



the  
**RUIAITE**  
monthly  
MOVING BEYOND PAPERS

## EDITORIAL

Festive Greetings to all dear Readers! What joy festivals bring into our households, right? As Mumbai is bedazzled with sparkle smeared on its streets and localities, it's no less than a star lit night. Taking this golden opportunity, The RUIAITE Monthly has come up with its very own Diwali special edition, which will definitely brighten up your joy of reading.

As the Nation gears up for Diwali our columns too have geared up for bringing something unique on your Diwali platter. Explore how people of different cultures in India celebrate Diwali in their own unique way in Insight, and discover the festivals of light celebrated around the world. Has Diwali got to be celebrated in an orthodox manner? Some people think not! Op-ed discusses about the unconventional methods and changes in celebrating the festival of lights. What festive profession

can you take up this time? Careerwise lists out the careers related to various industries which take part in making Diwali special. Open Forum talks about what Prince Bharat has expressed in his diary about the return of his brother Lord Ram, whereas Tech-Tricked is talking about eco-friendly ways to have fun this

Diwali. Ever thought what a Diya thinks about the hope that it spreads through its little flame? Explore this unique train of thought in Fictionally Yours. Science of Everything delves into the science behind various Diwali practices- if you like building mud-forts during the festival; you are in for a special surprise, read on to find out. Discover how exactly the traditions of Diwali have originated in Behind the scenes, along with opinions of craftsmen who work in the Diya industry.

Travel enthusiasts, read about the experiences of our columnists and their travel stories in Safarnama.

Along the same lines, keep yourself updated about the seminar on Digitizing Travel and Tourism organized by the department of Travel and Tourism in our reports section. Read about the #MeToo movement which grabbed national attention, and the mishap at Amritsar in Buzz Around. And finally, Art wall, as always has added colors in this edition through the works of student-artists.

Enclosing, we would like to know your comments on our Diwali edition. You can reach us on Gmail, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. Also, do subscribe to our YouTube channel for interesting videos.

Team RUIAITE Monthly wishes you a very Happy Diwali, and a joyous reading!





## *RAMNARAIN RUIA AUTONOMOUS COLLEGE, MATUNGA, MUMBAI*

Ramnarain Ruia Autonomous College organized a seminar on Tourism and Travel Management called 'Into a Digital Future: Where Technology Drives Travel' on the 4th of October, 2018. The event was organized in the college auditorium and hosted by TY Bvoc-TTM students. It was attended by college students from all over Mumbai. The speakers for this event were Ms. Divyakshi Gupta (blogger), Mr. Neil Patil (founder and director of Technology- Veena World) and Mr. Sanjeev Samala (co-founder and director- Axisvation).

The seminar commenced with the lighting of the lamp by the Principal and guests for the day. The first speaker of the event was Ms. Divyakshi Gupta. She started very confidently by interacting with students, asking them certain questions about travel and listening to their views. She then introduced herself and about her job, and what

she does as a blogger. She gave advice about having a career in the tourism field. She shared her experience as a blogger and also revealed that she liked clicking pictures of doors and visiting rural areas, clicking pictures of people there, etc. She spoke about travel before social media. She discussed how difficult it was to travel when there was no technology but now it is so easy to book hotels, vehicles, find places to visit and eat, etc. She said that blogging seems easy but is not; as you have to continuously keep recording and explaining everything. You have to make sure you take down all the important points and try to describe them perfectly. It's more difficult when you have to visit 3 or 4 places together. She tried to speak about everything that was required for having a career in the tourism field. The next speaker was Mr. Neil Patil who spoke about digitalization in

tourism. He spoke about Samsonite India, a technology that drives travel and continued to talk about the importance of tourism and travel management. The last speaker was Mr. Sanjeev Samala who spoke about travel and technology and how it has an impact on everyone.

This seminar was truly inspiring for students who want to pursue a career in tourism and travel management. The speakers were incredible and gave tremendous information about the tourism field and also shared some great insights about their experience. This also gave a boost to modern traveling and digitizing. Students loved the seminar and found it very helpful for their future. In the end, the students greeted and thanked the Principal and guests and the seminar ended on an inspiring note.





# BUZZ AROUND

## Sabarimala Temple Row



The Sabarimala Sree Dharma Sanstha Temple is one of the most famous Hindu temples in India, located in the Panthanamthitta district of Kerala. The temple is managed by the Travancore Devaswom Board. The shrine at Sabarimala is an ancient temple of Ayyappan also known as Sasta and Dharmasasta. It is open for worship during the Mandalapooja (generally 15th November - 26th December), Makar Sankranti (14th January), Maha Vishuva Sankranti (14th April) and the first five days of each Malayalam month.

The Sabarimala temple row is all about whether women between the ages 10- 50 should be allowed to enter the temple and offer prayers and it has been dominating the news for the past few weeks. As per traditions, women of menstruating age are barred from entering. So, it was a conflict between tradition and women's rights to enter a place of worship. As Lord Ayyapan is worshipped as a 'Naishtika Bramhachari' or a celibate for life, hence, the Devaswom Board that manages the temple affairs does not permit women's entry. The reasons cited were the celibate nature of the deity which forms the basis of the practice. Secondly, to preserve 'purity', during the menstruation period women are not permitted to enter temples of worship traditionally.

The Supreme Court passed the verdict on 28th September 2018 allowing women of all ages to enter the temple. Chief Justice of India, Dipak Mishra headed the five-judge constitution bench and gave a 4:1 verdict and ironically Indu Malhotra was the lone dissenting judge. Kerala women's rights activist Rehana Fathima and Hyderabad journalist Kavitha Jakkal were accompanied by more than 100 policemen, led by Inspector General of Police S. Shreejith attempted to enter the temple but managed to reach only up to the 'patthinettam padi' - the 18 golden steps that lead to the temple sanctum sanctorum and were blocked by the protesters, backed by temple authorities and royal trust officials. But the police and the protesters were involved in a standoff and almost two hours later the women were forced to go back. The police had to resort to 'lathi-charge' to control the protesters. There are nineteen petitions filed in The Supreme Court against the verdict and it will review the petitions on November 13.

'The Travencore Devasom Board has the legal responsibility to protect the interest of the devotees. We also have to look at the rituals and customs of the temple. The board will make its intervention in Supreme Court without harming it.' chief A Padmakumar told reporters in Thiruvanthapuram. He further stated that the meeting would decide the 'nature' of the report to be submitted to the



Disallowing women from entering the temple goes against the fundamental right to equality, the right against discrimination based on gender, freedom of movement and freedom of religion as guaranteed by the Indian Constitution. Similarly, another issue is the #MeToo movement which talks about the sexual harassment faced by women in their workplace. The movement sparked off after Bollywood actress Tanushree Dutta spoke up about decade-old allegations against actor Nana Patekar of inappropriate behavior on the sets of a Hindi film shoot in 2008. Since then, the hashtag has become a rallying cry against sexual harassment, with multiple women coming out with their #MeToo stories. Many big names tumbled out such as MJ Akbar, Suhel Seth, Chetan Bhagat, Utsav Chakraborty among others. Women are thus becoming more vocal about their rights and complaining against discrimination and harassment. But, the road to equality and justice is bound to be a long and arduous journey.

Swati Achwal.

## SIMPLY PUT: AMRITSAR RAIL TRAGEDY

Details of the recent Amritsar train incident are an example of the carelessness of each and every person involved in that day's celebration of Dussehra.



What exactly happened there?  
On 19th October, Friday, tragedy struck when almost 300 Dussehra revelers spilled over the railway track at Joda Phatak in the outskirts of the Amritsar. At almost 7 PM people watching the burning effigy of Ravana during the 'Ravana Dahan' were run over by a train going from Jalandhar to Amritsar. At least 60 people died and over 70 were injured after being mowed down by the moving train. There was a stampede during the bursting of crackers as people rushed towards the train tracks. Two trains arrived from the opposite direction at the same time which gave very little opportunity for the people to escape, said the officials. All the victims were hit by the same DMU train no. 74923.

Why did the incident happen?

As the Ravana effigy was put to fire amid the loud noise and firecrackers people claimed that they could not hear the sound of the coming train. Also, the driver couldn't have seen the crowd because of a turn, stated the Minister of State for Railways Manoj Sinha. The report on the incident is expected to be out by mid-November.

Who is responsible?

Soon after the incident, the blame game started on who should be held accountable for the accident. On a clear note, the railways denied the accident to be their fault as the people were trespassing on the track. Also, the railways were not informed of any such celebrations near the tracks. The local administration stated that as the event was being held on a private property there was no particular need of a permit. Punjab CM Capt. Amarinder Singh ordered a magisterial inquiry. Both the ruling and opposition party have accused the other party of this incident.



What happens next?

The state government has announced ₹5 lakh to the kin of each deceased and also have granted free treatment to the injured in government and private hospitals. The railways can do nothing more than awareness campaigns to reduce the trespassing casualties which was immediately launched by them. About 50,000 casualties have been reported just in the period of 2015-17. Also, railways will be eliminating 2,869 unmanned level crossings on the broad gauge by December this year.

-CHINMAY PARULEKAR

### Top 10 News

1. First indigenously overhauled Sukhoi - 30 MKI handed over to IAF, to be deployed in Pune.
2. PM meets Japan's Shinzo Abe, Regional security on Agenda talks.
3. Gujarat Chief Minister inaugurates Ghogha- Dahej 'Ro-Pax' Ferry service.
4. Me too movement takes India by storm. Authors, actors among celebrities hit by allegations.
5. Google fired 48 employees for sexual harassment: Sundar Pichai
6. Of top 10 most polluted areas in India, 8 are in Delhi shows pollution data.
7. Indian railways get its fastest engine, travel time to decrease dramatically
8. Forget Delhi CM Madan Lal Khurana dies at 82
9. Batting all-rounders will add balance to Indian line up: Bumrah
10. The sixth phase of electoral bonds sale to begin from November 1

-Adya Shreya.

### Top Twitter Quotes

CRPF:

#LestWeForgetIndia  
Yesterday - 27 Oct 2018, Four #CRPF Braves of 168 BN - ASI Mir Matiar Rahman, HC Braja Mohan Behera, Ct Chatti Praveen & Ct Gulli Palli Srinu laid down their lives in a landmine blast in #Bijapur. Remember their service & sacrifice for the Nation. @crpfindia

All India Radio news:

A subject that inspires us to look into our dignified past and ancient traditions. Today, the whole world and especially western countries are discussing environment protection and are trying to find new ways to adopt a balanced lifestyle: PM @narendramodi #MannKiBaat #PMonAIR

-Pushkar Bhatlekar.



# Careerwise

"FESTIVALS CAN LIGHTEN YOUR MIND AND BRIGHTEN YOUR CAREER."



## READYMADE HOME DECORATIVES

With the festive season approaching, it becomes customary to have our households and workplaces decorated in the best possible ways to make them "festive-ready". Of course, you want to make a lasting impression when relatives and friends visit your place during this time. Diyas, a variety of lamps, lanterns, etc are a must have during Diwali. But where do all these come from? Yeah, you get them from the shops, but there are a lot of hands at work in the making of these beautiful artworks that bring with them great vibes and enthusiasm.

The home decoratives industry makes a variety of products right from small oil lamps to big and complex electric decoratives. First, the manufacturing takes place at various small-scale factories typically situated in the rural areas near cities.

Home decoratives is a very rapidly growing industry with not a lot of competition currently. Most of the businesses in this sector work on a very small scale and are limited to a short area geographically. The industry as a whole has great potential. One would have to start on a very small scale and have a solid start in the market. Being a business proposition, it has certain risks involved, but then again which business doesn't? Profits would be short at the start but eventually are sure to increase over time.

So this Diwali choose 'homemade' as well as 'made in India' products!

### Fashion

Fashion is something related to your appearance, something which people observe first in you. Your dress, your makeup, accessories, hair, every small thing. There is a fixed set of outfits for every occasion. One cannot wear a festive outfit for a corporate meeting or vice versa. As the month of festivals is going to start, let's talk about some careers related to fashion!!

1) Contemporary Course in Ethnic wear.

Businesses have also tried hard to hold onto their traditional values of expert craftsmanship and fine handwork. The outcome has been favorable for both parties and today a market exists for both. Today there is a big demand for shoemakers who understand the importance of quality and have the expertise to handcraft premium quality footwear.

India has many institutes that offer courses in shoemaking. Footwear Design and Development Institute (FDDI), Central Footwear Training Institute (CFTI) and National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) are the most sought-after colleges. These colleges have rigorous courses that offer short-term, bachelors and master courses in shoemaking and designing.

The industry supports these colleges well by offering training, internships, and placements to students. A student right out of college can expect to start at Rs 15,000 to Rs 20,000 a month.

3) Jewelry designing.

This stage varies to a great extent depending on the decorative made. For e.g. A number of workers together make the traditional oil lamps out of mud. For making lanterns, wooden sticks, cardboard, and papers are used. They are made on a large scale as well as in a variety of different patterns and designs.

This profession requires an artistic point of view as people generally tend to look for something out-of-the-box as well as something that suits their home arrangements every year. Innovation and creativity are important. Moreover, this business also needs excellent people management skills as skilled labor is required on a large scale. This is also a seasonal business, thus most of the earnings are to be made by businessmen in a short span of 1 to 1 and a half months in a year.

National Institute of Fashion Technology, (NIFT Hyderabad) offers a 1 Year, Part Time, Certification Course in Contemporary Ethnic Wear. This is an intensive course in embroideries and surface techniques, fabric knowledge, fashion art and sketching, pattern making and garment construction for Indian ethnic apparels, and traditional Indian textiles.

Who can apply?

In order to apply, candidates must have completed 10+2 or equivalent examination from any recognized board.

This course is definitely for someone who is interested in dress designing. And Ethnic dresses are the ones that people prefer during the festive season.

2) Shoe designing.

"Good shoes take you good places", a famous quote that most shoemakers learn at a very young age. Shoemaking is an art. It is an art at par with other handcraft that has traditionally been passed on from one generation to the next. Across the world, we find

Your festive look cannot be completed without jewelry. Jewelry not only plays an important role during the festive season but also is a very important part of daily wear.

Jewelry designing is an important part of the gem and the jewelry industry and the designer is the very soul of it. Diploma in Jewellery Design trains an individual to become a jewelry designer by teaching them the proper skills and techniques behind the design. The course is 1-year long. A study in this field teaches students basic skills like stone cutting, engraving, polishing and testing the quality of precious gems and metals. Following is the list of some of the institutes that offer this course in India:

- J.D. Institute of Fashion Technology, Chandigarh
- Delhi Institute of Fashion and Technology, Delhi
- Gautam Banerjee's Academy of Jewellery Designing, Mumbai.

For getting admission in this course,

With people's lifestyles changing drastically in the past few years, the demand for ready-made home decoratives is increasing to a great extent. This makes it a very viable business in terms of market credibility. Also, the main assets of these businesses are skills and creativity- as far as you provide innovative and new ideas, there will always be a market for your goods. Also, these don't always have to be traditional, as people nowadays have become more open towards modern art. There are also professional decorators that are appointed by offices during festivals. They work in collaboration with such businesses to decorate offices. You just have to appoint a decorator and show them the place. Everything else is done by them, be it perishable decorations such as flowers or not-so-easy-to-find things.

different techniques and tools used to handcraft the most exquisite pair of shoes using family traditions and values. The quality of leather, the craftsmanship, the fit of a perfect shoe is what satisfies the purists who understand footwear.

The essence of shoemaking, for the major part of its existence, has been to handcraft one pair at a time. Nowadays, traditional shoemaking has largely been replaced by industrially mass-produced footwear without much emphasis on quality or craftsmanship.

In India, the footwear industry has been a thriving industry and growing at a rapid pace. We are the second largest producer of shoes in the world. With many favorable conditions, the industry is projected to grow leaps and bounds in the coming years.

Shoemaking, as a career, has always been a lucrative option but the rules have changed. With industrialization, many have adapted to the latest technology and processes, but several

students must have completed 10+2 or equivalent examination from recognized board.

Successful diploma holders can start earning anything between INR 2 to 8 lakhs according to their expertise in this field. Such diploma holders are hired in job positions such as designer, entrepreneur, qualified diamond grader, production manager, brand manager, visual merchandiser, retail store manager, quality controller.

### E-commerce and festivals

The Internet is one of the biggest sources through which people shop these days. Amazon, Flipkart, Club factory, Snap deal etc. gives a chance to the people who are interested in selling their designed products. Instagram has also played a vital role in publicizing self-designed products. A large number of people order product from Instagram also. So if you are a fashion lover do think about these courses.

## E - C O M M E R C E

Are you all waiting for your Diwali gifts? Gifts are one of the reasons why Diwali is one of the most awaited celebrations. Even if you manage to zero down on the kind of gift you want to give, you still have to get the best of the category, quality, and price.

E-commerce companies these days are turning to a variety of new ideas, including luxury watches, technology gadgets, crockery, designer apparel, expensive souvenir pens, home décor, movie tickets, free holiday packages, and gift hampers essentials for the festive seasons including torans, diyas, aromatic candles, etc.

E-commerce refers to commercial transactions conducted online. This means that whenever you buy and sell something using the Internet, you're involved in e-commerce.

The advent of e-commerce in India has redefined the way Indians celebrate their average festival. In the last few

3. E-commerce gives you a "feel" for customers.

In addition to all the hard business skills, an early career in e-commerce can hone your "soft skills". E-commerce encourages a deep appreciation for the value of brand experience and customer experience. It makes you a better storyteller. It forces you to take a customer-centered view of the world. It expects you to not only what customers say they'll do, but to what they actually do.

4. E-commerce accelerates your learning curve by giving you access to real-time results data. E-commerce gives you the chance to do lots of testing, and you get a report card back from the customer every day if not every minute. This real-time feedback loop accelerates your marketing learning curve exponentially.

5. E-commerce might make a difference in your life, not just your day job. Someday in some way, it's going to be

months of the year, e-commerce majors such as Amazon, Flipkart, and Shopclues compete with one another by luring customers with attractive sales and offers.

If you started out today, you would spend the first three years in E-commerce. Not just because of the frothy revenue growth outlook, but because e-commerce would give any young marketer incredibly valuable, transportable skills that could propel their careers for the long haul.

Why a career in E-commerce?

1. E-commerce has a fantastic long-term global growth outlook. Online selling is well established in the US, but there are immense growth opportunities left in emerging markets. Imagine how e-commerce will continue to boom as India, Brazil, Russia, Southeast Asia, and other emerging markets catch e-commerce fever?

pretty damn handy that you paid your dues in e-commerce. Maybe you want to promote your brand. Or help raise money for your favorite charity. Or start up your own company.

Or turn your favorite hobby into an extra source of income. Being smart at e-commerce is something practical and relevant that can last a lifetime. So, these are the five reasons. It's the advice given to new recruits, aspiring hotshot MBAs and graduates. Are you sold? This Diwali -Just give it a thought!



Mobile commerce is just a few years old and is already capturing 20% of e-commerce sales. Guess what happens to E-commerce as tablets and smartphones sweep the world in the next 10 years? So, whether e-commerce becomes your long-term love affair or not, spending three years there can give you skills and experience that will be in red-hot demand for at least the next 15 years.

2. E-commerce teaches you to think like a General Manager.

You cannot think of any other profession that is such an intense microcosm of all the fundamental skills of business. E-commerce exposes you to product marketing, supply chain, pricing and profit management, customer acquisition, cross-selling, up-selling, customer service and much more. So many jobs let you see a little piece of the puzzle, but never the whole enterprise at work.



## F O O D

Diwali without sweets cannot be imagined. The delicious Diwali sweets and faral taken out from the pan, steaming hot- imagining this itself is mouthwatering. Have you ever thought of a career related to these delicacies? In this modern, fast-paced world, there are very few people especially in the cities who take the interest or time out of their busy schedule for making the sweets for Diwali or any other festival. So, to aid them, we have seen many food shops growing and taking many orders.

This career looks very traditional but it too needs a lot of skills like business mindset, a decision-making, money handling, a good taste, and skill to make the best dishes.

Apart from this you also learn the soft-skills like interacting with people of different backgrounds, communication skills, last-minute preparations, stress handling and

happiness of serving others.

If you do hotel management with the majors in chef training, you will have an upper hand in the business of food and sweets and grab a large share of the market.

Though traditionally, this profession is practiced only if there are family occupation, nowadays it's a many people who are inclined towards food making and choose small-scale shops which are highly profitable especially during festivals. And in India festivals are celebrated throughout the year. This makes the career interesting as well as worth investing in.

This Diwali think out of the (sweet) box!







# BEHIND THE SCENES

## The Shades of Light

Cool breeze on your skin after a rather humid, grueling year and lights flickering softly in every corner of your eye at night time. Sneaking into the kitchen when your mom's busy entertaining guests you never knew were related to you. The cheer as little kids run around you lighting their firecrackers. What did all this just remind you of?

The festival of lights, Diwali symbolizes the spiritual "victory of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance". This festival is one of the most awaited festivals as it is celebrated with much fervor and joy all across the country. For all, Diwali conjures happiness and togetherness

while spreading light through the darkness. The mere mention of Diwali gets kids up and excited while the women of the house look forward to shopping for cartloads of goodies and dresses. Throughout the years, Diwali has been celebrated in different ways and has meant different things to different people. Some give way their belongings to the poor, some buy new ones. Some prefer to burst firecrackers while some prefer a pollution-free Diwali. Companies use this festival to attract customers by marketing the festival to encourage sales. For factory workers, this time of the year is a busy one, while diya and lantern makers use this festival

to hone their artistic skills and create funky and beautiful creations. Indeed, there's more to it than just lighting diyas and eating sweets. It's a sentiment that has stayed with us through the ages. With the early morning baths, the rangolis and the lanterns, the original flavors of Diwali have been mixed with the freshness of the coming years as these old traditions merge with newer trends. Despite the newer and different variations, people have still held on to the essence of Diwali and will continue to do so in the later years. This month, we look into the various aspects of Diwali and all that makes Diwali what it is.

The word Diwali has a whole host of memories attached to it. Even as we are enthusiastically looking forward to the beginning of the festival, the underlying nostalgia for all the previous years is always present. The world is constantly changing and with it, the celebrations have changed too- in some subtle as well as not so subtle ways. One thing that has remained constant is the tradition of fondly remembering the years gone by. It's a bittersweet experience; the feeling of warmth that these memories bring and the sadness that things are not the same now.

One of the first things that come to mind is helping our moms make special sweets and snacks and then being the first to eat them as a reward for a job well done. Rangolis were painstakingly hand drawn using dot designs. Today though, a busy life has led to store-bought faral and readymade rangoli designs. Decorations consisted of earthen diyas. Another unforgettable

memory is that of the homework all schools gave to complete over the vacation. It's probably safe to say that all of us ignored that till the last possible moment. And of course, no Diwali was complete without gift boxes of dry fruits and chocolates. Bursting crackers was the highlight of our day back then with all the favorite kinds purchased in dozens. Now with people becoming increasingly pollution conscious, sales of crackers are falling more and more every year and this is one change that should happen. Diwali shopping has also gone from a family trip to a crowded store to online stores and home deliveries.

This changing scenario is brought about by the fast-paced life today where slowing down even to celebrate with loved ones seems an out of grasp reality. Commercialization has played a major role in this. Long before the festival season starts, there is a sudden explosion of numerous sales and offers for every kind of product. Marketing the

festival as one of auspicious starts and new beginnings have created quite a boost in profit for companies. Diwali shopping has also become a competition due to social media and no one wants to be outdone. Also, a lot of the firecrackers that we buy, are made by the tiny hands of underprivileged children of poverty, who have been denied education and opportunities. Their black hands keep working in the dark corners of a factory so that we can spend a moment of joy seeing an explosion of light. And the situation doesn't seem to become better either because we fail to remember, or maybe we're in denial. Somewhere along the way, we have lost a little of the essence of what Diwali means. Everything must change with times and the celebration of Diwali is no exception to it but we must always remember what the festival is about- joy. The simple joys that are celebrated should not become something we feel nostalgic about.

Standing in a room filled with beautifully decorated diyas and lanterns and hand painted jewelry and notebooks, your eyes search for the artist and rest on a group of beautiful, beautiful people. That's what it is to spend time in ADAPT, a special school of a different kind. ADAPT stands for Able Disabled People All Together. It's an NGO with many schools in Mumbai. ADAPT specializes in educating and empowering kids and adults who suffer from Cerebral Palsy. Cerebral palsy can create a powerful illusion of helplessness and hopelessness for the child that it affects. However, they believe that this is truly just an illusion. Beneath the thorny layers of an uncooperative body and the challenges of mobility, there lies an intelligent mind, whose potential they believe is vast and can be unleashed.

ADAPT is an NGO which focuses on not only educating kids and adults with CP (Cerebral Palsy), but they also spread



awareness in the society with their outreach programmes and volunteering programs. Social workers, on school psychologists and doctors all work together in running the school. Students in ADAPT get to learn skills that normally they wouldn't be able to learn at their

homes either due to lack of attention from family or from the society in general. They get to socialize and make friends and important connections with people. The best part of it all is, they get to earn. People with physical disabilities have always been doubted by society on whether they'll be able to support themselves economically. ADAPT breaks that illusion. Students here are taught to make all kinds of different stuff which is then sold by the NGO, and the money comes back entirely to the students. They're also given employment opportunities, where they can get interviewed and secure jobs for themselves.

So the next time you see Diyas or Lanterns or candles coming from such NGOs, make sure you buy them. We can do our part.

Well before Diwali begins, its preparations begin at least about two weeks or in some cases, a month before the festival actually arrives. Everyone notices these preparations in full swing, especially with our mothers urging us to clean our forever messed up rooms and cupboards filled with unused books, while they get busy making the famous Diwali snacks, otherwise known as 'faral' in Marathi.

Faral has major diversity all throughout the country. It ranges from the karanjis in Maharashtra, Kheel Batasha from Delhi, Moti Pak in Rajasthan and Gujarat, Teepi Gavvalu from the South to Pinni from Punjab, etc. Each of these items imparts their own peculiar taste from their respective states of origin to the dish. Sweets like Moti Chur laddoo and Kaju Katli are also exchanged during the

festival. Some of the other basic items include the savory Chakli, sweet Shakarpara, the sweet-and-spicy Chivda.

Diwali majorly celebrates the period where farmers take into account their harvests and profits all throughout the year. It celebrates the bounty they earn after the post-monsoon harvest period. The making of 'faral' brings women together to try out new recipes and share them around the village. This brings people together. Diwali is a celebration of good over evil and on another occasion, it is the wedding anniversary of God Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi. It also marks the start of a New Year. When such auspicious times await, sweets are bound to be exchanged. This gesture is also a way of sharing happiness and wishing our loved ones a happy and prosperous life ahead.

Diwali without faral and sweets is like Thanksgiving without the special turkey roast. Like every festival, Diwali celebrates happiness and brings people together irrespective of their religions because of their love for food! It could well be called the Festival of Food and Sweets!



Diwali symbolizes the victory of light over darkness. Humans have always been afraid of the dark. Of the 300 thousand years of our existence on earth, we've never been nocturnal creatures. We love light. Perhaps that's where the roots of our affinity towards fire lies. Our love for things that glow and burn in the night, which spreads light in the darkness, is more ancient than we realize. Diwali celebrates and reminds us of this ancient love of ours for light.

During Diwali, we light our homes with beautiful diyas, decorate them with rangolis, exchange sweets as a medium to express our happiness and prosperity. In these festive days, marketplaces are literally filled with people trying to sell decorative items. If we look closely at

them, many of them seem financially weak. Also, we see many handicapped people trying to sell these things to earn a living. They make our Diwali colorful while living a very colorless life. It becomes really very tough for them to arrange money for operations or prosthetic parts and even if they somehow manage to get the money, they don't get access to the proper technology required. It's the same case with organ donations. Every year, about 5 Lakh people die due to non-availability of organs, thanks to the misconceptions of people about donating organs.

There are many blind and partially blind people who are waiting for someone's eyes to get their vision. They don't have to live in the dark. Of the 37 million blind

people across the globe, over 15 million are from India. 75% of these are the cases of avoidable blindness. What an irony! When the world is celebrating the festival of light, they are struggling to get light. It's high time that we break the bubble of misbelief about eye donation. There is no better way to thank God for our sight than by giving a helping hand to someone in the dark!

On this Diwali, let's take a pledge to spread the light. The satisfaction of giving someone a life even after our death will be unmatched. Only then these lines from the Diwali prayer, "Tamaso ma jyotir gamaya" meaning "from darkness lead us to light" will be meaningful! Let's gift them some of our light.

Among the more recent traditions of Diwali are playing cards during a Diwali party. Every one of us is aware of the deck of cards and its different suits. But take a close look on the card and you will notice a strange thing about them. The king of hearts from among all seems to be stabbing himself in the head. He also does not have a mustache which is strange as all the other 3 kings have

them. Well, modern playing cards have a French origin. Near the end of the 15th century, French publishers started naming the court cards after heroes, legends or historical figures. The King of Hearts was dubbed Charles, the presumably after Charlemagne. For the purpose of mass production, the earliest cards were printed using woodblocks. Disfiguring

occurred over the centuries as unskilled block makers distorted the original designs. Among the many distortions that took effect, the King of Hearts not only lost his mustache, but the direction of his sword gradually slopes from an upright and vertical pointing to a more horizontal direction pointing behind his head, commonly misinterpreted as a "suicidal" king.

With this article, we tried to shed some more light on this festival of lights and its many dimensions. From Behind The Scenes column, we wish you all a very happy Diwali.





# INSIGHT

## The Essence of Diwali

A festival of light. A festival of hope. A festival that brings home some giggles and lots of people together!  
 What more do we have to say about it? Read along as you relive some of your best memories

### In Two Parallel Worlds

Arjun startles awake, The day stretches out like a disoriented. He brushes his hair taffy, sweet and sickening - out of his eyes and tries to figure literally. His ma and other out where he is. He can hear vaguely related elderly women shouting and clamor and just as he swoop down and keep pressing air of general chaos that's as sweets into his hands as though familiar as home. Home. Of he is still that starry-eyed child course. It's been many a moon they remember, since he has lived in his childhood house and now the ceiling with its faded stars is as unfamiliar as his college dorm once was.

He rolls out of the bed, rubbing his eyes and steps out of his bedroom, barely swerving fast enough to avoid being hit by a worker barrelling past him whilst holding an armful of decorations. The worker shouts an apology. He mumbles an answer back.

He makes his way to the kitchen but not without getting tangled in some fairy lights and making another worker spill rangoli colors all over herself and generally causing a mess. Smiling ruefully at himself he steps into the kitchen where his ma is ordering about a million people around while also somehow doing all the work herself.

He sinks into a chair and puts his head in his hands.

Lights of all kinds and colors from his shoulders. of all shades were all Kiran could see around him as he rounded the bustling street corner with his baba. They went to their usual spot and started setting up their stall. The evening felt somewhat... off. People around him were tired, irritable, and grumpy as they returned home. Nothing in the world could bring down his excitement and energy, though.

"Not today," he muttered under his breath.

"Yeh kitne ka diya?" His For a month, the view that had greeted him in the morning was splashes of paint. They were everywhere in his house. Every single day. At 4 am. And he would be fascinated with the colors all over again, each morning.

He would wake up with all the enthusiasm his body allowed him to and get to work. He wanted to make his baba proud and lay off whatever small portion of burden his tiny hands could

Holding that brush in his hand and creating strokes from them, he felt like a big man. He was after all painting the diyas his baba had made.

Through the eight years of the little life he had, he had seen his father do it. And those were the most intriguing moments for him. The ones he looked forward to.

His chain of thoughts was broken by a lady in front of him. His first customer. "Bees rupiya," he answered as he noticed the appreciation in her eyes for his diya. He looked at his baba and he had a small smile on his face.

He wishes every year that this festival of lights would not end. But never had he felt that desire more keenly than at that moment.

-Himani Joshi (TYBA)

### A Diwali Regained



Along the paper trails of memory, around the crumpled edges, tracing an outline of childhood pressed between the pages, trapping the concentration of life, one thing stands out—the festival of Diwali. In a country like ours, perhaps there is no escaping the inevitable—nostalgia tinged with the smell of sulphur, shadows dancing around tiny flames—an essence most genuine to the heart of a child who has yet to learn to define this by its religion or tradition, uprooting itself there and never quite uprooted after.

Diwali has a way of dispersing itself to fit every corner of life. For the generation of people who grew up in chawls, it found its way in tiny quarters crisscrossed

across a narrow corridor—in the smell of gram flour wafting past doors which were never shut, tiny feet tiptoeing around rangolis spread along the doorways, shared spaces where lanterns were made with awkward fingers, often turning out bent and misshapen. And yet, for the people who struggled to claim their own lives, this had a whole new meaning—something that was unbelievably theirs. As Diwali now arrives in urban slums along railway lines, compressed between the public and the private, the broken homes almost look magical in the warm glow, a strange parallel to the skyscrapers in the distance, for in the fading darkness starting to be illuminated by the lamps, both sides of the city look the same. And then it carries in villages, where hands of all castes meet halfway to exchange the ends of tremulous sparklers, ancient divisions finally blurred. For the Indian Army, the candles lit are a reminder of the life they have left behind and the

better life they hope to come back to—a symbol of peace that often flickers just like a flame. And for the people who have crossed the sea, lonely and disconnected in new countries, Diwali is a way to recreate that love and comfort of home—one which they carry within themselves.

As we reach the peak of modernity, chasing pleasure that is only a ghost of happiness, perhaps this is what slips through our fingers. It is these corners of Diwali which must be reclaimed, the remains of the past months decluttered to rediscover the old, the end of the year masking a beginning. An essence that we must hold true, learning and relearning with time, reforming it with a touch of the new, remembering Diwali for what it is—shaped by blurred borders and the life which bleeds through in between.

Anushka Nagarmath (FYBA)



### लाडू...

नाते-संबंधांचं किती विचित्र गणित आहे, जे उलगडता उलगडत नाही. सगळीच घरं अगदी पिठासारखी असतात- प्रत्येक कण न कण वेगळा आणि तुटक पण तरीही नाईलाज म्हणा किंवा ओळख म्हणा, राहतात एकाच डब्यात. बरं, प्रत्येक घराण्याची consistency वेगळी, काही गव्हाच्या पिठाप्रमाणे अलगद, मऊशर बंध सांभाळतात, तर काही रव्याप्रमाणे हातात घेताच टोचत टोचत विखरून जातात. बेसनाचं आपलं भलतंच, चिकट म्हणजे अगदी चिकट! हात लावताना वाटतं मऊ, पण पिच्छा सोडवताना येतात नाकी नऊ. या अशा भिन्न भिन्न कणांना नात्यांच्या वेगवेगळ्या आकार प्रकारात घडवतात ते म्हणजे सण.

म्हणजे बघा ना, सकाळी breakfast ला एकत्र येणाऱ्या शिऱ्यामध्ये जरा भांडणाची मिर्ची पडली की त्याचा सांजा होतो... तेच, रोज तापणाऱ्या तव्यावर नेहमीच्या कणकेत शेजारी किंवा पाहुणे येऊन टपकले, तर त्याचा पराठा... तसेच प्रत्येक सणाला याच Basic पिठांचं रूप, रंग, आकार आणि संस्कार सगळंच बदलतं...

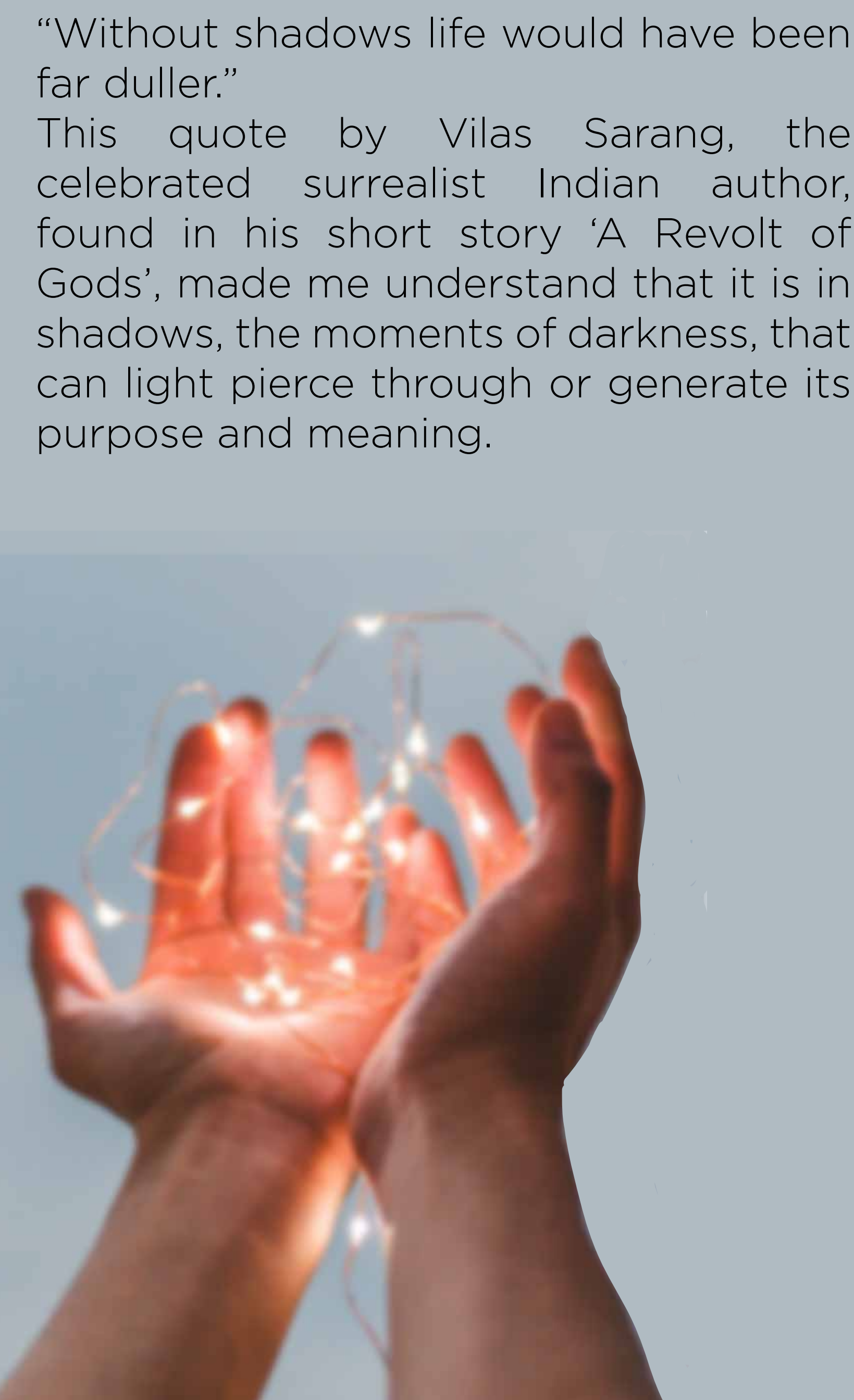
दिवाळीत हे असे विखुरलेले कण एकत्र आणले जातात घरच्या कढईत. त्यांना कसं वागायचं, कसं बोलायचं याचा खरपूस शेक दिला जातो आणि आपल्या मनाला पटेल तसाच रंग जोपर्यंत हे कण धारण करत नाहीत, तोपर्यंत त्यांची सुटका काही होत नाही! मग पुन्हा आधीच भरडून, भाजून निघालेल्या या पिठात relationsचं तूप ओतलं जातं, म्हणजे इच्छा असो वा नसो, त्यांना या Moral Obligation मुळे एकत्र रहावंच लागतं. त्यात कधी दुसरी पीठं येऊन मिसळतात, मग गोड आठवणी आणि प्रेमाची साखर पसरते. त्यात पडते special momentsची वेलची पूड, मोठ्यांच्या पुन्हा त्याच जुन्या आळसावणाऱ्या गर्पाचं जायफळ, उगाच कळ काढायला टाकलेलं मीठ आणि तासलेले misfit Dry Fruits. या Dry Fruitsची कमाल वाटते, म्हणजे त्यांनाही माहिती असतं की आपण या पिठात बसत नाही, पण त्यांना त्यातपण जबरदस्ती बसवण्यासाठी त्यांचीही पूड करायला मागे-पुढे बघत नाही कोणी. शेवटी काय, 'वेगळेपण' एकतर उठून दाखवलं जातं किंवा भरडून टाकलं जातं. Hypocrite सगळे...

मग या मेहनतीने एकत्र आणलेल्या मिश्रणाला नीट संस्कार आणि रितींच्या आकारात बांधलं जातं; आणि तयार होतो लाडू... भिन्न भिन्न कणांचा, एकत्र socially acceptable साच्यात बसणारा- गोल लाडू. त्यावर 'Happy Family'चा tag असणारा बेदाणा चिकटवतातही सगळे... काहींचा राहतो, काहींचा पडून जातो पण सावरत सावरत हा बेदाणाही निदान सणांपुरता तरी राहतो... काही जण त्यावरही show offचा वर्ख फासतात पण बहुतेक जण हा नात्यांचा लाडू तसाच enjoy करतात... कारण सण येतात आणि जातात, हे Basic Ingredients ही आपल्याच जवळ, मनाच्या कोणत्यातरी कपाटात असतातच, त्यांना एकत्र आणण्याचं फक्त कारण मात्र दिवाळी... आयुष्याचं सारण... ज्याला कळलं... तो शहाणा...

Sara Chavan (SYBA)



### A Lightsome Affair



"Without shadows life would have been far duller." This quote by Vilas Sarang, the celebrated surrealist Indian author, found in his short story 'A Revolt of Gods', made me understand that it is in shadows, the moments of darkness, that can light pierce through and give purpose and meaning.

A beacon of hope, a beacon of light, the float a basket, symbolize undertaking of halo of enlightenment, the moment of good deeds. But religion and faith are illumination, the moment of good deeds. Be it the diyas and the firecrackers in Diwali communities. In the city of Berlin that rouse the spirit of celebration, or Germany, the streets, monuments, the candle marches in the spirit of architectural sights are lit up by artists, outrage or justice, the anxious wait of a designer as an expression of an artistic public event in the field of arts and culture. This continues on for nine days while attracting huge local and tourist blowing of candles on a birthday cake, crowds.

or the light of martyrdom; lights bring about moods, strength, cause. To enlighten or to illuminate, to cheer up, surprise or mourn, lights serve many purposes.

Notably, a "festival of lights" is not ahead, what gives way. Mariners, limited to India. Such celebrations exist worldwide. The Jewish festival of Hanukkah, where each night a candle is lit on a ceremonial lampstand - the menorah - until on the eighth night the entire menorah is lit. The Lantern Festival in China, the Yi Peng and Loi Krothang festivals in Thailand are generator of it, not just a user.

Buddhist traditions. Floating lanterns,

Tanvi Padia (SYBA)



# OP-ED



Diwali is one of the most widely celebrated festivals in India. Also known as Deepavali, it is the Hindu festival expanding horizons beyond the boundaries of religion. The five-day long festival is celebrated uniquely in different regions of the country. In the Eastern regions, Goddess Durga or one of her incarnations, Kali is worshipped. Some communities in the North and the East also view Diwali as the day when Lord Krishna defeated the evil demon king Narakasur. During Diwali, the Jain community celebrates Vardhaman Mahavir, the 24th Tirthankara achieving Nirvana or enlightenment. Some regions up North perform Vishwakarma Puja and perform maintenance

equipment in honor of the Creator and the Divine Engineer of the Universe.

Diversity in Indian culture reflects itself in the numerous tales related to the celebration of Diwali. The festival of lights, it is believed; got its tradition of lighting lamps when they were first lit to welcome back Lord Ram, his wife Sita and brother Lakshman to Ayodhya as they returned after their 14 years long exile. Diwali honors Lakshmi as well, the Goddess of wealth. Some texts mention Diwali as the day the Goddess Lakshmi decided to marry Lord Vishnu.

With the tinkling of goddess Lakshmi's anklets coming closer

and closer, each household is looking forward to celebrating Diwali. The homes are being cleaned, people are buying new goods. A variety of snacks and sweets are being prepared in the household for the family to gorge upon and also to share them with their relatives and friends.

Irrespective of how varied the traditions of different states and communities, the message 'light overcomes the dark' is stated loud and clear through the festival. Diwali is a indeed festival that brings the whole nation together in a week of joy and revelry.

-Shabduli Shinde



## Checking the Calendar

Glancing at the Diwali journey.

### Dhanatrayodashi

Here comes the first day of Diwali, Dhanteras! Goddess Lakshmi is welcomed by everyone with beautiful rangoli, lamps that shine brightly against the clean houses. Traditionally things like rice flour, natural colors, and flower petals are used to decorate homes and to draw beautiful Rangoli. The day is considered auspicious to buy gold.

### Narak Chaturdashi

The demon Narakasur was killed by Krishna on this day. People in Maharashtra believe that on this day if one does not

wake up before sunrise s/he gets a stay in hell. Night sky shines brightly as firecrackers dance in their glory.

### Lakshmi Pujan

The morning begins with the traditional baths of aromatic ubtan. Diwali delicacies, sweets, and gifts are exchanged. Though the celebration is seen in the wealth and gifts of Diwali, the real beauty is in smiles of people as they spend quality time with family members.

### Padva

The fourth day has various names like Padwa, Balipratipada, Annakut, Govardhan pooja. Each word has its own story. Govardhan pooja resembles how

Lord Krishna saved his people upholding Govardhan mountain. Padwa celebrates the bond between husband and wife. Annakut is celebrated with great zeal in Gujarat as the first day of new year. Balipratipada is related to the Vamana avatar of Vishnu.

### Bhaubij

The relationship between a brother and his sister is celebrated here. Brother gives a gift to his sister and now even sister reciprocates. This traditional Diwali resides in the heart of every Indian. Yet, we can see a changing trend in this celebration. Methods may change, but Diwali spirit will remain the same.

-Mrunal Sapale

## From Ubtan to fairy lights

The sacred and brilliantly lit festival of Diwali is an integral part of the ancient Indian civilization and its history is magnificently intertwined with origins and evolution of Hindu religion. Today, this festival has become the epitome of enjoyment and is celebrated with great exuberance across the country.

While we know Diwali as a time to greet everyone and share special moments, the build-up to Diwali was special in the early days. Men would gather together weeks in advance to find ways to make Diwali special. Ladies would work together to make sweets and food, making this truly a community occasion. It ensured that no family was excluded from celebrations. This was, in some way, the real spirit of

Diwali, which was a time for bonding and spreading sweetness. After a few years, people have found their own reasons to make Diwali unique. Traditional celebrations would entail laborious cleaning of the house weeks in advance, lavish preparations including sweets and savories, and the purchase of new clothes for the family. In the days gone by, people would do most things themselves, and little was left to purchase.

But, while we say that, we also know 'Change is a growing process with time.' We do adopt new cultures and modern behavior, some by seeing others and some ourselves. The modern trend has brought a change in the distribution of sweets, the celebration, even the dressing sense. People nowadays prefer gifting chocolate hampers or a personalized

cake instead of a simple Mithai box. Everyone knows this effort of cleaning your entire house and decorating it in the most attractive way possible on Diwali. The changing trend from the traditional burning diyas to artificial light diyas helps in maintaining safety in the house too. The voluntary reduction in the bursting of crackers is the major change that has happened and it supports a clean and safe celebration of Diwali without crackers and makes a pollution free environment.

The value and ethics of the festival are not disrespected by the new trends but instead, it is celebrated in a new manner and everyone has the right to choose their own way of celebrating it.

-Lekshmi Prakash

## Wishlists, shopping carts, and diyas beyond the sea

Diwali represents the symbolic victory of light over dark, nowadays this idea is considered in a broader sense, it is more about having positivity, spreading love and enhancing everyone's life. People have started being more aware of their surroundings, their family and friends; their reality.

Getting indulged in social service and spending time with people who actually care. Diwali has such an optimistic approach to it, that today, it is more inclusive than it ever was.

Due to the development of the internet, mobile phone and communication, shopping is an easy task. Now Diwali countdown begins the day Amazon, Flipkart or Mynta take over your newspaper's front page in a huge capitative font. The big billion day and great Diwali festival; we customers are spoiled for choice.

Businesses are at a huge profit during this season. It is not that commercialization has affected the cheerfulness of the people; rather, it has helped Diwali get globalized. As India joined the global

bandwagon and got exposed to new cultures and traditions, the methods of celebration expanded themselves.

On Diwali morning you wake up with hundreds of texts, many from anonymous human beings who precisely assume you know their existence, wishing you luck and prosperity in myriad ways, mainly by unoriginal and forwarded inspiration quotes and pictures.

Once your house is all glammed up, you need to surely detox your mind, body, and soul. From spas and shopping coupons to spiritual retreats, the SMS offers come to chase you. From weird shaped electric bulbs to bright colored illuminations, the lights strung over walls, windows, and balconies make a flashy statement even as flowers vanish from Rangolis replaced by gaudy baubles and glowing stickers. Good may still triumph over evil, but good tastes too have been vanquished.

As youths of the country are pioneering environmentally friendly causes, it is time to motivate them to lead the front when it comes to Eco-Friendly Diwali. Concepts such as natural rangolis out of flowers, gifting greens to the loved ones, DIY recycled decorative items are slowly getting some spotlight. It promises to be a festival of lights in it's most

sanctimonious sense. With an increasing number of environmentally-conscious people in the cities, eco-friendly and smokeless firecrackers can expect a boom in sales. Made of recycled paper, eco-friendly crackers do not contain as many chemicals as conventional firecrackers and thus emit less smoke and noise. Based on vacuum combustion method, these crackers produce colored sparks with a considerable sound and less smoke. Yet, there is always an option of not burning crackers at all.

In recent years, the Diwali lights are illuminating foreign lands as well. Major cities in the UK mark the occasion with a council supported event usually with large firework displays. In London, events like, 'Diwali on the Square' takes place in Trafalgar Square, where dance troops showcase their work, prayers are sung. Diwali also attracts lots of foreign tourists to India as the festival of Diwali adorns the beauty of the country all the more.

Thus, Diwali in contemporary times is celebrated in manifolds. Not only in India but people outside India too indulge in merriment, thereby keeping alive the spirit of Diwali. In today's fast paced lives, festivals like Diwali give a nice excuse to create some memories to cherish lifelong.

-Mithila Kudalkar

## Sharing the sweets

While festivals act as a basis for fostering age-old traditions at the same time we need to be tolerant regarding the upcoming advances in the changing times. Charity and gift giving is an essential component of this festival, which in modern times gives us an opportunity to help welfare institutes like NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations), shelter homes, etc.

Donations to certified child care programmes will bring a brighter and long lasting light in the lives of underprivileged kids, than spending the same money for a momentary sparkle in the sky. Indian hand crafts and products will not only encourage local craftsmen but also support the government's Swadeshi Programme. Youth-based initiatives like Swadeshi-e - mandai connect local craftsmen and give

them access to a massive international market.

There are a number of online sites that connect you to such NGO's like Helpyourngo- this site gives you a detailed and informative list regarding a number of NGOs, their contribution, background and also provides you a platform for online tax saving transaction option.

One of the most notable NGO's is 'Save the Children' which has actually brought a huge change in children's problems in the past few years. It contributes to diverse areas like education, nutrition, etc. If you aren't keen on donating money without any return you can buy goodies from NGOs that provide employment to differently abled and subdued sections of the society helping them lead an independent and confident life. Mumbai based NGO Kshitij provides a platform to intellectually disabled wherein they make

handicrafts and chocolates. This not only makes them financially capable but also induces a sense of productivity in their lives. The NGO Advitya, based in Santacruz trains differently-abled individuals to stitch purses and handbags, mobile covers and shopping bags. Other organizations like Om creations trust, Shradha charitable trust, and many more such social groups are striving for the betterment of our society.

Diwali is not only about extending your greeting to your loved ones, but it is also most importantly about working towards creating a buoyant community. We tentaciously ponder about the debt we need to pay to family and friends for their company and care but we seldom think about the society we have been a part of since our birth. So, this Diwali opens your hearts and donate ardently.

-Disha Shanbag

The world is changing, so are we and so are our festivals. There is excitement in the air and zeal in our hearts. The methods may change over time but Diwali will always celebrate the human community. Ultimately, what matters is if there is a sense of satisfaction in each breath we take and if we are able to bring a smile on someone's face. Until that is happening, it is a Happy Diwali!





# OPEN FORUM

## THE BROTHER'S RETURN



14, Kartik 9347  
Treta Yuga

Fourteen years is too long a time for a pair of sandals to rule a kingdom. I know the whispers that go around Kosala - that this chappal raj is an awful joke. That I am a loon for putting my brother before our people. Let them whisper on! For he is coming home, and he is coming home in triumph.

It happened while I was in the fields next to the Saryu river, sowing my fourteenth winter crop. (If the righteous ruler of the realm must sleep in the forest with moss for a mattress, then so shall his brother.) Back bent and fists filled with seeds, I was utterly lost in my efforts. So utterly lost that I only heard the footsteps of the half-monkey, half-man till he was ten paces away. He was a messenger, he said, as he knelt. A messenger for his Lord Rama.

The message was simple and joyful. He's coming home.

Thosethree words contained heaven for me. How many nights have I spent sleepless, tossing at the news that he would be fighting a war against the mightiest of warriors and the cleverest of rogues in the universe? A war he was honour-bound to fight to its bloody end - a war he was pushed into because of me? If he were to die, what of Ayodhya and Kosala? I had sworn to him that I would surely burn myself to ashes if he did not return. Would Lakshmana or Shatrughana take the throne? Would they lead as he would have led?

But those fears are now over. I feel like crying with relief.

The messenger was, as I had conjectured, the wind warrior known as Hanumana. He knelt as he spoke to me, eyes shining with devotion. Brother is just as charismatic as ever, it seems and just as good at winnowing the grain from the chaff.

Now as I'm sitting in my cottage, I realise a big, big problem. Rama will be returning

on the golden wings of Lord Kubera himself tomorrow night. And tomorrow is... the new moon, the amavasya. Ayodhya will be cast in total darkness and gloom on the happiest day the kingdom of Kosala has seen in fourteen long years. This is unacceptable.

Should I perform penance and have Lord Chandra himself show his smiling face to all of our kingdom? No, a day's penance would do nothing. If I had more time, I would move our own kingdom to give him a reception worthy of him.

Wait, move the kingdom...

I think I know what to do. I have no time to explain! I swear that tomorrow will be the brightest Ayodhya has ever been.

- ADITYA NEGI



## 5 YEARS, 5 UNIQUE GIFTS

Our little kitchen space was crammed with women and essentials like plates, newspapers spread out on the floor, and a little machine made out of stone which wove an intricate circular maze of dough when one worked their strong hands off to make a perfect chakli. I loved the time when the pre-festival preparations for Diwali set the house buzzing with people and activities. My excitement made me flutter from one place to another in our house, which stood next to our farm with its brown tiled roof and a front yard with a Holy Basil plant welcoming guests with its auspiciousness. The air in the kitchen was hot, as the smell of the oil frying Chaklis penetrated every nook and corner. My eyes went round in awe each time my aunt produced this tasty snack from the machine, and the woman folk of our house giggled with amusement at my curiosity.

My attention jumped from snacks to the noises coming from the next room. I bolted to the hall to see our associates haul in sacks of grains: they were huge, brown, jute sacks; plump with food that was going to make it to the markets. Baba always held back one of those for our house of 12 people living together under the same roof. While I yearned to open one of those sacks and check what's inside each one of them, Baba called me, and I ran to him, only to be surprised with what he gave me. It was a small pouch made of jute, from which flowed Pomegranate tree seeds. He said that my eyes twinkled when I looked at those seeds coming

together in my hands like rubies in an expensive necklace. The corner of my lips stretched into a grin instantly.

Next day was Dhanteras, the first day of Diwali...everyone was swarming with a lot of energy, had donned festive clothes, and the women were adorned with sparkling jewelry. Platters full of Diwali snacks were arranged, and everything was set for Puja. I ran out in the front yard, with the gift Baba handed me over yesterday. I chose a spot, dug out the smooth soil, and sowed those seeds. My gift for that year: one which would grow into a full-fledged tree someday, its branches laden with prosperity and hope. I spent a lot of time every day with my new obsession: watering it, talking to it. I would never forget my happiness which the very first leaf of that plant brought with it.

Over the year I developed a habit of reading. This wasn't a surprise as Baba would constantly be found with a book in his hands whenever his work was finished. He had instilled the reading habit in me, telling me stories without the endings so I would be forced to read the book to know what happened next. These story sessions would take place under the tree I had planted, regardless of the time of the day. Fueled by my desire to spend time with my new friend, reading under the tree became new favorite activity. As the tree started growing, more and more leaves began sprouting that year, bringing with them a spirit of life and goodness, destined to ward off various evils such as illiteracy. Just like the way Baba

had instilled a love for reading in me, warding off the evil of illiteracy and ignorance, I had vowed to help someone younger than me in learning to read and write.

I spent most of that year sitting under the tree reading, willing it to grow quickly and bear fruits. Before I had realized it, the tree was full of lush, green leaves, emanating calmness and prosperity. On the day of Lakshmi Pujan that year, Baba gifted me a piggy bank. He told me to save not just money for buying books and other things that I loved, but also asked me to save precious moments...in memories or by gifting someone else by spending time with them. That was the gift of that year, prosperity and savings.

The year after that the tree bore its first flowers. Red and white in color, the flowers signaled the start of something good, something new. That was the year of Diwali Padva, bringing with it the gift of new beginnings. New relationships blossomed as I made more friends in school, with whom I shared my love for reading and exploring new things.

When the flowers gave way to fruits, sharing those fruits, gifting them to friends and family, lead to the gift of that year: the gift of gifting. The joy of brotherhood and affinity with family, friends and neighbors was enhanced that Bhai Duj, with the box of my personalized gift lying among others.

- SAYALI MAYEKAR AND GAYATRI GODBOLE

## CRAVING DELIGHT

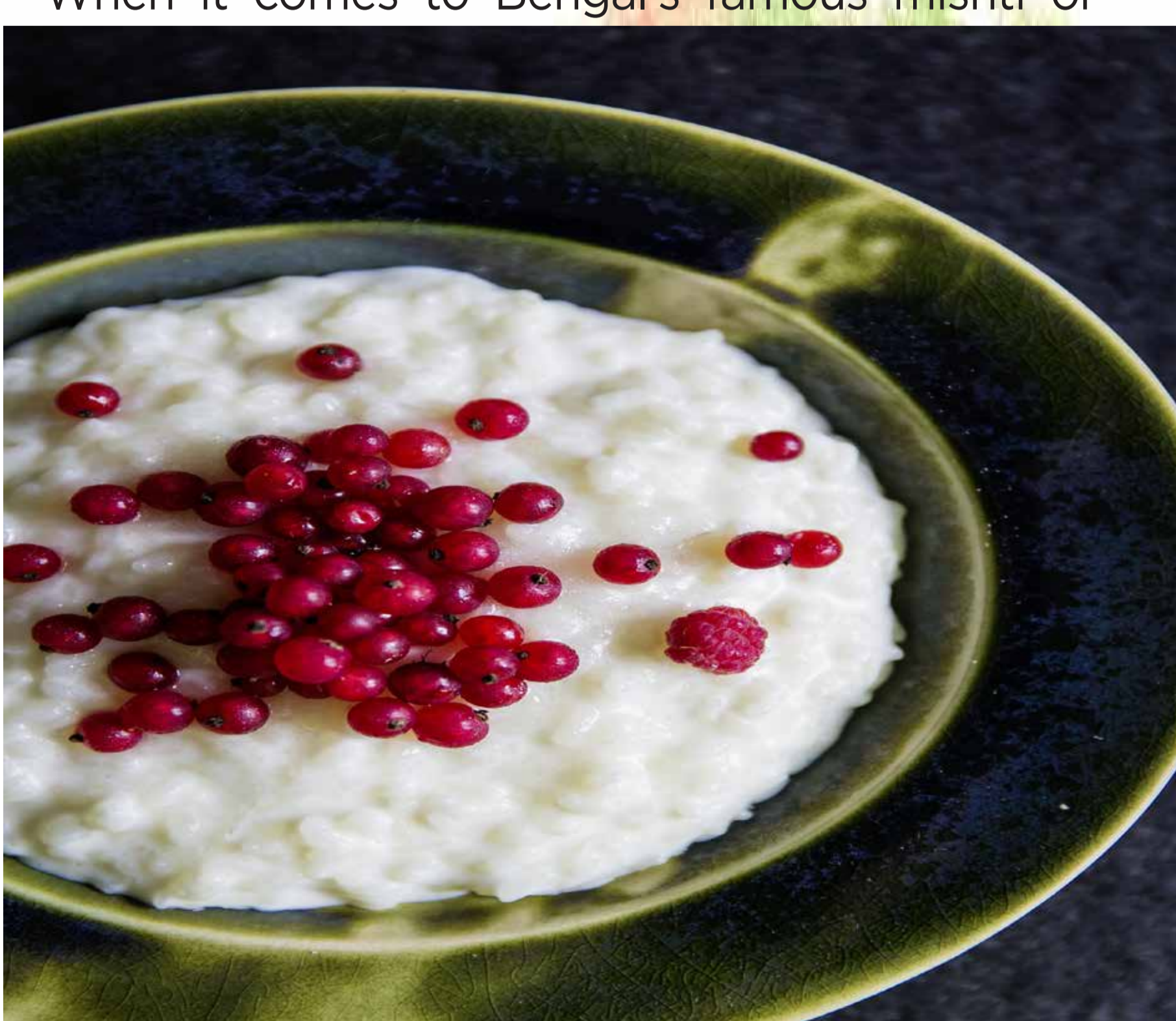
- Natasha Desai and Shwetal Funde

Indian festivals, for all their variety and differences, do have some constants. The spirit of togetherness, joy and celebration. The vibrancy and colors of nature reflected in everyone's attire. Learning from our roots about our culture and traditions. And of course, the most important thing of all: the food! India is a country known for its diverse plethora of cuisines and festive dishes, with each occasion calling for specific preparations whose recipes have been passed down over the generations. Each festival brings its own delicious platter of chow to the table - literally!

Diwali faraal is easily one of the most iconic aspects of the festival of lights. Each item on the plate is painstakingly prepared especially to mark the occasion. Faraal includes both sweet and savory dishes; chaklis, laddoos, chirote, poha, shankarpalya... The list never ends. With the advance of a new millenium, cooks across the country have strived to recreate classic festive cuisine in inventive new ways.

When it comes to Bengal's famous mishti or

sweetmeats, they have been gloriously reincarnated in a surfeit of flavors and textures, while still retaining the timeless essence of the original dish. Be it additions of exotic Western ingredients like rosemary to the classic milk-based recipes or incorporating quintessential Bengali flavours like the heady aroma of mustard into contemporary desserts, there's some serious experimenting going on in the kitchens here. Rosemary sandesh, nolengurer madeleine, malpua cheesecake and rabri brownies are just a few of the weird and wonderful spins on these classic sweets. They have been given the name "neo-mishtis".



### Kheer :

Kheer or Kiru is a rice pudding, originating from the Indian subcontinent, made by boiling rice, broken wheat, tapioca, or vermicelli with milk and sugar; it is flavoured with cardamom, raisins, saffron, cashews, pistachios or almonds. It is a typical serve during a meal or as a dessert. It is also known in some regions as payasam, payasa, and phirni while in Bengal the payesh is a variation of Kheer.

Adding a bang to this salver using

makhana; kesar makhana phirni. (Makhana- Commonly called, lotus seeds or fox nuts.)

The ground rule of preparing kheer remains the same. Makhana is fried until crisp, then it's been crushed to powder later, added in the milk and cook until the mixture thickens to a phirni consistency which is slightly thicker than kheer and that's done!

We can add up more ingredients or fruits to make it a bit healthier and tastier.

### Lip-smacking Laddoos :

Make oat and peanut laddoos - healthy and lets you indulge your sweet tooth too. Besan ke laddoo has always been a hot favorite, but now you can substitute fattening ghee with healthy olive oil and create the same. A modern avatar of traditional coconut laddoos are choco-coconut laddoos that can be made with coconut, chocolate and dried fruits, a sure fire hit with both young and old.



### Tweak your Halwa:

On the occasion of Laxmi puja, we usually offer sooji halwa as prasad. This time however, use up what you get in the fruit and vegetable hamper to cook up a different type of halwa like pumpkin or pineapple halwa, make it with lots of khoya, ghee and of course sugar and dried fruits. Or try the Saeb aurBadam ka halwa - a unique combination of almonds and apples.

A combination of ancestral taste with mithai-centric cheat is totally done with these twists.





# TECH TRICKED



## SMOKELESS DIYAS

Diwali is here and so are the various other wonderful facets that it brings along with itself, like the lights, rangolis, and warm greetings. And just like every year, it is also the time to plan something meaningful and different for the festival. For instance, in Japan, people try to work more on such special days to show their dedication for the country. But we can't expect the same here, because in India, festivals mean holidays. But in spite of that fact, homemakers need to plan something unique and out of the box, to make it a memorable one, which is mostly something of great grandeur and oomph, which always ends up hampering the environment in some way or the other. Now Diwali is always touted as the most polluting festival, and it's not just one specific kind of pollution, rather it spreads over a wide array of them. So we need to think of ways to prevent each one of them, and although the problems of noise pollution could be solved by banning

She has employed many underprivileged women and potters to make earthenware lamps that then became the carrier of her smoke-less, wax-based light.

"We are against mold-made diyas. The ancient art of pottery needs to be revived and this is our own little effort to keep the potters and their wheel from going out of work forever. I found a village located in the outskirts of Delhi where every house had a potter's wheel and a furnace and families sustained by creating handmade diyas. I gave the designs and employed groups of underprivileged women to make and paint this diyas. The designs were kept simple to facilitate maximum engagement of women into the project. Many asked me how my attempt will create a difference. I told them that 'it is every drop that counts'. Mine is a step taken in the right direction and I am happy to be a part of something like this," she concluded.

Mine is a step taken in the right direction and I am happy to be a part of something like this," she concluded.

sound to and produces lights just like any other conventional firecracker. Each pod contains a high-voltage generator, which sparks itself internally at random intervals. The sparkling can be compared to the sound from mosquito rackets. Although the technology behind this is very elementary, the idea is very thought provoking and gives a scope for a brighter future, no pun intended.

Another remedy to reduce the pollution created by firecrackers is to use the concept called 'silent fireworks'. As recently many areas all around the world are outlawing the noisy areal shows in order to reduce stress on livestock, protect people's hearing and to comply with local ordinances the use of quiet firework displays is rising day by day. One of the leading continents to give a rise to such movement in Europe. They have started using more non-conventional way of showing firework that is by using high definition displays instead of the real deal. Yet there are no new quiet rockets, only shows designed with

since the turn of the century, electronically controlled shows are allowing designers to time their shells down to a millisecond. In contrast to hand-lit fireworks which take 3 to 5 seconds to launch. Computer simulations and 3-D modeling allow pyrotechnicians to view their shows from various audience perspectives and to try out new ideas digitally. Advanced programs like Visual Show Director compensate for wind and gravity. Designers can combine their blasts with musical scores then load the data into a firing computer that runs the actual show.

To conclude, the time is at our stride with various technologies and we need to understand environmental issues. At the same time in order to make people happy with their cultural ways of celebrations, we can develop various types of firework illusions in order to give them satisfaction. All said and done we need to care more about the environment and change ourselves by adopting any of the new technology to celebrate the festivals.

firecrackers, of air pollution, by using reusable ones, there is one aspect of Diwali which couldn't be completely solved by such technological advances and that is the energy/electricity wastage during Diwali. Now it could be said this may be solved by using LEDs or other energy efficient forms of lightings, but even the best of energy efficient LEDs could still consume a large amount of energy simply because of the scale at which Diwali is celebrated. It was revealed that just in UP alone about 15,000 megawatts of energy was consumed on the night of Diwali. If we expand these statistics to the entire country we would easily go beyond 2,00,000 megawatts for Diwali night. And that's just for the night of Diwali, if we calculate for the entire festival, the number easily goes up to an insurmountable 10 terawatts of energy consumption! So, these numbers indicate that there's a serious need to tackle the energy consumption issue. And the solution might be all out anti-tech in the traditional oil lamps that were used in olden days. We could use these reusable oil diyas to decorate

The diyas are tested to emit no smoke nor do they blacken the wall with soot. The wicks are specially made of a certain thickness to be dipped into the special wax. This year, the team has experimented with the traditional Indian wax and has also come up with many more exciting designs.

We couldn't have imagined a better Diwali - the one that truly stands for what it is supposed to be - sustainable, empowering, prosperous, happy and full of good health.

## REUSABLE FIRECRACKERS

The festival of light is just around the corner. It is without any doubt the biggest festival celebrated in India. The whole of the sub-continent just brightens up during nights and the joys all around are indescribable. A festival being this big also brings with it huge use of fireworks. In recent years, due to the increasing threat of global warming and ever-increasing carbon footprints, use of firecrackers just for amusement and fun has come under question. Also,

already existing shells, that don't actually make quite as much bang. Such practices have proven to be more child-friendly and protect people with PTSDs.

Daytime fireworks are also trending these days. Traditionally for fireworks to really pop out a dark sky was needed but today it can be seen that manufacturers are pushing themselves to make daytime displays- like adding more color and also using alternatives like 'Flogos', corporate logos or designs made out of foam bubbles. 'Flogo clouds' were introduced in 2008 and are a major part of the event all over the world. Flogo clouds are synthesized from a proprietary surfactant based on foam formulation and lighter than air gases. They can travel for miles and last up to an hour depending on the environmental conditions. Inventions like these are really making the difference in the industry.

Fireworks have remained yellow or orange for several centuries until Italian

our houses and that'd give a traditional touch as well as help us to save a lot of energy over the period of the entire festival. Even if we could save 10% of the 10 terawatts used, it'd be enough to power a city like Mumbai for over a month!

But, we just haven't found our solution as yet! These diyas use oil, which is a fossil fuel which again isn't renewable, also these diyas still cause air pollution by producing soot. So we need to tackle that. But we do already have a solution for this in 'smokeless diyas'. There is a special kind of wax that is slow burning, doesn't emit fumes and is smoke-free. And it turns out, an Indian startup is already focused on producing diyas using this wax which could then be completely pollution free.

The woman who has initiated this start-up said that she didn't only want to sell the idea of a smoke-free, cleaner and eco-friendly Diwali. She also wanted to start something that would exhibit the true spirit of the festival.

the noise pollution and frequent major accidents during the festive season have raised a serious concern over usage and manufacturing of fireworks. Increasing the price of firecrackers is just another addition to the dislike for the producers of the plethora of colorful lights.

To tackle this issue various manufacturers all around the world are considering various alternative technologies. For example:- Chinese manufacturers have come up with a unique idea with an eco-friendly twist. They have developed an electronic, equivalent to the firecrackers which are priced very closely to the price of the pollutant firecrackers. This is just the start of a new revolutionizing era. A curiosity surely arises about this concept of e-crackers. They are pretty simple small pods connected to each other with wires and are powered by electricity. They are also equipped with flashing LEDs to create the pseudo effect of sparks from a firecracker. All you need to do is plug it in the unit to the source and it creates a similar

pyrotechnicians began fiddling with the recipe. They added trace amounts of metals to expand the rainbow of their displays. But the one thing that has eluded fireworks makers to this day is a consistent deep blue tone. Colors like red, green and orange are easy to produce. The copper compound used to produce blues, however, is finicky and destroys the color if temperatures get too hot.

It's a bit like making accurate assumptions of temperature. Because as you raise the flame temperature, the colors get brighter and brighter, but if it gets too hot, then you destroy the [metal] species that's emitting the color, and you just get a washed-out white. More precise temperature control means adept pyrotechnicians can develop blue tone more easily. Also, a technique to create blue more efficient is just above the horizon.

The most recent alternative and more creative way of displaying shows like fireworks are 3D Chromatography. Fireworks choreographed by music have been around for decades, but

## TECHNOLOGY BEING DIFFERENT IN DIWALI

As with most things in life, technology has an essential role to play in our Diwali celebrations. Diwali, the festival of lights, is India's most important holiday and symbolizes the spiritual victory of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance. In this time of the year friends and family come together to enjoy happy moments, and people decorate their houses with lights and lamps, new clothes are bought, new jewelry is purchased, people burst firecrackers and people worship Goddess Laxmi, the deity of wealth. In this festive season, the technology works in a distinct way than usual.

E-commerce and logistics companies have a crucial time during this festival. People all over the country order new things for themselves and gifts for their friends and family members. It is the efficiency in processing, logistics, distribution channels and operations which ensure that gifts and packages reach customers on or before the expected delivery date. Technology is assisting these companies to overcome challenges in route optimization, real-time information sharing, and optimization of human labor. Data-driven decisions, GPRS enabled smart delivery devices, sophisticated and automated warehouse system are crucial to logistics and e-commerce companies' success in the Diwali season.

sophisticated and automated warehouse system are crucial to logistics and e-commerce companies' success in the Diwali season.

For tech behemoth Amazon, Diwali means a lot. During the Great India Festival (October 10 - October 15), Amazon Prime membership surged by three times across the country, more than 80% of the new customers joined from small towns and they received orders from 99% of serviceable pin codes in just 4 days. During this festival, sales record was at an all-time high. This was the period relatively before Diwali, and other e-commerce companies like Flipkart and Snapdeal too made similar strides in this Diwali season, India's top online selling firms are expected to make USD 3 billion in revenue, thereby generating the majority of their annual revenue and sales.



Whether it is the commercialization of festivals or an aberrant consumer behavior during festivals or the nature of festival itself, each Diwali season there is a huge leap taken by tech companies and is more massive than any of the previous years. During this time, technology should be leveraged and innovations in providing better tech solutions and improved efficiency are desired.





# SCIENCE OF EVERYTHING



## BENEATH OUR FEET

Diwali is a festival of customs and traditions. One such tradition being followed is the making of forts with mud and clay to pay respect to the great Maratha warrior Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. In cities like Mumbai, due to lack of space, we're not able to follow this tradition. When was the last time you had dirt embedded under your fingernails or mud oozing between your toes? If it was recently - good for you! Let's see how...

Dirt is not just good for children. We all need a little dirt in our lives! — Christiane Northrup

A study shows that children who live on farms demonstrate about a 50% reduction in asthma, allergies, and gut-related disorders compared to children who grow up in more sterile environments. This is known as the "farm effect".

Research over the last decade or so has shown that the microbes in the soil can help boost your immune system and make you healthier and even happier.

When we get in touch with soil-based organisms (SBOs), our immune system learns to tolerate them and it becomes stronger.

The non-harmful microbe present in soil is *Mycobacterium vaccae* that works by stimulating serotonin production in the brain, which makes you feel relaxed. Lack

of serotonin has been linked to disorders such as depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and more.

When talking about the health of our stomach and gut, we cannot forget fermented foods and probiotic supplements. They are very beneficial, but unfortunately, some of them do not survive through the digestive system. On the other hand, soil based organisms have stronger strains of beneficial bacteria that can survive through the digestive system and provide the most benefit.

### Getting your hands dirty - literally - has many more benefits.

1. Being "dirt happy" lowers your blood pressure and stress hormones.
2. *M.vaccae* in the soil can improve cognitive function.
3. Bacteria on your skin can help manage inflammatory skin conditions such as psoriasis, and can even heal wounds.
4. Gardening stimulates multiple senses. The brain is more likely to remember things and is better able to solve problems.
5. If you're playing in the dirt, you are getting sunshine, which is full-spectrum light. Full-spectrum light stimulates the production of Vitamin D and serotonin. It also regulates the production of



melatonin, helping you get a good night's sleep.

Having read all of this, you may wonder - how can we replicate the farm effect in a city like Mumbai? Here are some ways to do it.

1. Stop using antibacterial soaps and detergents. Try using natural cleaning solutions. There is scientific evidence, that using cleaning sprays or air freshening sprays 4 times a week causes and exacerbates asthma.
2. Explore nature. Go walking or hiking. Put your bare feet on the earth and in streams.
3. Take up a mud sport. Playing in the mud allows you to feel a sense of freedom. Mud runs, mountain biking, and hiking are a few good options. If sports aren't your thing, consider a "mud pack" with organic soil. You can go to a day spa or do this at home.

Something interesting:

1. Finland - Daycare Study about Soil Based Microbes :

An interesting study is currently ongoing in Finland. Researchers have transported forestland, grassland, planting boxes and peat blocks to the yards of urban daycares. Children have been in wide contact with these green materials. It is observed that children of green daycare receive a versatile yet safe microbial exposure through their skin and body. This exposure improves the functioning of their immune system.

2. In one study, lung cancer patients injected with *Mycobacterium vaccae* reported a better quality of life and less stress.

3. Eating colorful fruits and veggies is great! We learned that last edition—but that's only half the story. There's surprising evidence that our mental and physical health depends on growing them ourselves.

Next time you pull a weed, plant a seed or put some homegrown veggies on a plate, take a moment to marvel at the unseen community you're engaging. So along with celebrating the festival, let's take some time to play in the soil and be a child again, meeting our body's oldest friends (SBOs) and an institution of higher learning for our immune system.

-Neha Raut and Pranav Nandkumar.

## The Thoughtful Traditions!

Diwali is a festival of colors, lights, food, and relations. There are many traditions associated with Diwali that have been followed throughout the ages. These are not baseless by any means. They are thoughtfully and precisely designed practices for the betterment of mankind. So, let's have a look at some of the logical reasons or the purpose behind these practices!



Diwali, also known as 'Deepavali' is a festival of lights. The literal meaning of the word 'Deepavali' is 'a row of lamps'. Diwali usually comes in autumn or winter, when a lot of insects

and moths multiply; which causes harm to crops and foodstuffs. These insects and moths are attracted to the oil lamps that are lit during Diwali as a custom. The heat of the lamp is lethal to the insects and they die, thus saving the crops and the foodstuffs. The oil used for these is sesame oil, which has many medicinal applications. Since we are talking about Sesame oil, let's see another logical reasoning of another custom, the Abhyanga Snana!

Abhyanga Snana is the bath taken before sunrise. It is highly beneficial for health, reducing stress and rejuvenating the mind. Abhyanga Snana involves massage of the entire body followed by the application of 'Utna', and then the actual bath with mild hot or lukewarm water. The massage is done specifically with sesame oil as it penetrates deep within and moisturizes the skin, which is very much required during winters. The gentle oil massage relaxes the muscles,

thereby strengthening them. It helps in effective circulation and of nerve conduction as well. 'Utna' is a fragrant paste of special herbs that includes Vala, Manjistha, Nagarmotha, rose petals, and orange peel. These have therapeutic value. The mixture is then mixed with milk or coconut water to make a paste and is then applied all over the body before the bath. Due to its special herbs, it moisturizes the skin and acts as a cleanser, by removing the pollutants, toxins, and even dead skin from the skin surface.

Now where there is a festival, there is food! In India, different kinds of food items are prepared during different festivals. These food items are not only a treat a foodie, but they are also season-friendly and health-friendly. Diwali has its own special dishes like the sweet Karanji and ladoos, while the namkeen Chivda, Chakali and much more. This tradition Diwali Faral is

season-friendly and health-friendly. Diwali has its own special dishes like the sweet Karanji and ladoos, while the namkeen Chivda, Chakali and much more. This tradition Diwali Faral is primarily made up of ingredients like chickpea flour, condensed milk, ghee, lentils, semolina, jaggery, and coconut. These food items are considered heavy and they build up the adipose tissue content of the body. As Diwali falls in winter, where the atmosphere gets cooler, shorter days and more time spent indoors means that many of us are exposed to very little sunlight in winter, and as a result can suffer from vitamin D deficiency. You may also experience lower levels of serotonin - a neurotransmitter linked to feelings of pleasure and well-being - which is also

generated by exposure to sunlight. Studies have shown that due to this people tend to crave carbohydrates, as these help the body use tryptophan, an amino acid which can be converted into serotonin to boost flagging levels in the blood.

However, in order for this process to work, it is important also to eat plenty of foods rich in tryptophan, carbohydrates. Hence in Diwali foods rich in amino acids and carbohydrates are prepared also these heavy foodstuffs favors digestion and instant energy is provided to the body.

Another aspect of Diwali is the colorful and artistic Rangoli. Rangoli is an art form in which patterns are created on the floor or the ground, using materials like colored rice, dry flour, colored sand

or flower petals. The purpose of these is decorations and it is thought to bring good luck. There are some specific patterns and manners in which the Rangolis are made. Cymatics, a field of science that deals with the relationship between vibrations and their corresponding geometric patterns, explains the reason behind the Rangoli patterns. The reason a rangoli is drawn at the entrance of the house is that it has a calming effect on a visitor who is about to enter the house. Its patterns manifest into vibrations (brainwaves) in the visitors' mind, putting them at ease and making them happy and comfortable. Thus, rangoli is not just an art form but actually, a science discovered by Indians thousands of years ago.

These age-old traditions are made a part of the culture for the purpose of spiritual, aesthetic, and medicinal purposes. Thus, they are not just culturally significant practices but scientifically remarkable too.

-Prajakta Velankar and Sanika Upadhye.

## The Other Side of Diwali

The festival of lights is supposed to bring brightness and happiness everywhere. Don't all our Diwali greetings read a very happy and healthy Diwali? Diwali brings joy and laughter true but fails to fulfill the other half of the wish. It does not bring health. Read on to know why.

Ask yourself when was the last time you saw stars during Diwali. Ask yourself if you were lucky enough to have regular glimpses of the Milky Way. If you have lived your entire life in a city, you probably never have. The culprit? Light pollution. Ever wondered what effect our City that Never Sleeps has on the starry skies? Back in those days, when Diwali was more about diyas and handmade lanterns, when our much-beloved Mirchi Lights and halogens were absent from the scene, everybody, no matter where they were, could look up and see the Milky Way and a multitude of stars in the sky, not the handful of clusters that we see these days.

The unwanted extra light from artificial sources is referred to as light pollution. Light pollution, also known as photopollution, is the presence of anthropogenic light in the night environment. It is exacerbated by excessive, misdirected or obtrusive uses of light. It exists in four different forms.

**1.Glare:** First, a light that is too bright often causes glare, or a visual discomfort when looking at the light.

**2.Skyglow:** Second, too many external lights causes the night sky to glow. You can see this when looking down at a well-lit city. The sky above the city is brightened.

**3.Light trespass:** Third, a big bright light shining on one area usually trespasses and shines on unwanted areas. For example, if you live in the middle of the city and you are trying to go to sleep, the lights coming from outside artificial lights can prevent you from going to sleep because of the light trespasses into your room, making it look almost like daytime.

**4.Clutter:** Fourth, when you have too many lights bunched up together or when the lights are grouped in confusing ways, it can make you dizzy or confused looking at them.

Light pollution poses a significant health risk to humanity and is impinging on the habitat of nocturnal animals. India is losing its night more than three times faster than the global average. Between 2012 and 2016, the study period, India's area exposed to light pollution grew by a third, as Christopher Kyba, a Canadian-born physicist and the lead researcher of the study observed. Life expectancy could go up to 6 years if natural ambient air quality standards are met. Yes, you read it right. Our firecrackers and vehicles are shaving years off our life. The week leading up to Diwali, and on Diwali itself, is one of the most toxic days of the year for every

city in India when it comes to air pollution. The concentration of PM2.5 particles, the most harmful type that can do actual physical damage as it's able to get into your bloodstream, is off the charts. It's 15 to 20 times higher than the maximum permissible level. The Respirable Suspended Particulate Matter (RSPM) or dust particles in the air are more than harmful gases. Pollution in Diwali rises to 8 times the safe limit.

Another phenomenon that happens in Diwali is noise Pollution. The bang and boom of firecrackers are pleasant only if heard from a distance, otherwise, it is nothing short of a headache. Almost every year the noise level exceeds the safe limit during the Diwali. In Mumbai alone last year, the 80-82dB sound was the peak value that was reached, which is just below the limit of hearing loss. This noise is due to both firecrackers and increased traffic.

Recently the Supreme Court of India has ruled that only those firecrackers who do not contribute to air or sound pollution are allowed to be sold. However, the genuine implementation of this rule is questionable. The solution to this problem can come only through civic efforts, but are we ready to forego the momentary joys in favor of increased lifespan? That remains to be seen. Till then we wish you a happy and safe Diwali.

-Aditi Patil and Sushrut Mane





# S A F A R N A M A

## THE TRIP WITHOUT PHOTOS

This edition, I would like to share one of my travel experience the memories of which are very special to me. I was just 6 years old when I visited Kashmir for the first time. I believe that if the people you travel with and the experiences you share with them are precious they always stay in a corner of your mind, filled with souvenirs. In this write-up, you won't find an itinerary, just some moments worth retelling.

I remember sitting on the car floor, resting my head on my aunt's leg and munching biscuits with jam on them. We ran out of petrol that day in the middle of nowhere and there was literally just biscuits left with us to munch on. Biscuits were our saviors.

I also remember jamming with my cousin on this new Bollywood song while eating snow. We were hiking on one of these small snow-clad mountains, when my cousin and I thought it was best to try the snow for adventure, duh!

The stay in that houseboat, to the boat ride, to the snowfall in Gulmarg, just a few glimpses remained with me, but they are enough.

We've been surprised by army men surrounding us in the middle of the road, we've assumed the noise of the bomb to be firecrackers.

Though we never saw anything as a puddle in our journey, in fact, the 'puddle moments' are the one we all still remember and sometimes have a good laugh about it too.

Lastly, I would love to break the myth of safety in Kashmir. In fact, our best experiences were shared with the habitants and the army forces there.

Don't let a myth stop you from exploring one of the prettiest places on Earth. There aren't many pictures of this trip, maybe that's the reason the memories just stayed with me.

Rashi Gulati



## FROM DESERT TO GARDENS

It all began 250 million years ago when India was merely a floating island and about 50 million years ago it collided with the Eurasian plate giving birth to the snow-capped ranges of mountains known as the Himalayas. It is indeed very fascinating to study the process of this collision, but for us laymen, it is far more impactful to see the multi-colored blade-like mountains in deep valleys of Ladakh.

The beauty of Leh - Ladakh region is unparalleled. It is known popularly as the cold desert, stretching for hundreds of kilometers, yet every valley, brook leads to a new and different terrain and vegetation. Walking in the sand, averting your eyes from the blinding reflection of the sun off of every surface, you gaze upon a lonely brook traversing through the barren land bringing with it cold snow water. You cup some water in your hand and wash your tired and dirty face.

You are in the Leh city, walking through the bustling streets trying to reach no destination in particular. You take a small road leading to the inner parts of the city and come upon a narrow street with houses on both sides caked with mud, and in the corner, you spot a lady sitting with jewelry made out of semi-precious stones, you marvel at their beauty. As you leave that alleyway you come upon a small bakery along the road, as you are tired from the beating sun, you enter the bakery and order a cup of coffee and an apple crumble which you eat while watching people pass by.

While the chilly winds of Leh make you bite your teeth and close your eyes, you open them to a different scene altogether. You see in front of you luscious green tree plantations while a cool breeze blows through your air and the warm sun kisses your face. You see women with baskets on their back, picking tea leaves, chatting and laughing; such is the warmth of Sikkim. Your drive takes you from the dense forest of oak, maples, chestnuts trees to fields of pink rhododendron plants whose syrup, if you get your hands on it, is rather delicious.

The mountains of this region are rather different from those seen in Leh, they are snow-capped but also wear a green dress of assorted trees and shrubs. You can see the melted water from the glaciers trickling down the mountainside and along with it you hear the chirpings and growling of birds and animals.

The Himalayas is the perfect example to understand the concept of contrast but to truly understand it we must experience it for ourselves! So go out and venture into the valleys; be brave, stay wild!

Chinmay Patwardhan



## KUTCH

"Let's go to Gujarat this year for the summer vacation," suggested my mom. "Sounds good!" I replied. Typing on her phone my mom said, "The Ahmedabad- Balasinar - White Rann - Ahmedabad tourist circuit seems nice. It's a nine days tour. There are a lot of group tours conducted for this tourist circuit in the months of April and May. We can go with one of them."

Frowning at her I replied, "Or we cannot. Let's only go for a Kutch tour, so we can actually explore and experience the place rather than just jumping cities."

"So you suggest we go as free individual travelers? No group tour?" she asked considering my opinion. "Precisely!" I confirmed.

Four months after that conversation: mom, dad, my sister and I packed our bags and boarded the Kutch Express. Eighty percent of the passengers were Gujarati and all of them were extremely friendly. They offered us their home-made pickles for our theplas and we offered them our yogurt for their theplas.

We reached our destination i.e. Bhachau at six in the morning and after getting down on the platform we grinned at each other so widely anticipating an eventful and happy journey ahead. Our smiles turned sheepish after a few seconds of us just standing there grinning because we knew none of us had any idea of what to do next. With no hotels or a return ticket booked we were clueless of the near future but that was the plan and according to me it was a solid plan.

We ended up booking rooms in a Dharamshala and stayed there for the next two days. We visited panjrapore (cow sheds) to feed the cows and bokdaghar (goat and sheep houses) to play with the lambs, one of which licked my hair and my sister laughed herself hoarse.

From Bhachau we went to Old Aadhoi. This is an offbeat place, hardly even known by disaster tourism enthusiasts. Here you can still see the ruins in the form of skeletal buildings with their pillars from the 2001 earthquake. Though, the scenery here is beautiful! We stayed overnight at our relative's farmhouse in New Aadhoi.

The car driver that we had hired to take us everywhere suggested us to visit Nirona village in Bhuj which is home to seven different traditional art forms practiced by seven families carrying forward the legacy through generations. This piqued my sister's interest and she insisted we visit.

Each in its purest form is what we saw there!

Art of those families welcomed us warmly, made us sit and offered us tea and explained us about the whole process of expertly doing the rogan art and about the secret to giving the metal bell that perfect curve which would lead to it creating particular sounds. They looked so genuinely happy to have us there that their enthusiasm was contagious. I had the time of my life seeing new pieces of old art forms coming to life. From there, after visiting a few more places like Mandvi beach and Dholavira in the next couple of days' time, we decided to end our trip and booked ourselves tatkal tickets back home.

This trip by far is my most favorite one. Like someone rightly said, "Spontaneity is the best type of Adventure."

Disha Jain

I write this sitting in a bamboo hut in the middle of a forest filled with lights, strangers, guitars, and books. I chased a sunset and undertook a 36 hours journey to find myself in the middle of nowhere with only travelers for a company. Sounds great, doesn't it?

It really is, after you get used to bathing in a makeshift hut with no roof. Having finished with my exams and a month of hair pulling, I decided that I had to do something crazy this Diwali vacation. Though I had many destinations in mind, the idea of asking my mother for permission to visit a place with my friends for the company wasn't an easy one to entertain. In between political science textbooks, procrastination, a rabbit hole of YouTube videos, my friend called and asked me to accompany her for a wildlife protection and afforestation volunteering program in Auroville, Pondicherry. Though the idea sounded fantastic and I enthusiastically said yes, the thought of asking my parents scared me and I kept pushing it until I found my mother in a really good mood. Long story short, she said yes and I have never been happier.

After a long and stressful exam and a list of hastily booked tickets, I packed my bags to take a train from Mumbai to Chennai. After taking a 23-hour long train with my friend and her boyfriend (yes, third wheel and proud), I got down to a hot and dusty city. However, before I could think of Chennai as any other fast-moving metropolitan, I heard loud classical music blaring from an auto rickshaw. That is Chennai for you. We had to take a bus to Auroville which would normally take 3 hours to reach. Saying that India's public transport and police is inefficient would be an understatement. Our bus accidentally hit a bike's headlight and the bike's owner started demanding Rs. 1 lakh. It would have been hilarious if we weren't stationary for 2 hours in the middle of a deserted highway.

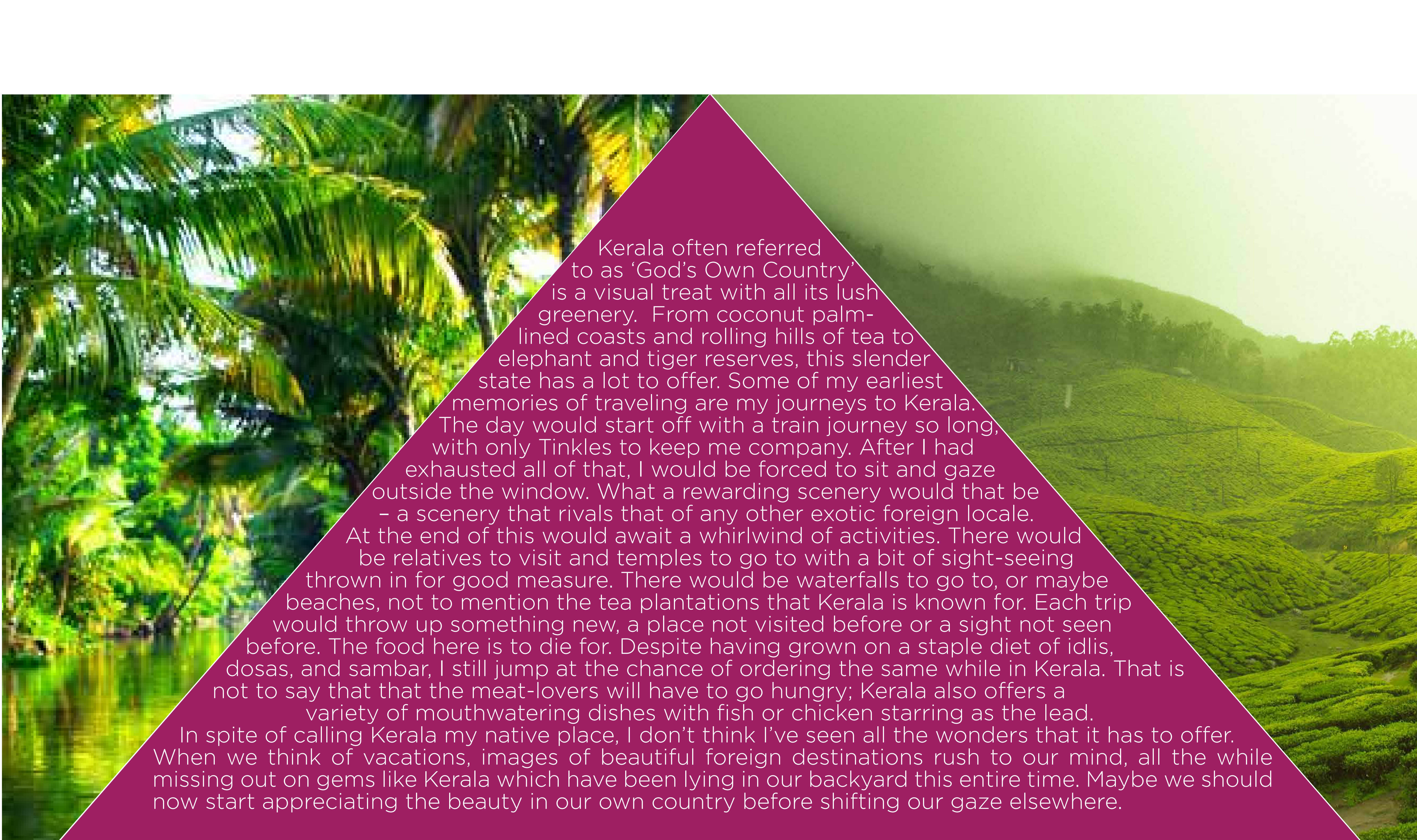
With more than 4 hours of traveling added to our agenda, we haven't Sadhana forests and were greeted with complete darkness and no civilization in sight. If you think this was crazy, I hadn't spoken about the 15 minutes rickshaw travel in the dark in which I was sure, I was going to be kidnapped or possessed by a ghost.

If this wasn't adventurous enough, I then had to have a bath with ice cold water and that too in complete darkness. As this forest is a no waste and a completely natural habitat, it works on solar energy and has a limited amount of electricity after dark. I bathed and slept under the stars and woke up the next day to dig holes and plant trees. I struck up conversations with wanderers who have no home elsewhere and carry everything they own on their back. I met a single mother who started her own NGO to counsel women that went through psychological trauma. I spoke to the project director whose parents opened up their house for foster care when he was 4. I took up a workshop of Thai massage with a lady who visits a new country every 3 months. I am eating vegan food and using a compost toilet (it's actually not that bad).

As I sit here under a flickering light bulb while typing away this article, I am reminded of a session of a human library that we had today. A session in which humans became books (with titles) and we sit and hear their stories. After listening to the stories that one lives with after they travel across lands and seas and meet new people, I realized this is a life I wouldn't mind delving into.

So here I am.

Priyanka Tibrewal



Kerala often referred to as 'God's Own Country' is a visual treat with all its lush greenery. From coconut palm-lined coasts and rolling hills of tea, elephant and tiger reserves, this slender state has a lot to offer. Some of my earliest memories of traveling are my journeys to Kerala. The day would start off with a train journey so long, with only Tinkles to keep me company. After I had exhausted all of that, I would be forced to sit and gaze outside the window. What a rewarding scenery would that be - a scenery that rivals that of any other exotic foreign locale. At the end of this would await a whirlwind of activities. There would be relatives to visit and temples to go to with a bit of sight-seeing thrown in for good measure. There would be waterfalls to go to, or maybe beaches, not to mention the tea plantations that Kerala is known for. Each trip would throw up something new, a place not visited before or a sight not seen before. The food here is to die for. Despite having grown on a staple diet of idlis, dosas, and sambar, I still jump at the chance of ordering the same while in Kerala. That is not to say that the meat-lovers will have to go hungry; Kerala also offers a variety of mouthwatering dishes with fish or chicken starring as the lead.

In spite of calling Kerala my native land, I don't think I've seen all the wonders that it has to offer. When we think of vacations, images of beautiful foreign destinations rush to our mind, all the while missing out on gems like Kerala which have been lying in our backyard this entire time. Maybe we should now start appreciating the beauty in our own country before shifting our gaze elsewhere.

Shreya Nair



# Fictionally Yours

## DESTINY, PASSION, OBSESSION (Part 2)

It was a cold, clear and eerie night. A full moon graced the sky. The howls of dogs could be heard distantly. The trees moaned at being disturbed by the firm, gentle breeze which carried on coercing them, getting stronger making the trees moan louder and their old bones start creaking. The moonlight that was partially obscured by the moving silhouettes filtered through the window. The natural source of light came from a medium sized pentagonal window- the moonlight illuminating the peaceful specs of dust happily swimming in the vast cold, dark and silent sea, illuminating a small part of the eerie room. She heard footsteps approaching her room as she searched for a place to hide out of sheer desperation. Her hopes came crashing down as the door banged open before she could find shelter. And

What happened post that was no mystery. She reported all the happenings to her parents and they lodged a complaint against him. But his wealth helped him break away from the clutches of law and he taught her a lesson, a lesson she would never forget - stealing the one she loved the most, her best friend.....

Her driver informed her that she had reached her destination. It was a small cabin that was situated in a beautiful patch of greenery! 'How ironic', she thought to herself. Her life was fresh before he came and now all that was left was dried roses rotting in the hands of destiny. Why was this place so beautiful and his heart so dark? Why was there no sense of justice to punish someone as evil and crooked as him?

She pushed the door of the cabin open and what she saw left her stunned and paralyzed.

Her pictures were pasted all over the wall and the word 'MINE' was scribbled all over it. A spotlight shone on the floor in one corner of the room and a glint attracted her towards it. She grabbed the piece of paper and vial of blood that were lying on the floor.

there he stood in all his glory. Holding a plate in his hand, he took predatory steps towards her. "I told you that you were mine, but you never paid attention. Warnings seem to have no effect on you. You have forced me to do this. No more hiding now. It is 'I' who will be your past, present, and future. You were mine the day I set my eyes on you. It will be a futile struggle on your part to try to walk away. Now that I have you, I am never letting you go!"

As he turned towards her, his gaze lingered on her hazy figure and his eyes turned dark. Obsession, madness, passion, lust, love and a need to possess swirled in his eyes. He needed her soon or else he was going to lose himself in the world of darkness. His face reflected a desire - she was going to be his and he was going to be the sole person she

would ever worship. This is what she feared - being a victim to his fixation, his fetish. She started to struggle to escape from the clutches of the Devil. Just as he tried to reduce the distance between them, his older brother barged into the room and started screaming at him for. "How could you abduct her to fulfill your wicked desires? Didn't mom and dad tell you to wait till the time was right? Why can't you ever wait patiently? You always have to mess up things. Release her at once." A brawl ensued between both the brothers and HE was struck down by his older brother. He freed her and escorted her to the main street. He said, "Don't ever look back. Keep going but remember HE will come back. I have released you because you were not prepared to bear with his insanity. But I assure you, HE will come back."

On the paper, written in blood was a poem:

"You are a little bud, my love  
But soon, blossom you will.  
Be safe for you are mine still,  
As the world at your sight will bow.  
Never forget my dear one,  
The tender age of nineteen,  
For on the day you attain your true self,  
I'll be back to cherish what I had truly won!  
Wait for that very moment, my princess.  
- Yours eternally,  
(you know I am)

P.S. If you think you can get rid of me, you ought to know that I am always two steps ahead of you. Any attempt to reach out to the cops again will only lead to me speeding up the process of possessing you forever. Love you, doll!!!"

She woke up like she did every morning; stretching her limbs and contemplating what to do for the rest of the day. As she lazed around on her bed, gazing at her phone and scrolling through her messages, her eyes stopped at one. And there she sat, stunned and shocked. That message evoked in her the emotions she never wanted to feel - FEAR!

Flashback replayed in her head - the thoughts, the events, the gifts, and the nightmares were so over-bearing that she flipped! Anxiety seized her veins and as terror struck once again; she suffered from a panic attack. She couldn't breathe. She became unconscious and dropped on her wooden floor.

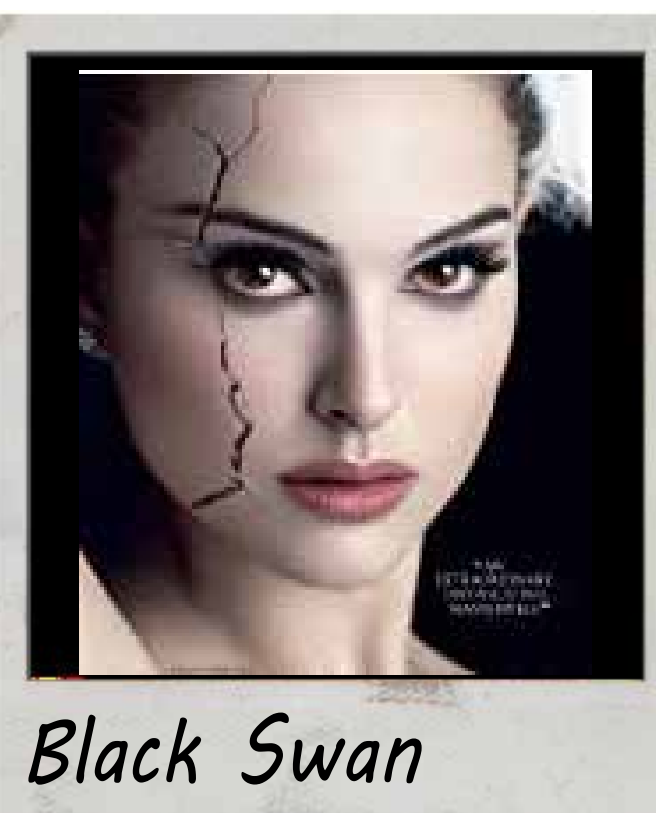
Sara Sehgal was a beautiful young girl age soon turning 19. Residing in the city of Mumbai in India, her life was as chaotic as the city life was. An hour later, she woke up and saw her mother, wearing a worried expression and standing right next to her, talking to the doctor. Dazed, she was only able to utter two words with a gasp as she fell unconscious again. "HE'S BACK".

THE END  
Shruthi Narayan (TYBA)

## PSYCHOLOGICAL THRILLERS, A MENTAL STIMULANT?

My life has been a sequence days where the only thing I've wanted is to go home just to binge watch a show or a movie. And I think this situation would seem relatable to a lot of folks of our generation. We have seen our mothers not allowing us within a certain radius of the TV set while their soap opera ran and we also remember coming home, throwing our backpacks and watching our regular afternoon cartoons. But for the last few years in India, as if the gods have heard and answered our prayers we have been blessed with Netflix and a speedy internet connection.

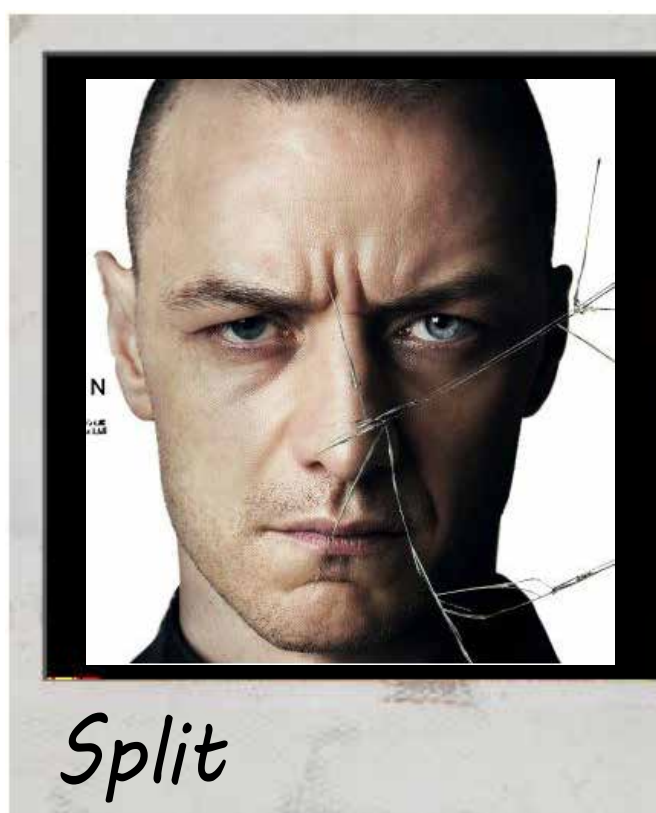
There are always different genres to try while you are watching something and the options get you all excited. Dabble in the humor genre when you want to have a good laugh or weep with the female protagonist when she loses her lover in a romantic movie. But when you are in an adventurous mood, to get your adrenaline running what you need the most is a good psychological movie. Instead of using tactics like high pitched background music, psychological movies often use plot twists and unreliable narratives. They stretch our imagination and bring us to the brink of our seats until we are holding our breaths



Black Swan



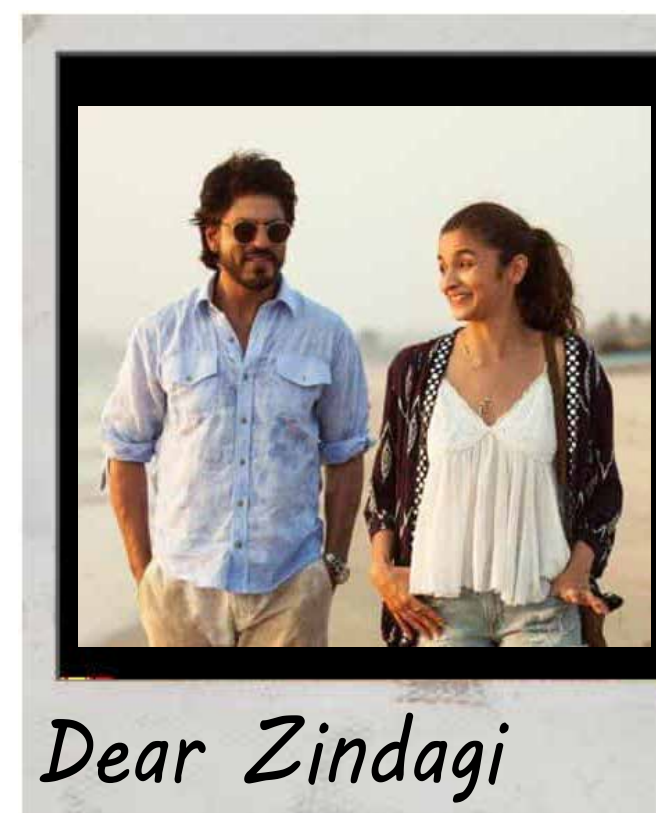
A Beautiful Mind



Split



Phobia



Dear Zindagi



Gone Girl

Speaking of unreliable narratives, 'A beautiful mind' is a movie that is famous for exactly that. Narrated through the point of view of a schizophrenic genius and based on the life of Josh Nash, the movie bagged Academy awards for best picture and best director. The movie is a roller-coaster ride of emotions and you better brace for it.

Darren Aronofsky's 'Black Swan' is a movie that cannot be pushed into the background while we are talking about this genre. Starring Natalie Portman and Mila Kunis of prominent roles it shows the struggles of an artist to achieve perfection and finally diving into madness while doing so. This movie is a must watch for all the psychological thriller/ horror junkies. The character's loose rein on sanity scares us from time to time.

We have become familiar with seeing James McAvoy as Dr. Charles from the X-Men series. He's a wise and calm man who gave out advice and maintained a calm behavior. But his character in the movie 'Split' is something that is almost the opposite of it. The movie focuses on Kevin (McAvoy) who suffers from multiple personality disorder, how he kidnaps three girls and then transforms into

something that cannot be called human. The movie builds up the tension by introducing us to the different personalities trapped inside Kevin. In the end, you'll have no diet for the popcorn kept beside you. Also, try to drink less of that soda because you'll even fear to go to the washroom alone.

Psychological illnesses and unbalanced mental behavior have been portrayed in many Hollywood movies in the past decades but the Indian film industry never used these elements as a major theme. This remained unchanged until Radhika Apte starrer, 'Phobia' released in the theatres. It shows the actress as a victim of agoraphobia, an anxiety disorder caused due to an accident the dark nooks and corners of the characters minds and reveals to us their secrets and fears. The theme of the movie is dark with very little comic relief. Phobia as a movie was largely appreciated by critics as well as the audience. Apte's performance is applaud worthy.

Another movie in the Indian film industry which threw light on mental health and issues surrounding it was 'Dear Zindagi'. Directed by Gauri

Shinde, starring Shahrukh Khan as a psychiatrist and Alia Bhatt as his patient who suffers from insomnia and borderline depression, the movie tried to normalize conversations related to mental health. Shahrukh not spewing out honey dipped romantic dialogues every few minutes confused my millennial brain for a few seconds. Also didn't the Goa setting give us major summer vacation goals? The director, the actors and the writers were successful in getting the message across in a very light-hearted and simple way. We can only hope for more such movies instead of the Bollywood masala that is produced every year and which the audience happily eats up.

Psychology is a large genre when it comes to movies. But the movies don't always fit into it perfectly and neatly. Some fall into the horror column (Split, Black Swan, and Phobia), some into thrillers (Gone Girl, Silence of the Lambs) and some are light or use dark humor (Dear Zindagi, Fight Club). Whatever their nature might be they never fail to amaze us, leave us with bated breath, to see what would happen next.

Shubhangi Pingulkar (SYBA)

## THE STORY OF THE LAMP

The darkness was all I could see when I moved, but being inside the box, I couldn't say for sure.

Diwali was about three weeks away and as much as I've heard, Diwali is considered a really auspicious and happy period. People start cleaning their homes, buy new items and clothes. Even the days appear brighter and stars sparkle better during this festival. The lady who brought my box had opened the lid and placed me with my other 23 siblings in a rather dusty little showcase. It had developed cracks, the glass was stained and the corners were inhabited by spiders and webs.

Both the parents in this house were working and the kid was always in school. They hardly spoke to each other. When back home at night, the kid used to retire to his bedroom while the parents were scattered in the kitchen and bedroom. This wasn't the Diwali spirit I was expecting. Day by day, the distance was increasing. The cracks among this family were deepening. Negativity prevailed in this house armored either by the constant arguments or pin drop silence. Even the big

wide windows were helpless without a lamp to open them. Indeed the doors will remain closed as our lovely Diwali stands on the outside, waiting.

I was a lamp, but now I was afraid of holding a flame. The emptiness of my living room, where nobody ever lived had entered my mind, leaving me hopeless and sad.

In the early hours of dawn, a distinct laugh was heard. The main door suddenly opened. In came a figure embellished in gold. It wasn't clear until the golden fairy came closer to the cupboard, opened it and pulled me out. She was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. A fair golden damsel, wearing elaborate gold garments. She tickled me with her fingers and the gold bangles in her hands chimed. She looked at me ever so lovingly and placed me at the center of the coffee table. With a swing of her hands, she filled me with oil and cotton and gently blew air on me. I realized she had adorned me with a newly born flame, the purpose of my life was achieved.

With the same vivacity, she lighted all of my 23 siblings and placed them everywhere in the house. A living purpose of happiness, she capered all over the room. She cleaned

the glasses, decorated the walls with the sparkles of joy and life, she hooded away the intrusive spiders and healed all the cracks. She went inside the bedrooms leaving a trail of golden light behind.

Diwali greetings resonated in the house as the family was together once again. They bathed, wore new clothes, ate sweets and prayed to god. They came near the front door in the living room; finally, the room was living up to its name.

Sitting by the front door was Diwali, crafting a beautiful Rangoli on the white marble. The family sat down with her, holding colors of various hues and textures. With Diwali by their side, they knew how to fill colors, in the Rangoli as well as in their lives.

The darkness outside was fading, the sun was slowly rising. The first firecracker of Diwali season shot high up in the sky and blew up. The importance of sacrificing oneself for the delight of others was known to it. As it blew in the now colorful sky, dawn was greeted with the words, Happy Diwali!

-Shubhangi Pingulkar (SYBA)





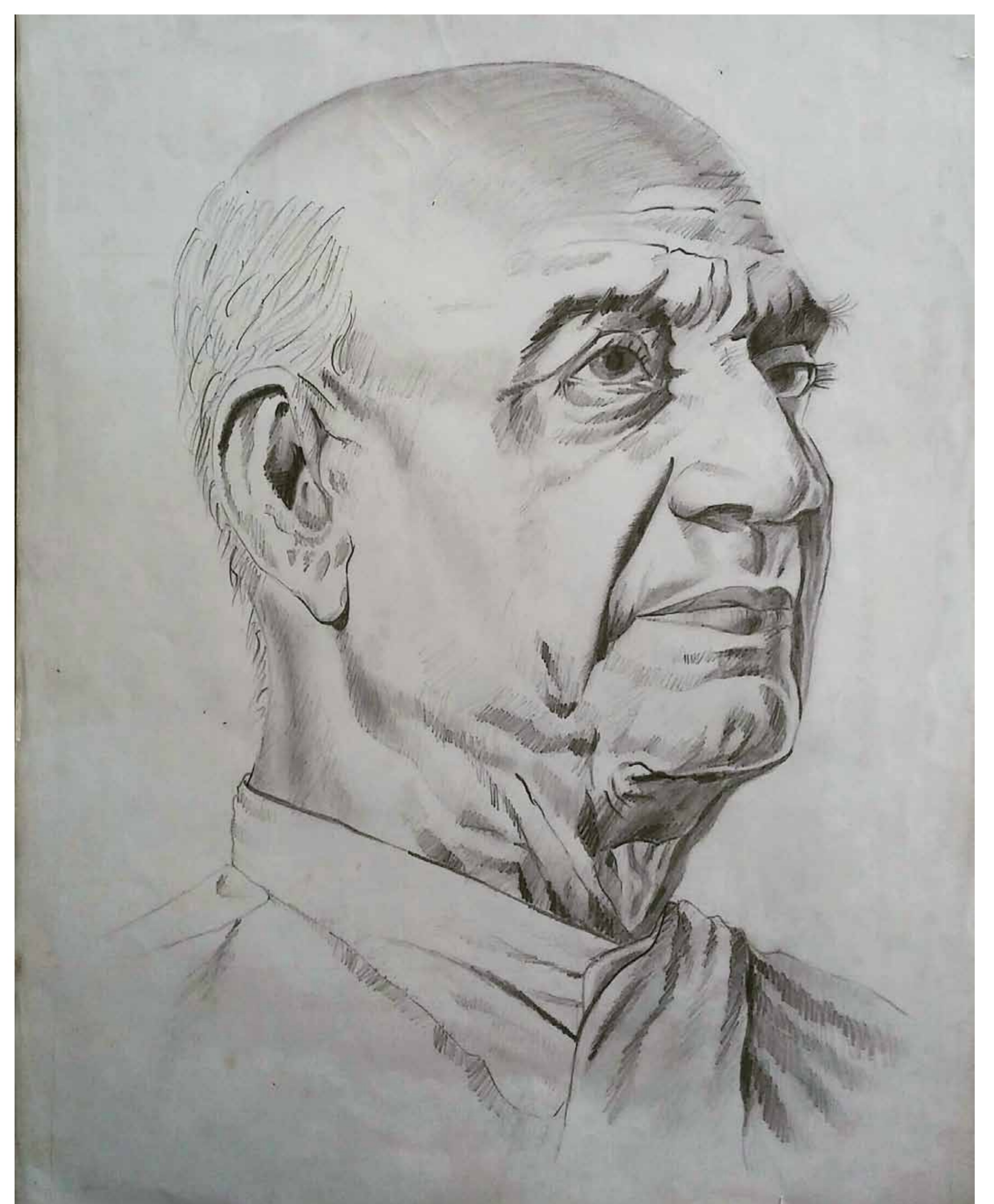
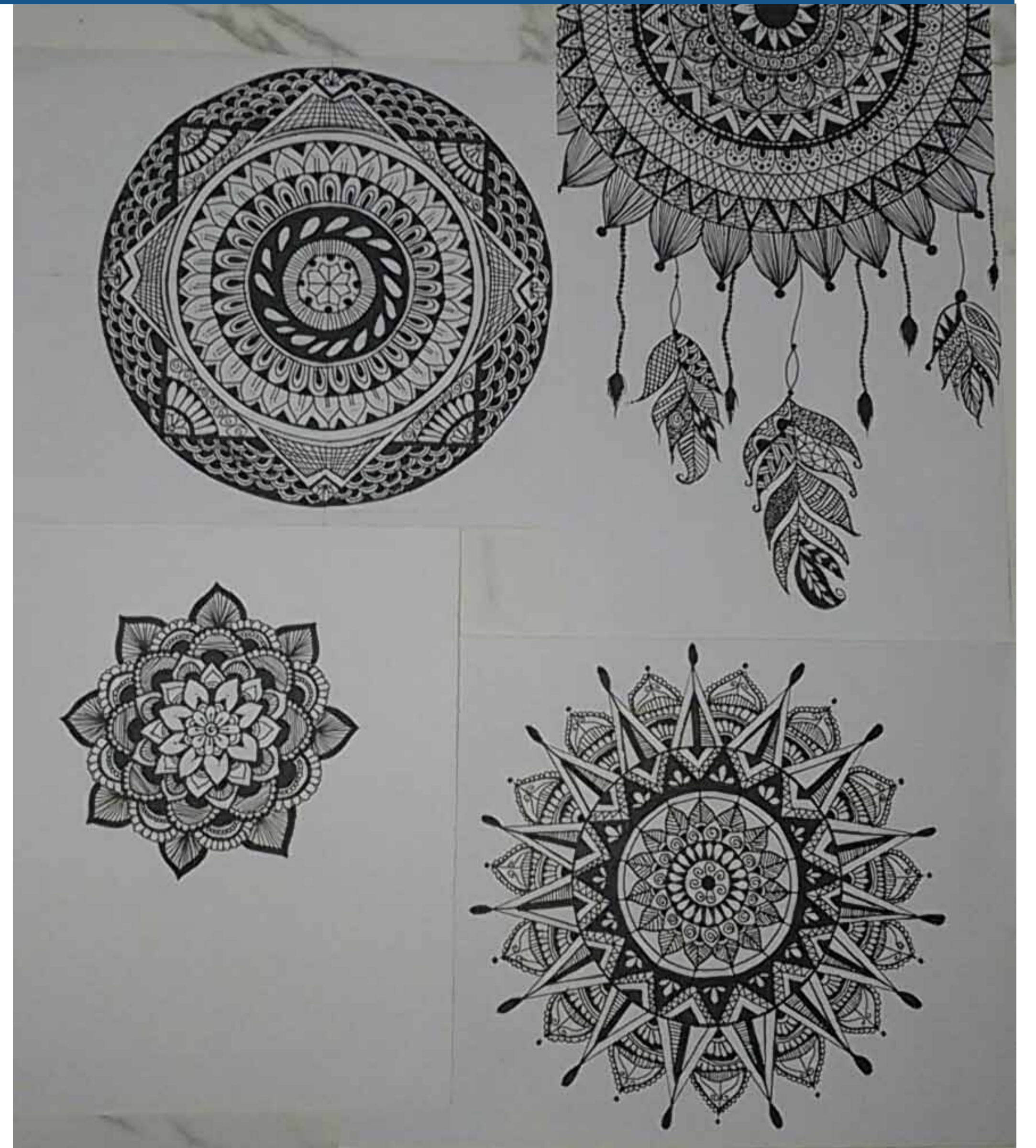
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