symbolic of how he is also “feeding off of” or capitalising on death (233).

The book has great relevance in today’s political climate in that the argument of whether or not capital punishment is an acceptable form of justice is a timeless question that appears to have satisfactory explanations both in favour of, and against the concept. The book also discusses the bureaucracy of the government and its regressive ideologies to some extent.

It goes without saying that feminism is still an extremely necessary social movement due to the oppression of the patriarchy still being rampant in its subtler forms in society, and hence the book is definitely relevant on that forefront.

“Hangwoman”, a Sahitya Akademi Award winner, and rightly so, is a remarkable piece of feminist literature about a woman’s struggle to find her own identity, separate from the men in her life. The plotlines and experiences of all the female characters are so realistic that one would have a hard time calling this masterpiece a work of fiction. I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. As a feminist, I found it gripping and entertaining, with a very subtle sense of dark humour.

*The Lost Stories*

NLUJA ASSAM

# An Ode to Menstruation – Review of 'Colours of Blood'

Written by Sarvagya Agarwal

Student, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohiya National Law University, Lucknow

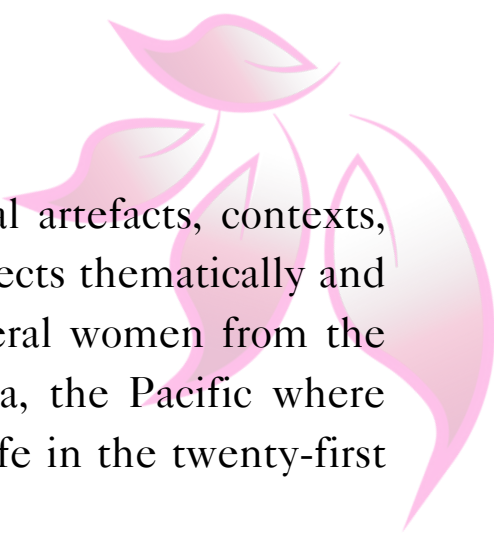


Myths and taboos have always surrounded the topic of menstruation. Religious and cultural directives reinforce the belief that menstruating women and girls are unclean.

Islam prohibits menstruating women from touching the Qur'an or praying during their menstrual cycle. It is also forbidden to enter the mosque. According to verse 19 of the Bible, a menstruating woman is considered unclean during menstruation, and anyone who touches a woman is considered unclean until evening. Lack of awareness of menstrual health and education about hygiene management have contributed to the fears, anxieties and taboos surrounding menstruation. According to a report commissioned by the United Nations Population Fund (U.N.F.P.A.), stigma, taboos, and misconceptions about menstruation lead to exclusion and discrimination against girls and women, creating severe human rights problems.

With all the stigma and stigma surrounding menstruation, what if a book was written on the subject? Poetry! Is this possible? Dr Alka Singh, the author of 'Colours of Blood', made it possible.

'Colours of Blood' by Dr Alka Singh offers a critical new addition to the now-growing field of Menstrual studies, which intersects with various other disciplines, including Cultural, Women, Gender, and Literary Studies, Feminism, Psychology, Mental Health, and several other areas. From menarche to menopause, Singh affirms that menstruation matters and offers, in her recent collection of poems, the many colourations of women's menstrual cycle as it touches on various other aspects of their sexuality, femininity, identity, and humanity.'



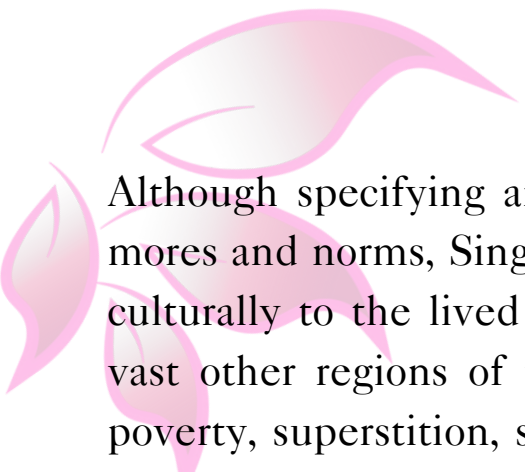
Although specifying and steeped in Hindu cultural artefacts, contexts, mores and norms, Singh's collection of poems connects thematically and culturally to the lived and life experiences of several women from the vast other regions of the global south; Africa, Asia, the Pacific where poverty, superstition, stigmas and taboos are still rife in the twenty-first century.

Ordinarily concealed and downplayed in the vast repertoire of literary texts by women writers of the global south, there is a paucity of public discourses on women's menstruation. This study circumvention process prevents viewing the possibilities of women's bodies and physiological details, including menstrual cycles, as potential sites for empowering these countless women and girls.

What we find is that words like "toxic," "pollution," "impurity," "danger," "impurity," and other harmful/offensive connotations generally evoke attitudes because it is associated with the natural occurrence of menstruation in women. and maintain the silence that surrounds them.

In this collection of her 29 poems on female menstruation and the many sub-themes that come with it, Singh creates a colourful, poetic pastiche that expands and reinforces the theme. The topic is broad. From fallacies of superstition community and camaraderie to other issues such as safety stemming from women's menstruation.

It also touches on sisterhood, and these are subtly expressed in poems such as "Shakti Within," "Chain," and "And So Moved She." Sometimes poets delve into rape and poverty and how it affects access to sanitary napkins.



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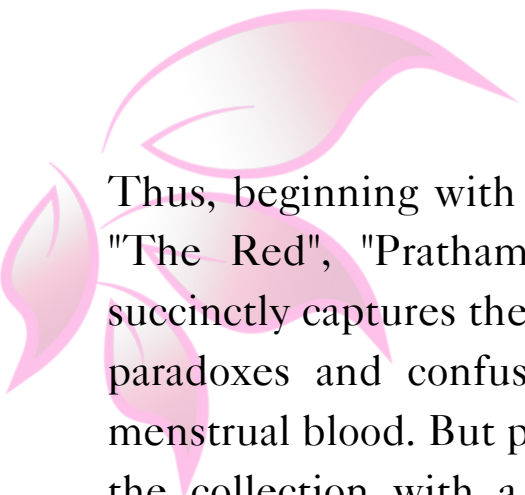
Such a redefined complication had a significant effect on the psyche of a girl who was in dire need of such an accessory, and the poet captures this vividly:

*[t]he girl with blood oozing out.  
A deep sigh within,  
Just no way out.  
Nature offers benevolence  
When none stands there  
Some parched, strangled leaves  
She wraps around. (52).*

Poets exploring imaginative genres that are elliptical in nature typically find themselves deeply entrenched and, in the most straightforward terms, on subjects that are shut out of public perception by their somewhat 'majestic' nature. You seem to speak eloquently. And without excluding her personal experience from the universal experience of menstruating women, she seems to make it so easy and empathetic. It creates a participation effect because all women in it are connected and drawn into the bloodstream of these women's menstrual cycles.

Singh's passion is when he finds himself in poetic discourse such as "Chain," "My red—myself," and "Blatant rouge on the face," and devotional words such as "To the woman in me." are powerfully conveyed. Others". We are all involved in a "cyclical togetherness," as she states in another of her poems, "Washing the Hair" (43).

Feasts, seclusion, ceremonies, rites of passage, and entire communities of dedicated women/sisterhood herald the first signs of reaching puberty. This theme runs through the first few poems of Singh's collection.



Thus, beginning with "Menstruating the Miasma" and running through "The Red", "Pratham Rajordarshan", and "Shakti within", the poet succinctly captures the many hues, sights and sounds, the contradictions, paradoxes and confusions that come with young girls' first sight of menstrual blood. But perhaps more significant for me is that Singh opens the collection with a firm, strident and mature voice devoid of the falsetto that may be found in a debut work.

Although menstruation may ordinarily appear personal, intimate, private and individualised, -- Colours of Blood -- is a complexly woven collection of poems that show that menstruation has public, cultural, economic, psychosocial and even cosmic resonances.

For instance, the ballad-- "Eclipse" offers a cosmic rationalisation for the exclusions of young girls and women from public spaces, thus, surreptitiously pointing to the universal embarrassment that the woman's body causes. As Singh herself remarks in the concluding part of her introduction to *The Colours of Blood*— "the poems here analyse the body, the heart, the soul and the mind and psyche of the menstrual environment that speak on the history, culture and sociology of humankind".

In her poetry collection, Singh hopes that when the menstrual cycle is celebrated and not anchored in harmful sociocultural taboos, it has the potential to inspire transformative attitudes towards the menstrual cycle.

Thus, in the poem *Celebrate Fleck*, the poet calls out aloud to celebrate Fleck. But Singh's call to the celebration differs significantly from the ritual in some of the opening verses mentioned earlier in this article.

Your reputation is more conscious and confident, requiring strategic self-awareness. For Singh, this is essential in changing old negative perceptions, traditions and norms.

In these poems, the poet demonstrates an ideological commitment to the women's cause for which she is writing.



# *The Lost Stories*

NLUJA ASSAM



# Book Review of 'Prometheus Bound' by Aeschylus

Written by Ishita Nair  
Student, Maharashtra National Law University, Mumbai

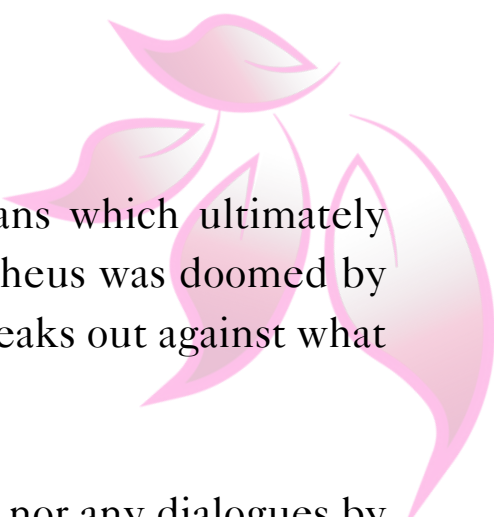


“Prometheus Bound” is a Greek tragedy written by Aeschylus, also known as the father of tragedy, in the 5th century BCE. The play tells the story of Prometheus, a Titan, who is punished by Zeus for giving fire and knowledge to humans, thus saving them from Zeus’s plans for the destruction of all humans. As a result of his actions, Prometheus is chained to a rock and left to suffer for all eternity.

Throughout the play, Prometheus remains defiant and unrepentant, even in the face of torture and threats from Zeus. The play is a powerful exploration of the themes of rebellion, punishment, betrayal, and the struggle against authority. It is the first play of the trilogy, however, the other two plays in the series have been lost to history.

Prometheus experiences dreadful injustice and suffering throughout the play as a result of his reckless words and rebellious act. Despite this, he continues to speak out against Zeus' tyranny, which is especially cruel and an act of betrayal because Prometheus had supported Zeus in his conquest against the Titans.

Although the exact act of rebellion is not depicted, it can be assumed that Prometheus defied the delicate and strict hierarchical rules of the realm of gods by giving mankind access to fire, which was thought to be a luxury reserved for gods. The relationship portrayed between Zeus and Prometheus is ironically human and perpetual. Many ancient and contemporary authors have toyed with the concept of rebellion against tyrannical rulers.



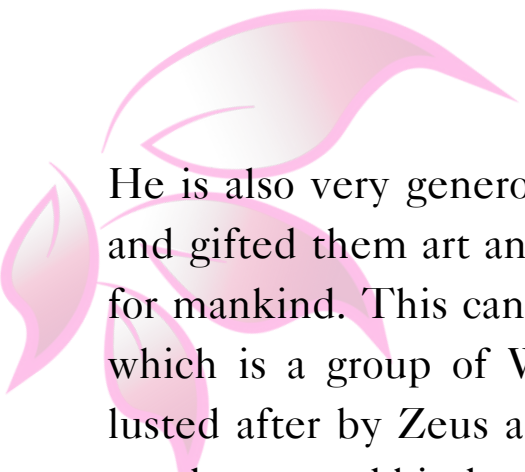
Prometheus's hamartia is his compassion for humans which ultimately brings him his downfall. It is fair to say that Prometheus was doomed by the narrative. Throughout the play, he recklessly speaks out against what he perceives to be the unjust betrayal of Zeus.

It is important to note that there are no appearances nor any dialogues by Zeus in the play, though he pulls all the strings. He is only represented by his servants. This is one of the very few pieces of Greek literature which question the authority of Zeus and terms him a despot.

The characters in this play are not depicted as either being morally virtuous or horribly wicked. There is plenty of room for interpretation of the actions of the characters. It is interesting to ponder upon if Zeus was right in prohibiting humans from accessing fire. Was Prometheus being impulsive by letting mankind use fire? Does this justify Zeus commanding an immortal God to a life of unbearable pain and suffering? Is it morally right to let Prometheus's agony serve as a deterrent to other Gods? Or is this just the arrogance of every newly-crowned monarch?

Prometheus, despite being a God, is one of the most realistic characters in ancient Greek literature. He is extremely arrogant, boasting about all the favors he has done for humans. He lacks self-preservation, by continuing to speak aggressively against Zeus, for which he later has to pay by having his liver eaten by the Eagle of Zeus. He also thinks very highly of himself, as he believes himself to be the only one capable enough to save Zeus's throne. He is also extremely sarcastic, something hardly appreciated by the other characters. His most humane characteristic, however, is his tendency to wallow in self-pity, which also earns him criticism from the Chorus.





He is also very generous, as he saved mankind from the wrath of Zeus and gifted them art and fire. His grief is never-ending but so is his love for mankind. This can also be seen in how kindly he treats the Chorus, which is a group of Water Nymphs. Similarly, he treats Io, a woman lusted after by Zeus and inadvertently earning the wrath of Hera, with gentleness and kindness despite suffering from inscrutable pain himself.

This play follows the theme of suffering, which can be found in almost all of Aeschylus's plays. Aeschylus seems to imply that all suffering is a result of an individual's transgressions that he brings on himself. Suffering is a form of divine intervention to break an individual's hubris. In this play, it can be said that Prometheus's punishment was to destroy his hubris and the excessive importance with which he viewed himself.

Aeschylus ends this play on one of literature's greatest cliffhangers, with Prometheus dramatically challenging Zeus and inadvertently being swallowed by the ground, leaving behind many questions with no answers. Who will dethrone Zeus? Will Prometheus be freed? Will they ever reconcile?

The next two books of the series, "*Prometheus Unbound*" and "*Prometheus – The fire bringer*" are only found in fragments. Although, the title of the second book offers an optimistic view of our protagonist's fate.

The play, with its poetic language, vivid imagery, and thought-provoking ideas, has influenced countless writers, philosophers, and artists throughout history.

This play's themes are timeless and can be found in the contemporary world. A political prisoner being isolated from other people by means of psychological and physical torture by a tyrannical regime is something that is all too common in the present world.

The play's enduring popularity is a testament to the eternal power of Greek tragedy and its ability to speak to universal human concerns. Its depiction of the conflict between authority and rebellion, justice and injustice, and fate and free will continue to resonate with people even today, making it a timeless work of literature that has stood the test of time.



*The Lost Stories*

NLUJA ASSAM



# Lagaan: An Epitome of Perseverance, Sincerity, and Devout Discipline.

Written by *Nandini Ravishankar*

Student, School of Law, Dr. Vishwanath Karad MIT World Peace University



Long lost was thyself who never used to watch a lot of Bollywood movies but constraining myself to only school books, and what is worse is not being exposed to even external reading. Something struck me a year later with a great clarion call to watch Lagaan. Few around me proclaimed it to have changed their lives, few claiming it to be boring (evoking atman or blissfulness that still makes me look like being at beggar's words is like no love lost for them).

A huge gamut of credit goes to this module of 'science, religion and spirituality' which has certainly dawned on me as to how important the inner spirituality is, Rajas to be enlightened and tamas to be done away with, and to portray sluggishness and procrastination to be the greatest enemy of mankind. All this is definitive of what Lagaan is.

Before going any further, I would describe what spirituality, science and religion mean to me, subsequently narrating a few stories and drawing a nexus between the takeaways and the magnanimous film which certainly deserved all the glory, and glorious of the glory-The Oscar that elicited so much of adulation of masses!

The story goes as a tussle between two birds that can be seen as a higher order and lower order knowledge. One being perched on a higher pedestal and the lower being flummoxed being distressed as to its position on the tree. After closing the eyes and offering an opportunity to itself for some introspection and self-reflection, the bird realises the one above it to be the one that he calls as 'I'.

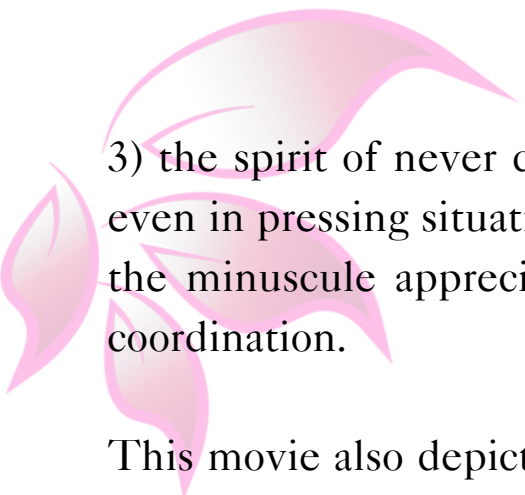
The essence of this illustration can be said by Swami Vivekananda - Man should hanker after being called the iron-chested willpower or the roar of a lion. It is only with this impetus that he would evoke the inner atman, realise his wholesome potential and never repeat the sin of thinking of himself to be of a lower value or capability.

But the capability should be in what is called *dwitya* in him rested in *advaita* - An instance where he preached a few principles to his friends while his teacher was teaching and still being able to answer the questions thrown down as a gauntlet by the teacher pertaining to his lessons which swami was still able to answer. Another example is where swami was followed by a few unruly monkeys but he chose to remain still and face the obstacle.

He says 'Nothing can be a greater sin than the youth of today to not put on the mantle and start chasing the path of excellence'. Words of pearl wisdom when he says just like how the tributaries on merging with the ocean cannot be differentiated on the basis of their individuality, just like how the tussle between manifest and unmanifest is in constancy because of kinetic energy being absent to transform latter as former, just like how a gold bracelet is of no self-identity than either being of gold or left in wilderness of nothingness, similarly this body is just a mortal being which needs to realise and hear the inner atman (Brahman or the state of nature).

This brief introduction to commence the film appreciation was thought to be apt by the author since lagaan stands to be the example of:

- 1) having the audacity to stand single, yet gain the trust of those who at times did not have a moral standing when the objective is just.
- 2) devotion towards the love bestowed by a mortal being and veneration towards the teacher.



3) the spirit of never doubting on the capabilities but trying to be calm even in pressing situations and so on as this report will cover inclusive of the minuscule appreciation of the musicals and dumb-struck chord coordination.

This movie also depicts the devotion, and no surreptitious endeavour of the people of the village and the villagers being the children of God.

A very practical syllogism of the 'Draupadi Vastraharan' can be this: In spite of Draupadi being in tumultuous situation of her bodily integrity was at stake and her modesty was being outraged, why did it take so much of time for Krishna Paramatma to save her, even miraculously at last? The simple answer to it is that she never reminisced God's name but chose it to be the ultimate recourse to be sought after.

However, the movie 'Lagaan' has a melancholy '*paalanhaare*' that describes the entire cult to be prostrating before the lord at the same time proving the work to be worshipped. A very similar incident happens in Kantaara where the villagers are God's children and he acts as a protector of the cult throughout. This is not to state that my understanding of spirituality is confined and cribbed to God alone. Spirituality still mystifies the creation of miraculous happenings around us, much more titillating than the Big Bang theory that aids in tracing back to our smallest of atomic habits, tracing the most microscopic triviality into a life-changing phenomenon.

Lagaan is exactly that- knowing the smallest of spark in spite of few incapacities just like the story of Udaalak rishi and Shwetaketu where what the latter could not see beyond the seed, hidden clandestine was the cause of emergence of a big tree, similarly the smallest faith or the smallest Krishna in ourselves can do the impossible like the smallest atom in a nuclear bomb- but a constructive form.



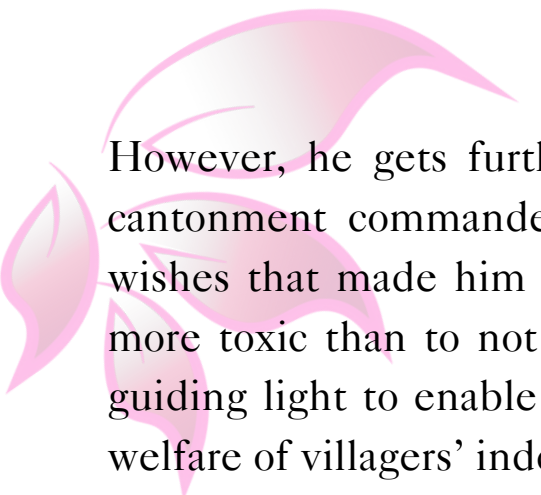
The longing for the mercy of rain god, introduction of rivals who use their strength to bring laurels to their land and the devotion of Gauri with portrayal of British atrocities

The movie opens with a humble dwelling of people toiling to ensure that no one goes hungry to bed with meager income availability and hand-to-mouth elasticity of physical exertion. The rain god has no mercy since the land is parched with drought-prone emptiness, and no crop production resulting in the gravity of distress. Adding salt to the wound the acrimonious British heads of Champaner cantonment decided to increase the tax by two fold. Amidst all this comes Gauri who yearns for the love of the protagonist Bhuvan, a simple man with no great pomp yet the one to always initiate the path of righteousness for all.

The first part turns out to be the most favourite for the reasons mentioned herein:

1) The rage in the eyes of villagers that goes subtly unnoticed: let's draw a parallelism with the epic Mahabharata. For all the atrocities that the kauravas did, the people who were expected to be on the path of dharma kept quiet being driven by the rule or pratigya to adhere to the one who ascended the throne. However, that pain never led the pandavas to digress from the path for preparation of a bigger battle to set an example of satyam and dharma to have the ultimate triumph. Similarly the villagers patiently waited for their good days, to tread the path of justice and sanctity of the land.

2) Bhuvan the blessing in disguise for the deer- The avaricious predators wished to knock down the deer which Bhuvan was averse to for among several reasons one assumed to be: the British having the say in the forest of its properties or out of sympathy for all living creatures.



However, he gets further enraged by the prerogative enjoyed by the cantonment commander to arrest, release, or detain him as per their wishes that made him feel suffocated on his own land. What could be more toxic than to not be caged yet be unable to fly? This shows the guiding light to enable him to prepare for something mammoth for the welfare of villagers' independence and authority on their own land.

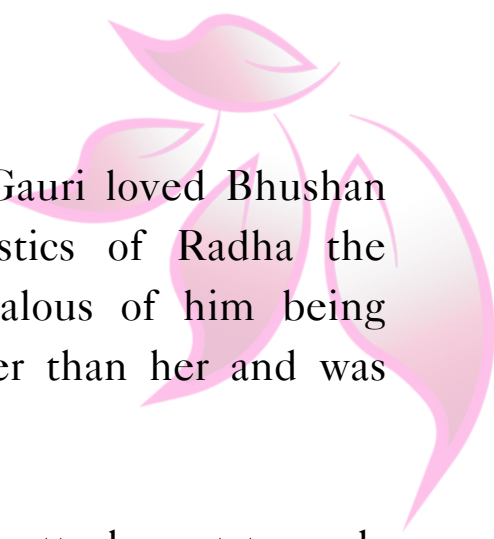
3) The merciless trick of Indra: Just like yagnavalkya proceeding to terminate the pride of indra, varuna also decided to play a trick on the villagers. But this shows two dimensions of perceiving it:

a) Rain denotes welfare and happiness. This is achievable only when land , and its citizens are guided by pursuit of justice and right rule striding towards dharma. Once the latter is achieved, just like how Raja Harishchandra could get his dead son alive as a boon from Yamraj who was pleased with his devotion and no trace of heavy-headedness was to be seen in the Raja the villagers wait for lord indra to be pleased with sincerity and contentment without any condemnation or greed.

b) Rain depicts fertility or a sign of being prolific. The blessings are bestowed not on those who do their duty mechanically but discharge their duty the right way. Bhagavad Geeta shows illustrations of Bhishma pita maha having blindly followed the rule without a dharmic fold.

Similarly, nature wanted to evoke the wrath of the people against untowardness and prepare them in accordance with the will and true spirit they possess. This is seen when they attain victory and Indra torrential downpours his tears of happiness and fulfillment on the villagers and their aboriginal bhoomi.

c) The naivety of Gauri: Gauri is one of those pure souls who is an amalgamation of rage, innocence, good-heartedness and nobleness of purpose.



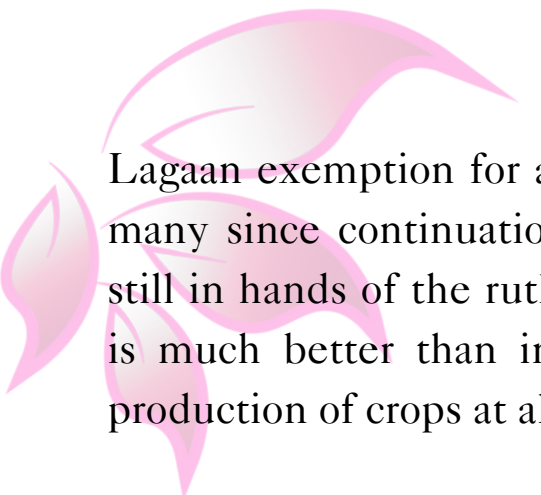
She can have fathoms similar to those in which Gauri loved Bhushan without conditions. She showed the characteristics of Radha the affectionate beloved of Sri Krishna who was jealous of him being accompanied by any other heterogenous sex other than her and was extremely possessive about him.

The love of a mother is explicit and here is where attachment towards ones relations comes in. Gauri is just like the mythological character of Satyavan Savitri who was so persistent that she could fight any hindrance as great as hill for her beloved.

The movie is interrupted by an inception where her faith, and belief acts as an ounce of strength for Bhushan's enervating and challenging journey. The relation of both was filled with utmost respect for each other and beyond the understanding such that she sees herself to be a part of him having surrendered herself completely, at times feeling devastated amidst the assumption of their separation.

Metaphorical representation and personification of the rain God in the song titled '*ghanana ghanana giri giri hoye badara*' depicts the mastery of the poet's command over the blend of onomatopoeia, personification and metaphorical power as figures of speech. It shows that happiness is the state of mind that needs to be held intact despite gigantic challenges. The respect still is staunch towards one putting them in distress, that is the rain god which one can make out from the tone in which the song is set.

Moreover, the oneness of all being affected by a common cause and not turning the tables on one another but collectively working for a better future is the indomitable spirit that is worth the emulation.



Lagaan exemption for a matter of three years may not be a big deal for many since continuation of rule, despotic power to hike the rates was still in hands of the ruthless british. However peace, though ephemeral, is much better than infernal crashing down of the economy without production of crops at all.

### The camaraderie and emergence of love for queen Elizabeth for Bhuvan

Knowing what is unjust and still being reticent is the greatest sin one could ever do. That is where even Bhishma Pitamaha faulted. Knowing the flaws of Duryodhana he remained tacit just like his father Dritharashtra. Queen Elizabeth found the villagers to be simple yet precarious, who could leave no stone unturned for their survival with sagacity. She decided to help them understand that her brother was in the wrong and in this quest of virtue vice she would be a heralding force to train them to understand the nuances of cricket.

Whilst she is in the process of this goodwill, she falls for Bhuvan but never discloses directly. Here is where spirituality comes into play:

1) Somewhere Bhuvan understood the feelings were not reciprocated the way they should ideally be and the moral side to it being the truncated economic, racial (then) and naturalistic differences and that his only dharma was to learn the sport from her. Here is where discharging the duty comes into play.

One should benefit the role ascertained, do what is anticipated and leave the results to God. Any deviation would lead to tamas or slumber that would have been detrimental to their victory.

2) This part sees the vacillating loyalty of Lakha who could be charged with treason in the present day. But the way Bhuvan handled the situation and increased his acceptance capacity despite the former having deceived his entire plan shows the benevolence and magnificence of Bhuvan. God in his words illustrates that mistakes can be forgiven and provision of a chance to correct the same is deserved by every transgressor of righteousness.

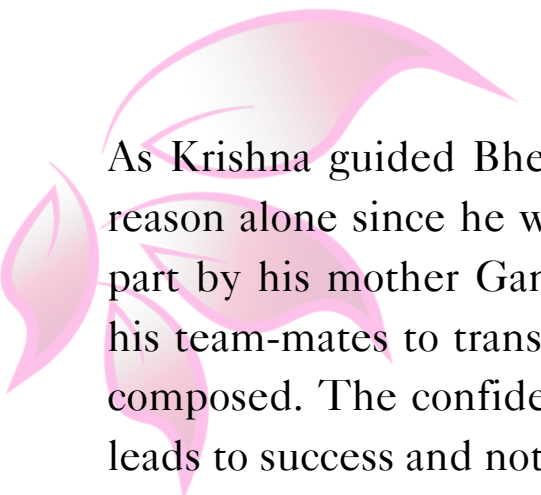
3) The sequel finds the interception of the recruitment of members of the team by Bhuvan. Many look down upon Kachra (hailing from a community considered untouchable then) in a condescending way. But Bhuvan mentions the incident of shabari moksha which turns out to be a scene very close to my heart.

He elaborates on how Rama only saw the purity of devotion in Shabari's heart for him so much so that he ended up having the grapefruit tasted by Shabari calling it to be sweeter. This shows the principles of Jainism and Christianity that folds are forked by us humans due to our parochial mindset and it was Kachra who kept rising beyond his incapacities to fight for a cause to set an example for sky is the limit.

The song inducing the encouraging spirits, mastery over the teamwork orientation and victory

Captain Russel is the most condemned character throughout the movie for his overconfidence. It is acceptable to have faith in the capability but one has no authority to cabin the dexterity of the other. Here is where captain Russel slipped, thinking the villagers to have no chance of celebrating the victory over their mastery over the sport. The game was all about presence of mind.





As Krishna guided Bheema to injure Duryodhana on the thigh for one reason alone since he was not blessed with the protective shield on that part by his mother Gandhari, Bhuvan tries to find out the weakness of his team-mates to transform it into strength insisting on being calm and composed. The confidence bestowed by the leader on the team is what leads to success and not the individual valiant actions alone.

While Bhuvan designated plots of players according to their strength, Russel was more of a monarchical decision-maker without reality or wisdom. Moreover, truth has the most realistic and decisive nature of its own that is to be revealed crystal clear one day.

Hence Russel's blueprint of devouring the sincere onerous attitude of Bhuvan could never materialise. As Yagnavalkya obliterated the pride within agni and vayu about their power, Russel was extremely impulsive due to which he had a delusion of his victory. He was oblivious of the fact that he was beyond the boundary both in his actions of testing people's patience and his unsympathetic approach towards the natives. Russel had all the mentalities, of which he could not measure the optimum level whether it was greed, desire or delusion and anger (*lobha, moha, krodha*).

### Conclusion

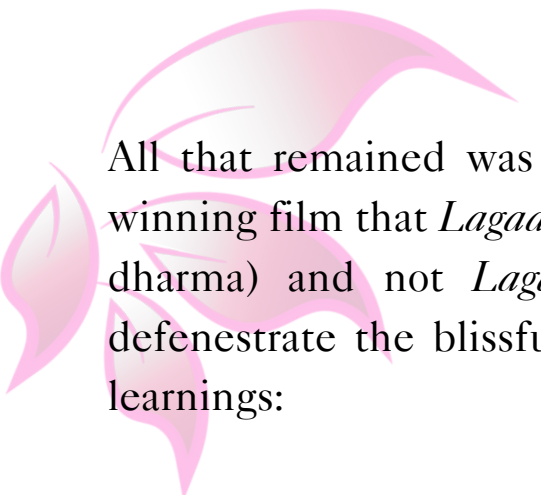
One thing that may go unnoticed but not as substantial as the central theme is queen elizabeth's definition of pure and honest love. Spirituality talks about the mentality of letting go. Even in Mahabharata, it was Bheem who loved Draupadi very deeply; this fails to beget any recognition. Moreover, Queen Elizabeth recognized the longing that Gauri had for Bhuvan and realised that it was time for her to forgo someone else's happiness.

Despite knowing the meagre possibilities of her love materialising into fruition she kept helping them for their victory which speaks for itself that she never expected anything in return.

At times letting go is the greatest expression of love and the portrayal of rising up to the level of true wisdom. After all, lord Krishna right from his birth had to undergo the cavil of hindrances in various manifestations but still could not marry Radha. However, they were one in spite of being two different souls because of the exchange of spiritual energies between them.

Similarly in the reminiscence and rendezvous of Bhuvan, Elizabeth remained unmarried to stay true to her consciousness and feelings- a great example of the spirituality of an ascetic in this mundane world. The victory was followed by the villagers never taking anything ill to their rival despite the endless atrocities. This shows that one should never have a sadistic approach towards others' distress. Conducting oneself and others with humanity is the greatest form of kindness. The materialistic world that hankers after money will always be self-centered because of being forgetful of the hard work of the real *anna-datas* of the country that runs back. Devotion towards the motherland is of utmost priority. Bhuvan was seen touching and rubbing the sand for the spirit of confidence to be instilled in him. They were not adorned in fancy apparel, but all that they were adorned with was their clear-cut objective of winning the game.

If one carries with him the sense of simple living and high thinking, one will never walk down the path of complacency like Russel who was the titular captain who never practiced considering the spirit of villagers to be superficial but will be walking down the path of acceptance, belongingness, appreciations and accreditations of the true quality of patriotism that Bhuvan always carries in spite of never wanting or getting recognition in the lost papers of history.



All that remained was an inspiration to all through this Oscar award-winning film that *Lagaan* (mindfulness towards one's duty is the greatest dharma) and not *Lagaan* (tormenting and cantankerous toxicity to defenestrate the blissfulness of simple mortal beings). Takeaways and learnings:

1) Never underestimate the power of self-confidence and faith in God: Just like how the smallest atom in a nuclear bomb has the potential to destroy the world in its entirety, the smallest God or Krishna that survives in the soul can instigate the person to break through the clutches of any sort of disability (Kachra, who suffered from the amputation of the right hand, was one of the contributing factors to the victory in the contingency) can lead to the manifestation of the impossible.

2) Abide by value, not rule: In spite of Draupadi being tortured in the sabha filled with onlookers and the fact that things are unjust towards her and the Pandavas, Bhishma Pitamaha chose to be tacit given he went by the rule to not be at loggerheads with the decision of the person entrenching the throne irrespective of the gravity of harm they caused to the sanctity of dharma. In the end, he too like others had to die although gracefully.

In the movie *lagaan* too, the rule of untouchability was done away with. Bhuvan taught everyone about the potential of Kachra to be a splendid spinner of the ball for the game. It tells us that picking out faults in others is an easy task, whereas selectively appreciating what is different in that person is extremely difficult.

3) Enemies never stay to be one always: The movie witnesses a feud between two village mates always. However, when the need of the hour arose, they chose to eliminate their personal differences and fight for a common cause.

Imagine how difficult it would have been to resolve internal issues and then veer toward the British atrocities. The characters did complete justice to the role assigned to them in this aspect which led to understanding the importance of what a priority is.


A subtle meaning of family affection arises here. During the last shot, Bhuvan remembers the words of his mother, Gauri and the shrewd words of Russel. He knew how to use those words to his benefit which would lead to better confidence in him and never let that make him feel low. There arises a portrayal of how people who wish to pull you down would go miles to kindle the quibbling nature within you.

But unlike other teammates of his who got out of the match due to overwhelming and stressful shots, he chose to be calm. This is exactly what Krishna Paramatma chose to say that being calm, and composed even in stressful situations would avoid cavil and lead to the achievement of the desired goal.

4) Act of letting go: Queen Elizabeth's love for Bhuvan talks about the true meaning of Love. Love never meant clasping onto something. For the power she had she could have chosen to force, abduct or take a wrong path towards threatening Bhuvan to marry her and live with her forever.

Wisdom in her prevailed when she decided to never intervene in the relationship of Bhuvan and Gauri but took an affirmation of staying unmarried, very similar to what Radha and Krishna did.

Their marriage can be termed as celestial but never earthly. It was beyond the understanding of the worldly mortals since she completely merged with Him and surrendered herself to his feet. They were one in spite of marrying different people and respect towards each other was inexplicable.



A great message to all modern day relationships that everything need not be driven by desire, lust or love alone. Realising the longing of another individual for you is the greatest strength many times in pressing circumstances. Relationships need to be confined to the concept of direct quid-pro-quo but beyond that. Not doing great things always is ok, but doing small things with great love is what makes the bond eternal.

Queen Elizabeth's action of continuing to help Bhuvan to walk down the path of righteousness is a sign of maturity and whatever she did was without any expectations-ultimate example of love for which anyone may fall short of words.

NLUJA ASSAM



# NLUJAA

## Gallery (Pt. 1)



~ by Kabyashree Konwar



~ by Diwakar Dalmia

Stories  
ASSAM

# Movie Review: Court (2015)

Written by Sayonee Mangaraj  
Student, Maharashtra National Law University, Nagpur

The movie '*Court*' is a sharp, fresh and contemporary look at issues confronting Indian courtrooms, and it serves as a great showcase by writer-director Chaitanya Tamhane. The movie tries to depict real-life courtroom drama. Many viewers would anticipate a Bollywood influence in this courtroom drama before seeing the film, but there isn't any.

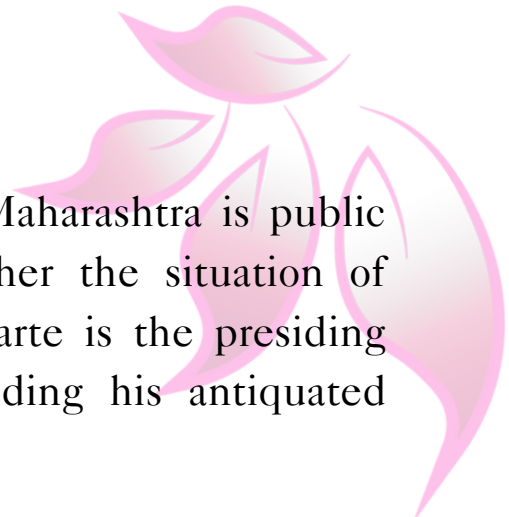
A courtroom drama generally has at least one of the following components: a passionate lawyer, high drama, a growing matter, compelling debates, and some kind of settlement if it isn't a pleasant one. None of these components are provided by '*Court*.' The situation itself is very solemn. The discussions are frequently rife with jargon, some of which may even be unnecessary.

The original language of this movie is Marathi but in a few scenes, some characters use English as their language for the medium of their communication.

'*Court*' was the official entry for India in the category of foreign language film for the 2016 Academy Awards.

In '*Court*,' an elderly Marathi folk musician named Narayan Kamble, who resides in Bombay is detained following the filing of a charge. The charge claims that he is accountable for the death of Vasudev Pawar, a manhole cleaner because a song he sang allegedly prompted the manhole cleaner to kill himself.

Vinay Vora, a wealthy and well-educated lawyer, takes up the case and decides to fight for legal issue faced by Narayan Kamble.



In this case, the lawyer presenting the State of Maharashtra is public prosecutor Nutan, who is unconcerned with either the situation of Narayan or the merits of the case. Justice Sadavarte is the presiding judge for the case who only cares about defending his antiquated righteousness and strict interpretation of law.

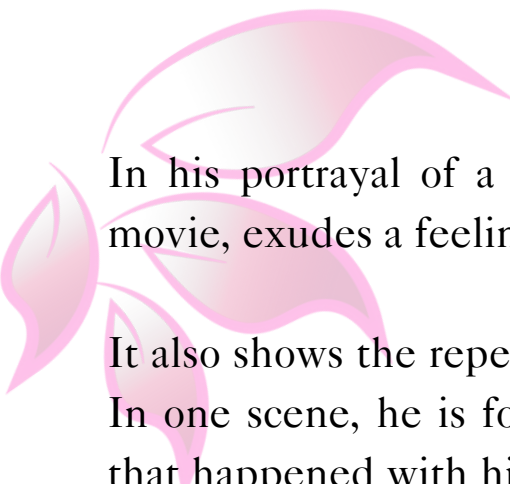
In one of the scenes in the movie, the judge declines to hear a lawsuit because the plaintiff, a woman, is sporting a sleeveless shirt. There are moments when it seems as though the Indian legal system and society are the true defendants in '*Court*.'

Tamhane beautifully crafted the script keeping in view the individuals' lives outside of the courtroom as crucial to understanding what they do inside of it. The humanistic tone of the movie is largely a result of this beautiful craft.

The audience follows Vora as he hangs around with his affluent companions in a luxury club and purchases products in the super market with no regard for the price. He definitely has the financial means to take on a lawsuit that is clearly heading in the wrong direction, so it displays that he keeps using English in court even if it doesn't help him or his cause.

In '*Court*,' Nutan is also depicted as a capable woman who struggles to balance her professional obligations with those of a wife and mother while pursuing a promotion. There's a point where '*Court*' appears to be coming to an end. The movie continues even after that.

The movie director Tamhane highlights, bolds, and italicises the goal of his movie with a string of moments that are astonishing in their assurance. The performance lifts and makes the words on the paper sing.



In his portrayal of a wealthy lawyer, Gomber, who also produced the movie, exudes a feeling of ponderous serenity.

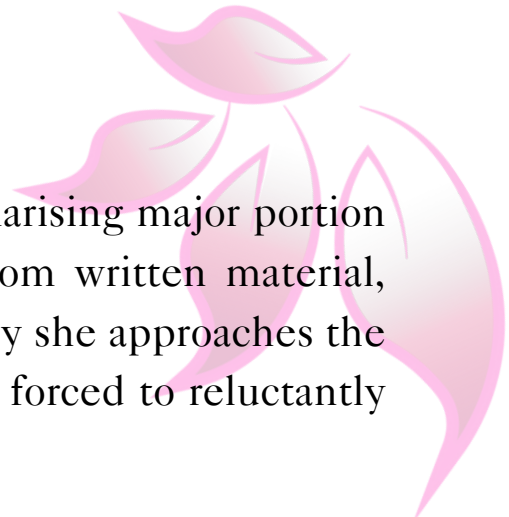
It also shows the repercussion for the lawyer Vora for taking up the case. In one scene, he is forced to break down because of a horrific moment that happened with him. But later he is shown in a beauty parlour taking a facial. The movie is not flawless like any other Bollywood court drama.

Vira's tiredness as well as his grief make for powerful acting. The portrayal of a Maharashtrian woman from the middle-class family by Kulkarni is flawless. She reads the litany of allegations against the accused in smooth but repetitive English, and after she's through, she switches to Marathi, which is comical in its authenticity.

The action in the movie feels more like it was filmed by chance than like it was forced, which ultimately enhances the film's realism. Also, it serves as an example of flawless attention to detail in the setting of the movie. The frame lets you to witness the security guard flee into the protection of the building while Vora is attacked outside of a restaurant.

Some of the funniest events highlight serious issues; two examples include the judge declining to hear a case because the plaintiff appeared in court wearing a sleeveless top and in the second example where every evidences planted against Kamble seems weak and stupid, the police officer so confused about the next step that he uses the letter as the burden of proof but he fails to explain the conduct of Kamble in front of the court. There are useless legal arguments between the attorneys which draws attention to the minor facts that they are prepared to ignore.





Although Public Prosecutor Nutan is good at summarising major portion of the Indian Criminal Code relevant to a case from written material, there is scarcely any independent thought in the way she approaches the issue. But Vora, who hails from a wealthy family, is forced to reluctantly accept the black letter system in existence.

### Legal Aspect

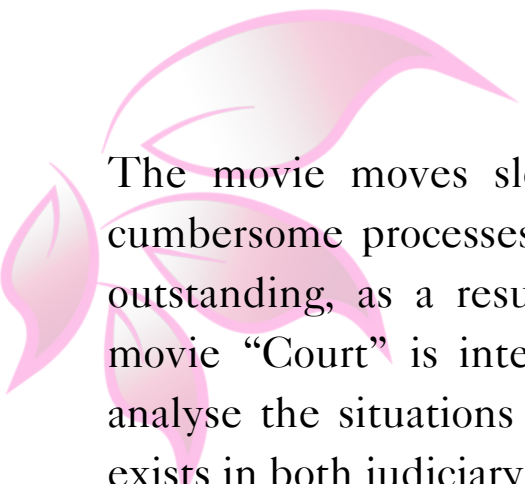
Vasudev Pawar was either forced to commit suicide by Narayan Kamble, who is also a singer, or he died due to the poisonous gases which were present in the manhole is contested in the court. And in the movie, it is shown that Kamble is charged under Section 306 of the Indian Criminal Code which governs the abetment of suicide. In the end, it is not clear whether Kamble was responsible for the death of Pawar or not.

In the later part of the movie, Kamble was arrested for conducting seditious frauds and indoctrinating workshop participants in several districts of Maharashtra. The public prosecutor said that these schemes were being carried out under the guise of poets and folk artists workshops. Proof of these frauds was discovered in the form of correspondence, songs, poetry, and manuscripts, and there was little connection between them and the state or popular culture. Hence, the court didn't grant him bail in the end despite his failing health.

### Conclusion

The personal lives of the public prosecutor, defence lawyer and the judge engaged in the case are monitored outside the court as the trial progresses. Nobody in the story is a villain determined to ruin Narayan's life. All of them serve as tools in an unjust system.





The movie moves slowly, maybe as a metaphor for the judiciary's cumbersome processes, but the writing is brilliant and the direction is outstanding, as a result the audiences never lose their interest. The movie "Court" is intended for intelligent viewers, and it asks you to analyse the situations intellectually. This movie depicts the flaws that exists in both judiciary and society.

It also portrays the reality of getting justice which is not an easy game for everyone. This is a must-watch for everyone who appreciates meaningful film.

'*Court*' reflects the brutality of everyday life in India while addressing important societal themes including caste, status, individual rights, and justice. Court fields resemble an expansion of truth itself, where the majority of societal inequalities are mostly concealed. Only the gaps that the movie finally highlights allow the audience to notice them.

In contrast to other social and political dramas, Court doesn't hammer its audience with promises of false optimism. It slowly exposes our society's numerous layers and continues to be a pessimistic examination of its nature throughout time.

Court uses the frequently misunderstood framework of a judicial system. In the end no one cares what happened to Narayan Kamble who was shown having a bad health in the movie. The judge deciding the case in the end of the movie is shown slapping a kid for ruining his sleep.

Similar to the situation of the judge, court and people in the society where everyone takes the immediate actions without understanding the human sentiments and emotions hidden within.

# Finest as his Mom

Written by Yukti Y. Shiwankar  
Student, Maharashtra National Law University, Nagpur

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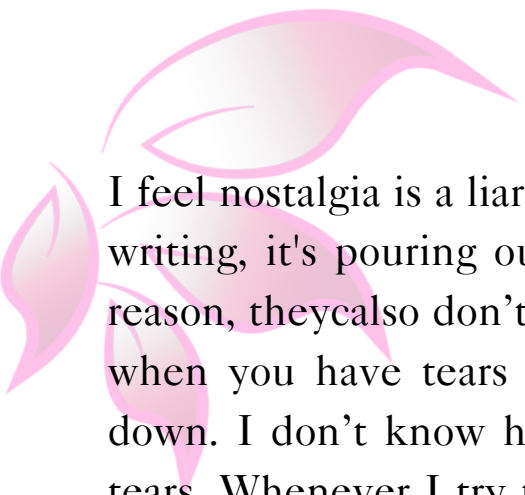
There is a different enchantment to the evenings; earlier, I used to be ignorant of this. Now I sojourn near the artificial lakeside at my university, mostly in the evening. Many writers or poets find their muse in writing by watching the sun go down. Here I am, witnessing the sunset but not writing.

Evenings are overwritten subjects, and love is too. My heart speaks love, passion, tenderness, happiness, unhappiness, and much more when I see the sun going down. And my mind stands still. I amble over the lawn and notice there are umpteen hues in the sky.

Early this morning, I got a notification from my weather app for scattered thunderstorms. Swiftly, my gaze caught the notification on my phone, and I opened it. I have the city of Dehradun added to my weather app for some reason, and I checked if it would rain there too. If you have ever been in love and on a rainy night you futilely think of a person whom you don't talk to anymore, you'll know the pain it brings. I'll somehow go through my days; I don't know what to do about such lone nights, which come like a widow.

And it's been three days since I've been getting this weather app notification. I get so happy and sad at the same time; I am pulled by opposing emotions right now. As I die to see the sun set on other days, I become a writer on rainy nights. It's raining, and I am a wave, the highest tide, but now I have become a river, flowing patiently, knowing I'll end up somewhere someday.

Though I try to cling to all this, this isn't about it. Moved by the heartbreaks in the world, all of us have experienced detachment, but we still cling to that one reason for happiness that we have treasured in our hearts.



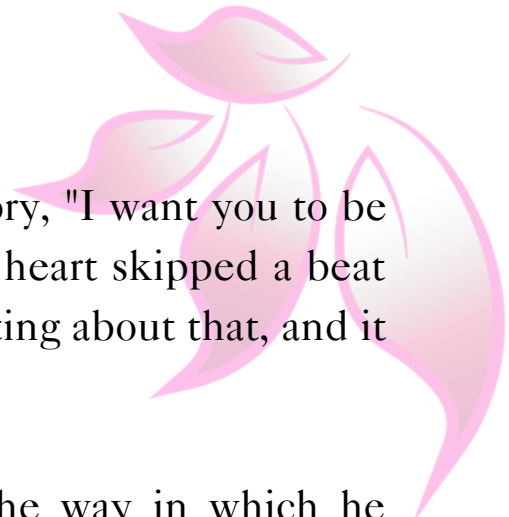
I feel nostalgia is a liar, and it has made me miserable as hell. While I'm writing, it's pouring out, and I am holding tears in my eyes. For some reason, they also don't want to come to my cheeks. It's the worst feeling when you have tears in your eyes, but there's no way to bring them down. I don't know how I'm going to get away with my unreasonable tears. Whenever I try to write a word, it destroys me. I bleed. I wonder how a sheet of paper reflects me.

I am drenched and anxious all the time. As these words flow, I see a bag nestled in the corner's embrace. In the sweet breath of March, I went to Jodhpur. The journey was beautiful; I traveled carefree and merry with my friends.

And it's been two months now, and I haven't unpacked my bag since I returned from Jodhpur. Now I want to open it, as my end-of-semester exam has ended and I have to go home. As I open my bag, I see a verdant handcrafted shirt I bought from Jodhpur and a Jodhpuri artisanal saree on top.

I lay upright at the same spot, and slowly the tranquility of the moment seeped inside me. As I snuggled cozily with a shirt and a saree, I remembered that before buying these, I called my mom and told her that I was bringing a shirt for my brother and a saree for her. She refused and said, "Buy what you want for yourself; don't bring anything for us."

Regardless, I had already wanted to purchase a shirt as a gift for someone. I liked one beautiful saree, and I again called my mom, and she again said, "No costly gifts." Then I bought the same saree to present to his beloved mom. My eyes were frozen, and my heart quickened its pace because, before I could present my gifts, he broke up with me. Though he knew that I bought a shirt for him, he didn't know that I brought a saree for his mom.



The words he once said to me echoed in my memory, "I want you to be the finest woman in the world after my mom." My heart skipped a beat when I heard that, it skipped a beat when I was writing about that, and it always skips a beat when I think about that.

His love for his mom knows no bounds. I like the way in which he embraces her. He tries to be the best son. He doesn't know he's the best. He has placed her at the top of the world and prioritised her above all else. And I was bestowed with a privilege when I heard that he wanted me to be the finest after her. I don't know whether he meant it or not. But it holds immense significance in my heart.

Nobody puts you there. But he wanted me after her. If it was for him, I really wanted to be like his mom, and perhaps that thought compelled me to buy a beautiful saree for her. For me, I believe there are only two beautiful things on this planet: my mom and his mom. Although she will never wear the saree I bought for her, she still remains the most beautiful woman in my eyes, even though we have never crossed paths.

The way her son adored her profoundly made me admire her more. While I cannot be as fine as her, I shall endeavor wholeheartedly to stand as the finest woman after her. Some words have an irrevocable essence.

While leaving, he gave me this exquisite keepsake — a tale to be woven into the fabric of my existence, a story to be cherished throughout my life. I would be happy to be chained to this story with joy in my heart.



# NLUJAA

## Gallery (Pt. 2)



~ by Dibyaranjan Haloi



~ by Snigdha Mili

Stories  
ASSAM





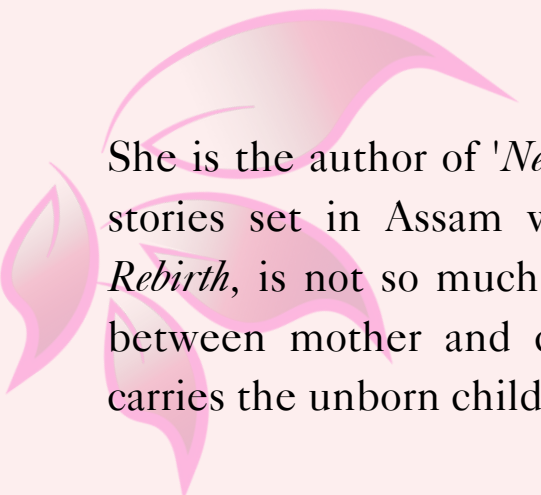
# In Conversation with Jahnavi Barua: Shaping the Literary landscape

We had the opportunity to have a meeting with the much-celebrated writer, Mrs. Jahnavi Barua, and interviewed her for the 3rd edition of NLUJA Assam's literary magazine, *'Lost Stories'*, under the aegis of Literary and Debating Committee, NLUJA Assam. She was interviewed by Antabikhya Gogoi and Amrita Kashyap, members of the Literary and Debating Committee of NLUJA Assam.



Jahnavi Barua is an accomplished Indian author celebrated for her evocative and emotionally resonant literary works. Hailing from the culturally rich region of Assam, her writing skillfully weaves together personal experiences, regional influences, and universal themes.

She has obtained her MBBS degree from Guwahati Medical College and has also studied creative writing in the United Kingdom and currently lives in Bangalore.



She is the author of '*Next Door*', a critically acclaimed collection of short stories set in Assam with insurgency as the background. Her book, '*Rebirth*', is not so much about parenting as it is about the unique bond between mother and child. The particular period, when the mother carries the unborn child is depicted beautifully in her literary work.

*Undertow*, published in 2020, is a novel about migration, exile, and loneliness, all the themes we will be struggling with in a post-pandemic world, with an uncertain future. She was awarded the 'Charles Wallace Trust fellowship' for creative writing in 2006. Her books are on the syllabi of many universities and her short fiction has been widely anthologized. *Undertow* has won the 'AutHer Award' and the 'Kalinga Award,' and has been longlisted for the 'JCB Prize' as well as the 'BLF Atta Galatta Prize.'

With a deep exploration of emotions and relationships, Barua's storytelling captivates readers by offering profound insights into the human condition. Her works often traverse the landscapes of both novels and short stories, allowing her to craft narratives of varying lengths and intensities. Rooted in the landscapes and cultures of northeastern India, Barua's work not only celebrates the region's authenticity but also embraces universal themes that make her stories accessible to a global audience which has earned her a place of recognition within contemporary Indian literature.

As an author, she continues to shape the literary landscape with her unique perspective, leaving an indelible mark on readers and aspiring writers alike.

The meeting could not have been held offline, but even online, her expression when she talks about her books makes you feel like you have been transported to a different world.

*Q. So the first thing we would like to know is what initially drew you into the world of writing and storytelling?*

(JB): Um, that's a good question to start with. When I was growing up, I was a very avid reader. I read a lot and I think as I always tell young people that when you read a lot, somewhere along the line, you may end up being a writer and that's what happened to me. I'm sure by profession or by training, I was a medical doctor. I studied medicine but I took some time off when my child was born to sit at home and spend some time with him. I thought it was a short break and like it happens with many of our Indian women, especially of my generation, it became a very long break. I never went back to medicine and instead I began to, in that phase of being at home, I began to write short fiction and short short stories. And it was with those few pieces of short fiction that my writing career began...

*Q. So, you are saying that you did not start writing while studying medicine?*

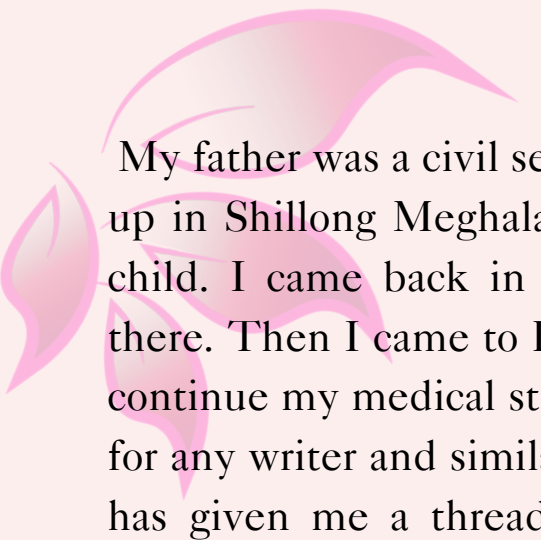
(JB): I always wrote a little bit for newspapers and the college magazine, but never seriously.

*Q. Can you tell us how you managed writing while studying medicine?*

(JB): I didn't write while I was studying medicine. After studying medicine when I took some time off later to look after my young son when he was born, at that stage when I was not practicing medicine, I began writing.

*Q. Your stories have the backdrop of Assam in them. Can you tell us how your background, growing up in Assam, influenced your writing style and themes?*

(JB): I think for any writer, the places you grow up in always feed into your writing. So I grew up in many places.



My father was a civil servant and I grew up in many many places. I grew up in Shillong Meghalaya. I was in Haflong, Guwahati, and Delhi as a child. I came back in High School to Assam and I did my medicine there. Then I came to Bangalore in Karnataka almost thirty years ago, to continue my medical studies. I got married here, and I stayed on here so for any writer and similarly, parallelly for me, every place I have been in has given me a thread. I call these threads with which I weave the tapestry of my life. It is these threads or these little ribbons that bleed into my writing. So naturally, Assam being my native place, my roots being there, my having spent so many years there with family and friends always feature a large place in my work.

And I think for many writers and definitely for me, when I began to write, I naturally went back to this landscape, to this stage which was the most familiar and stage that I have very strong bonds and ties.

*Q. Can you describe your typical writing routine? Do you have any specific rituals or habits that help you get into your writing zone?*

(JB): There are no rituals as such but typically what I do, you asked me earlier how I balanced medicine and writing. I didn't have to balance medicine and writing but I had to balance raising a family and writing. So, typically my days would be spent looking after my child, seeing to him, seeing to the house, and seeing to other family responsibilities and I would write at night. What I would do, and what I tell young writers to do; I teach creative writing, I do writing workshops for children, young adults, and adults; and what I tell young people to do is that in that time when you are not physically writing, it is not time that is wasted.

You can put it to use by thinking and as I went about my day-to-day life, my real life, I used a lot of it to ideate, to think of the next story, to think of a character, to think of how I would open that story, close the story, open the book, close the book.



So I would use a lot of that day-to-day time in thinking. It was at night, after the family went to sleep, after my child had gone to sleep, my days responsibilities were taken care of, is when I would write. And I would write very quickly. That is the process I follow with short fiction, in that I get the whole story in my head from beginning to end and then I start writing. I use the computer so I use a keyboard.

Similarly for novels too, I spend a lot of time thinking. I spent a long time ideating. I know the chapters, chapter by chapter. For me, I almost write like a movie script. I write scene to scene and those scenes are very clear in my head. When everything is clear, a full stop practically is given, which is when I begin to write.

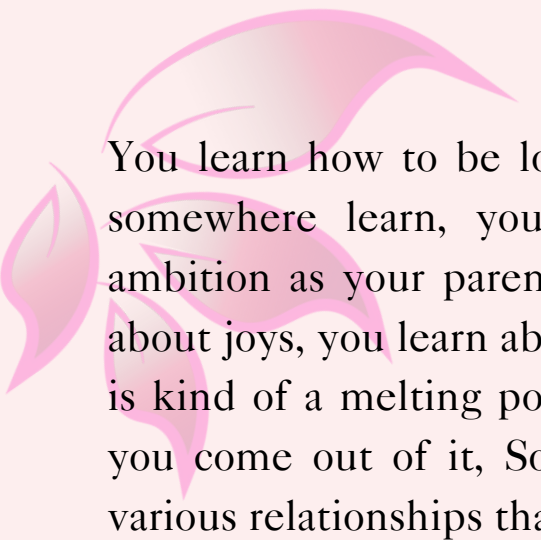
So my process, if you have to distill it, would be that I think first, I decide on everything, every aspect of it and then I begin to write.

*Q. Your work often delves into complex emotions and relationships. Are there any specific emotions or themes you find yourself returning to in your writing?*

(JB): I think if you have read any of my writing or even read about them, you will see that I write a lot about the family. I think as a primary landscape, I go to the family. This is a domain I find very interesting. I find that almost every emotion, every situation which you meet in real life, in the outside world is initially something that you find within the family. As you are raised and you grow up in a family, you come into contact with people, situations and feelings which almost cover the whole spectrum of relationships.

For example, I will tell you, you learn how to love. You love your parents, you love your siblings, you love your grandparents, you also unfortunately along the way learn about losses. You may lose the love of a sibling, you may physically lose a parent. You may have a fractured relationship with a cousin.





You learn how to be loyal within a family but you also along the way somewhere learn, you find a point of disloyalty. You learn about ambition as your parents drive you to achieve in the world. You learn about joys, you learn about sorrows. So for me, the family is a crucible. It is kind of a melting pot where you are molded into who you are when you come out of it, So I return again and again to family and to the various relationships that exist within it. I would say possibly that is what sparks my writing.

*Q. So ma'am, among all your books, which one is your personal favourite?*

(JB): That's a very difficult question. That's like asking a parent who their favorite child is and asking a child who their favorite parent is. I think it is a very difficult question for me to answer. Each book has its own place.

My first book, 'Next Door', is a collection of short fiction, short stories that are largely set in Assam and they deal with families, societies, neighborhoods, and politics that were in place and motion at that time. It deals with nature, it deals with the Brahmaputra as it flows through Assam. It almost deals with every aspect of life as I knew it growing up. And that is a very special book because number one, it is my firstborn, my first book and secondly, I have this great passion for short fiction. It (short fiction) is one of my favorites. I think I can easily say, I prefer short fiction over a novel so that book has a very special place.

My second book 'Rebirth,' which went on to be shortlisted for the Commonwealth Prize and the Man Asian Literary Prize, is a favorite in its own way because it deals with a young woman and the bond she shares with an unborn child. The whole book is in the form of a young woman speaking to the child within her, not yet born and she is in a difficult situation in her life at the moment. She is having problems with her marriage, and she is trying to find a place in the world and again.

That for me, is a special book, because it deals with a bond you have with a child. This was written a few years after having my own child, so a lot of that is explored in this book.

Secondly, it deals with, for me, another very important domain in life, an aspect in life about young women finding themselves. It is always hard for a young person or a girl, a man or woman to find himself, to establish himself, to assert himself in the world. But I think, in India, we women find it particularly hard and women of my generation found it even harder and they have an even harder time. This book deals with a young woman finding herself, finding her little nation of the world, finding her little place in the sun. So it is special to me on that note.

The third and last novel 'Undertow,' which won the AutHer award from 2020 for the Kalinga Award, I think was special to me because it dealt with an aspect of life that has played a large role in my life that of identity. As I mentioned earlier in the program, I moved around a lot as a child and a young woman as my father was a civil servant.

Although my roots were very firmly in Assam, every place you go to, especially in those days, where you remember pre-television, pre-electronic media, and pre-mobile phone age, there wasn't much knowledge about the different parts of our country in the different parts in those days. So, every place I went to, I had to explain myself.

In Delhi, I had to explain that I was from Assam. What is Assam and how far is it from Delhi. Are you Chinese? What do you speak in Assam? What do you eat in Assam? So the question of identity came to me very early in life. When I came back to Assam for postings, in Guwahati, I would be asked, Are you really Assamese but then you also speak Hindi, you speak it so fluently? Are you from Delhi? So I realized that every human being is always questioning his or her identity.

And on the larger scale of politics, our difficulties in the North-East without border areas and difficulties in our relationship to politics with Delhi is a question again about identity. So, this book explores identity and it is special to me in that sense. So, if you ask me which book is special, I really can't tell you, but I have told you why each little book is special to me, the reasons for it.

*Q. As you mentioned short stories earlier, can you please discuss your approach to crafting short stories as compared to writing longer narratives? How is it different?*

(JB): It's two completely different structures and you have to take two completely different approaches to it. What I tell students when I teach a lot of creative writing is that short stories may seem simple to you, but it's probably the hardest form to master. It is the hardest thing to write because it is very unforgiving.

You have very limited space, although you can take a short story up to ten thousand words, you can even make it fifteen thousand words, but regular short fiction has been known from one thousand to three thousand words, it is a very narrow space.

In which space you have to deliver to the reader, a completely formed plot, completely etched characters, round characters who deliver what they promise from the first page to the last?

You will have to take the reader through the complexity of the emotions from the beginning to the end in such a short space. It is a very difficult form to master because of the scarcity of time and space. So, the approach to this would be precision. You will have to know in your mind already, what theme you want to explore, and what is it that you're trying to say. You'll have to have the plot in place to seem to know exactly where to slack in the tension and where to tighten the tension.

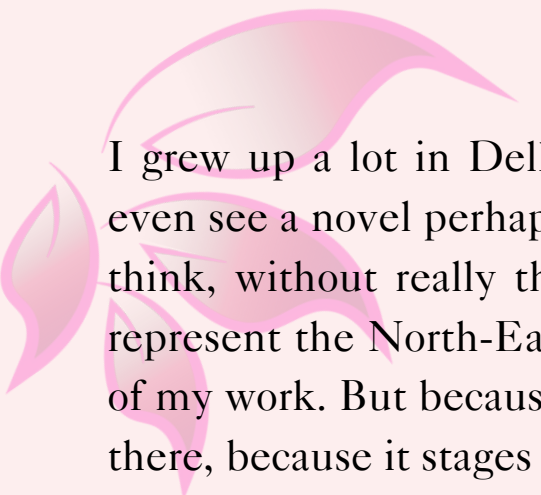
You will have to have your characters very clearly painted out so that is a very different approach. A long form, the long novel, has slightly more forgoing space. For me personally, I take a similar approach. I tend to know the plot thoroughly. I know the beginning and end. Some people say the plot ran away with itself and the characters went their own way, this doesn't usually happen to me. I know the plot from beginning to end. I have the characters very well drawn out in my head.

But unlike short stories, here, I do allow myself some room to perhaps change the plot so that it can take a detour along the way. And I have the liberty here to change a few things, one-back actor, the change of the *name of ones*. *So that is the difference between the short form and the long form for me.*

*Q. Your writing often draws from the cultural context of northeastern India. How do you balance making your stories regionally authentic while ensuring they have universal appeal?*

(JB): This wasn't really a conscious approach. As I said in the previous section, I think any writer, the places they live in or the background they are from, and very often, many people are today from mixed backgrounds. Your mother may be from one part of India and your father may be from another. So you have roots in different places. You have different landscapes behind you. So it's not really a conscious decision. For me as to how I keep the northeast paramount, how do I keep it in focus? It just so happened because my roots are from there. My characters live there. The stories somehow set there as a stage as it were. It just comes organically together.

In fact, in the second and third books, the novels that I have written, Bangalore plays a fairly large part. For the last 30 years, as all of you will know, I have been based in Bangalore so it definitely plays a very large part of my fiction too.



I grew up a lot in Delhi. So increasingly in some short pictures, I can even see a novel perhaps where part of the landscape may be Delhi. So I think, without really thinking too much about it, didn't aim to sort of represent the North-East. I didn't aim to make politics the main feature of my work. But because my characters lived there, because my roots are there, because it stages there, it just has become part of my work.

*Q. So continuing with response of your answer, so how do you see your work contributing to the broader contemporary Indian landscape at this point?*

(JB): In Indian literature, it's a very exciting place. There are writers, young and established; young and old, from many parts of it coming together. And because this is a digital age, unlike before, we are all able to connect. There are festivals and discussions like this. If it had not been for technology, you and I would not have been connected today. I would have been writing in isolation here. After a couple of years, you might have read some of my books once they were published.

But right now, you and I can just talk to each other. But just coming together, writers from different places has led to this sort of big stage. And as if we are all actors in it, as if there's a play being staged called Indian Fiction. Each person has its role. Each person lends something to that play. Each person lends his own significance, his own contribution. It's all flavors in the world to this entity called Indian Fiction. And I'm so glad we have this diversity.

Unlike me, these are one of the countries where it is a flatter stage where the differences are very subtle between different regions of America, the regions of Australia, where there are such interesting things to be learned from the various regions of our country. And I have been privileged, I would say, in being in this unique position where my roots are from Assam but I've had the opportunity to live outside of it.



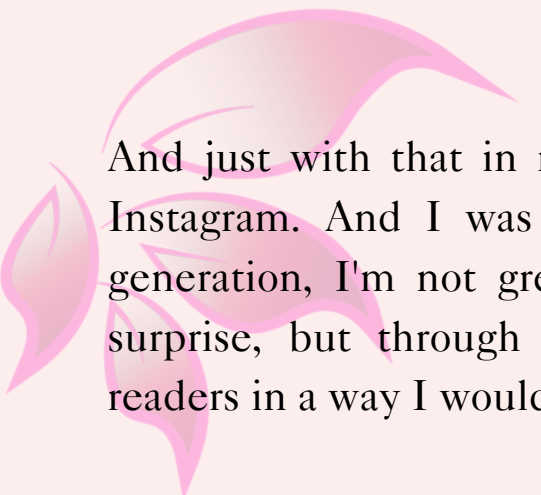
Growing up, as I mentioned, I was in Delhi. In the last few decades, I've been living in Bangalore largely, but I've also lived in Gujarat, I've also lived in Kerala, I've also lived in West Bengal, in Calcutta. So I have this privilege of kind of having a leg in two or three places. And in a way, my writing seems to have become organically a bridge between the landscape of my roots and my native landscape of the northeast, to the other landscapes I've been in.

Because of my long tenure in Bangalore, for example, a lot of people know me and a lot of people know Assam through my writings. And they know Assam through my discussions at a book launch or at a book festival. So I've been privileged, I think in being a sort of bridge between the part I am from. And the various landscapes I have lived in.

I think possibly my work has relevance. Because of that, my work is not just about place. As we discussed earlier about relationships, family, and a lot about the challenges young women have faced in various stages of their lives. That is an urgent matter today. And I think a lot of my fiction factors in and contributes to that domain.

*Q. A lot of times, we see readers and writers connect a lot. So in your case, do you have any instances where you have witnessed your stories connect with the readers in a very unexpected way?*

(JB): I can't really remember a specific example, but after telling my experience with technology, pre-2020, I was not part of any WhatsApp group, I was not on Instagram, I was not on Facebook, I'm still not on Facebook, I'm still not on Twitter. But my last book, 'Undertow,' took ten long years to write. So what happened to that book was it went into lockdown. It's what we call a lockdown book. There was no launch, no bookshops for six months, no book launches, no book events. At one point, my publishers, friends, and family urged me to get onto some platforms so that the book would at least be seen.



And just with that in mind to support the book coming out, I joined Instagram. And I was apprehensive, I was anxious, I'm not of your generation, I'm not great with technology but it was such a pleasant surprise, but through Instagram, I immediately connected with the readers in a way I would never have before.

So for my previous books, I would read, I would meet readers and book talks, bookstores and books shows and talk to them, listen to them, I would meet young readers. But this instant ping of somebody saying I've read the story and I have tears in my eyes. It's a very large, warm feeling for an author. And instantly I would talk to my readers on Instagram, I could do Instagram live.

So for me, I feel those years of writing in isolation where I sent the book out as if it were a child into the world and then I didn't see its journey. Today I'm part of that journey and it's very warm, it's a very gratifying feeling for a writer.

*Q. Do you have any authors or literary works that have had a significant influence on the way you write or the way you do your storytelling?*

(JB): Again, this is one of those difficult questions like which is your favorite book because there are so many. There are so many and in a short time I'll be able to name only a few when I do, I hope I don't do any disrespect to the others that I love so much. But a few names just immediately come to mind. One of my biggest influences has been Canadian short fiction writer Alice Monroe.

In fact, during that time when I stayed home with my young son, planning to be at home and go back to work in a couple of years, I read almost her entire body of work and body of writing. I had always read her before growing up but something resonated.

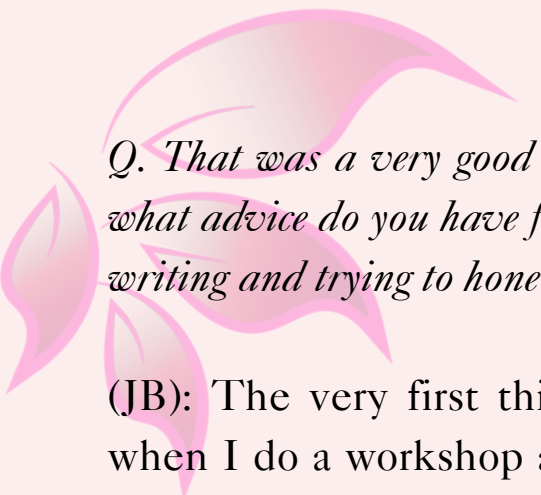
I think short fiction is something, you may agree or disagree with me; Very useful when you have short, short bursts of time. So as you can imagine with a very young baby, I had just maybe 15 minutes when I could read and then the baby starts crying again. So for me, that was a period when I read a lot of short fiction. I read a lot of her.

If you haven't read her works in your view, please pick up her writing if you want to read seriously for the future. She is a remarkable lady who has just lived in one place in Canada. She's got international in that sense. And she writes only about her region in Canada. She doesn't write about, she writes about concerns which can be looked upon as feminine, feminist, domestic. And she doesn't bother. She doesn't write about being a feminist or write about the environment or outer space.

She writes about, domains that interested me so much as I mentioned before, a family, relationships, mothers and daughters, mothers and sons, husbands and wives, a woman trying to find a career, a woman trying to find a gift. And as I read more and more of her, I was not just inspired.

I had the courage to put my own feelings out there in paper. I felt that these are not just small concerns. These are large concerns in the human condition. These are universal concerns. These are concerns in bangalore, in Delhi and in Calcutta.

There are many other writers like that even in Assam, like Indira Goswami and as you all know, she again courageously addressed the condition of women, the state of women in India. There is Trashilish Bandhi, one of the most senior writers, living writers in India today. And somebody who broke new ground or writing fiction, especially for women writing fiction. Many, many writers of the West, Salman Rushdie, Amitabh Ghosh. So many of the short fiction, Grace Anton, Utera Welty, William Fochman, and many, many writers have been great influences in my life.



*Q. That was a very good list ma'am. I'll surely pick them up in the future. So, what advice do you have for students or people of any age who are trying to start writing and trying to hone this skill of theirs?*

(JB): The very first thing I would say and this is the first thing I say when I do a workshop also with young, aspiring writers, is to read. It's a cliché I know, but you just cannot become a writer if you've not read. From my own experience, I remember from, I think as far as memory stretches, maybe three, four, five, my big list of pleasure was in grabbing a book and reading it. This continued throughout my life. I think it was a blessing that I read so much because as a writer, unless you read. For example, if you want to become a cook, you want to become a chef.

For instance, if you've never tasted good food. If you've never tasted a variety of cuisines, how will you know what you're enjoying? How will you know what is good? How will you develop your taste? Before you become a great chef, you become a great, I think, connoisseur of cuisine. So that's you and then formalize, you can sort of structure your taste and know what it is you want to cook.

Similarly, for a writer, unless you have read widely, read diversely, read very deeply, you will not have that taste, you will not have that voice, you will not know in which direction to progress. So read a lot so you know what you like and you can write accordingly.

The second thing I would say, this is not really a literary piece of advice as something which a lot of people don't realize that writers don't touch upon, is that you have to know yourself. It will seem strange to you when I say this, before writing, ask yourself who you are.

Who am I? Who are you? Who are you with respect to? Where are your roots? What do you feel about them? What do you feel about what's happening around you? What are your ideas about family?

What is your opinion about relationships? What do you feel about your friendship? What do you feel about the current politics? What do you feel about the environment as it is today? You need to know yourself inside out and then become that voice inside you telling you that this is what I would write about.

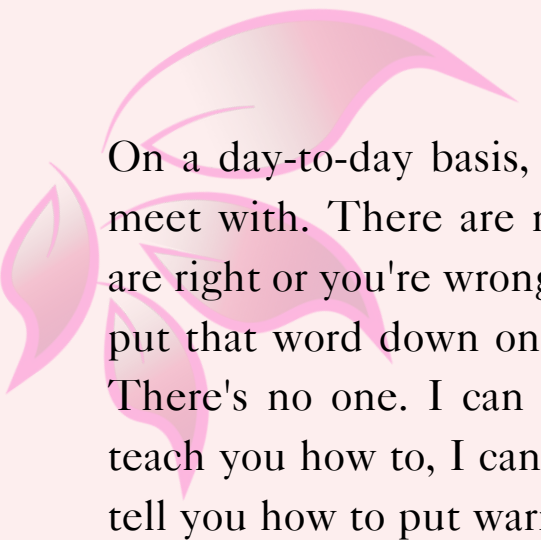
The pure mechanics of writing can actually probably be learned to be taught, which is why I teach writing, but this little domain of who you are, this aspect of finding your voice is something only you can develop yourself and you need to go through this exercise, through this journey before you begin to write.

And of course, the other advice about writing is, those are the mechanics of writing, the elements of writing, your theme, your knowledge, your background, your setting, this all can be taught at a purely teaching level. But before that I would tell a young writer read widely and know yourself.

*Q. So, ma'am, are there any lessons that you have learned along your journey as a writer that you wish you knew when you started?*

(JB): I wish I knew how hard it was. Because although writing seems almost everybody says I want to write and would write a short story and it seems simple, right? So, that we'll think of a character, think of a story, put it down in paper, but this is probably one of the hardest things to do. And remember, I have also been a doctor and which is very hard work. I've done endless duties, I've been awake for 36 hours And I've been on my feet without sitting down, perhaps with well-bought stretches. But the effort and the exhaustion that comes from writing is another level altogether. This is very self-motivated work. There's nobody there to say that tomorrow morning I want a short story. Of course, your publisher would say that we want a short story in six months or a year, but that's a very loose deadline.





On a day-to-day basis, there is no office to go to. There is no team to meet with. There are no targets. There is nobody telling you that you are right or you're wrong. You have to wake up and motivate yourself. To put that word down on paper, to create that character, there is no help. There's no one. I can teach you the mechanics of writing, but I can't teach you how to, I can't help you put that entire novel on paper. I can't tell you how to put warmth into your novel. I can't tell you how to touch the reader's heart. I can tell you the ways to do it, but it's up to you to take action. It's such a difficult task and while you're writing, people don't realize that life goes on and writing for a woman is doubly challenging, especially in India.

There is a feeling that this is a hobby. This is not a serious profession. You're not a doctor, lawyer, architect, engineer, or corporate person. So, What is it you're doing? Almost everybody feels they have access to your time. Be it your own family, be it domestic health, be it friends and neighbors. It's like do that chapter later, come for your coffee. If you refuse, if you want to finish that chapter because the words are just pouring out, it's like, well, that's so strange.

Why don't you just leave your work and come for your coffee? You never are given that stretch of me time in which to sit down and complete this very difficult task. So there are many challenges in writing and I wish before I started, I knew about this.

So I warn young writers about that. Please be careful. This is not easy work. It's work that will exhaust you. In India, you need to have a profession. If you are an architect, a lawyer, or a doctor, you have to have a profession. It will help you support your writing because, in India, very few genres make money. The one who makes money is very, very popular writing, maybe mythology. but the kind of writing I do is literary fiction and it doesn't pay. So, if you want to pursue literature, the addition of another profession is more convenient.

*Q. So ma'am, can you provide us with any insights into any of your upcoming projects or any areas you are currently writing about or exploring about?*


(JB): I'm actually a very slow writer. I could have actually finished the next book after 'Undertow' in 2020, but I'm still thinking. I'm still ideating and think the writing will become much better once I get the idea fixed. So I'll just generally tell you that it's again going to be about relationships, probably again about a family and its setting... And it probably will have to do with...

See, a writer also writes about different stages in life, depending on the stage of life that they're in. So I am at a very different stage from 20 years ago. I'm looking at the quieter years of my life in the next year. It could be that this could be about people in that state of life. When you're dealing with the response that you've done you are probably looking at the twilight years, the winding down time of life. It could be very, very that.

I'm not sure, but I'm just beginning to think about those things.

*Q. Ma'am, we come to the last question for today. How do you envision your writing evolving in the future?*

I suppose at this stage in my writing career, I mean, it's been 20 years since I've been writing, and writing, and writing. I don't think this will evolve that much at this stage. As I said, I have evolved to how it is and what I'm comfortable with it. But like I said, the things may change the subject matter may change, but I am not really certain that the physical writing of it, because that is like a signature, right? Your writing is like your voice when you sing. You may sing about different things, your songs may be different, but I don't think that boys can sing as well as you know. I don't see my writing really changing.



*Q. So that's it from our side, ma'am. Thank you so much for joining us for this interview session online. Both of us are very glad that we could host this session with you. And that's it from our side. Is there anything you would want to address or talk about?*

I think, first of all, I would like to thank all of you. Thank you so much. I thank you for your patience because it's been with me so long ago, but there were lots of things happening in the field where I was tired of it. I wanted to have a quiet day where I could give you time to do what I have to do. I'm so glad we decided that we managed to do it on a Sunday. To also to say that I'm also very encouraged by the fact that learning people like you are reaching out to writers, we are thinking about reading and writing because I do see that around me this has become just the age of the screen. It's just become digital. Even, of course, reading people who've done the screen, but that's not the matter.

But there's such quick means to clarification that these are saying reading you might just watch the TV, you must watch the movie first. So it's very encouraging for me to interact with you to know that you are interested in film, you are interested in books, you are interested in text, you are interested in reading. The film is in a condition because the picture reflects this take on a new condition.

So if you really want to understand yourself, your family and labor force and society, history, the future, this helps, which is the pathway of it. So I'm very encouraged that you've gone through this too. And thank you very much for having me. And it's always a pleasure for me to talk to young people from my part of the world because for me it's like an input. I get a fresh insight into what's happening there because I know so far.

So, thank you very much for listening to me.

# Special Thanks to



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# *The Lost Stories*

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Literary and Debating Committee  
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