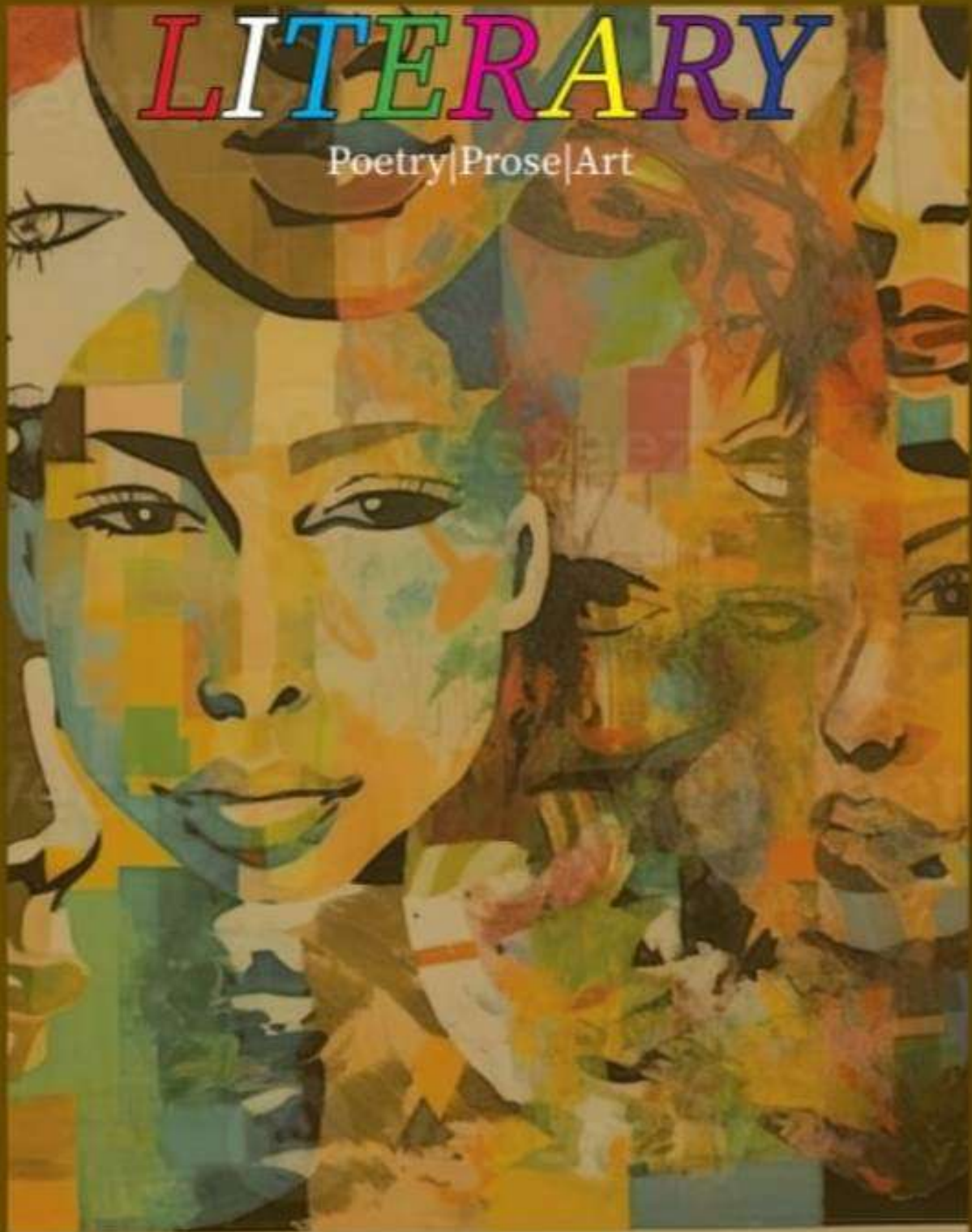


THE AESTHETES



Department Of English, MLNC(E)

The Aesthetes Literary

Annual Journal: 2023-24



Department of English

Motilal Nehru College (E), University of Delhi

In-charge

Prof. Pradip Sharan

Convenor

Dr. Shefali Rathore

The Editorial Team



Editorial Board:

Chief Advisor : Dr. Shefali Rathore

Advisors: Mr. Sinchuilung Gangmei Kabui

Mr. Deepak Gupta

In-charge : Prof. Pradip Sharan

Chief Editors : Mr. Ansh Kasera

Ms. Chhavi Dua

Members : Aarav, Akanksha, Vanshika Gujrati, Garima Malik, Anushka and
Palak AaroHi

Principal's Message



As a college, we have been encouraging our students to do the to go beyond what college teaches them. The Aesthetes Literary Magazine proves the same. The students who have submitted their works and the council behind the pages have both put in commendable efforts to make it a success. The literary pieces selected each share a story different from the others. We are happy to see the entries from different colleges as well. This presents a new step in the history of college e-journals. It is with great pleasure that I introduce the current edition of The Aesthetes Literary Magazine. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the editorial team and the participants, whose contributions have been instrumental in making this publication a success. This journal is a testament to the power of our students, guided by the wisdom of our English department teachers.

Thank you.

Prof. Vichitra

Message from The Convenor



With great pleasure, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all those who have contributed to the latest edition of our Department Literary Magazine. Our latest edition focuses on the profound theme of “Embracing Diversity.”

This edition serves as a testament to the transformative power of literature and academia in confronting societal perceptions and advancing the principles of equity and justice. Through the creative pieces that delve into the nuances of diversity studies by capturing the essence of resilience and amplifying marginalized voices, each contribution enriches our collective understanding of the rich tapestry of the human experience.

Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge the diligent efforts of our Editorial Team in meticulously curating and refining the content to ensure its relevance and coherence. I also want to thank our Graphic Designing and Layout team for their unconditional support. Through their expertise and meticulous attention to detail, they have enhanced the visual presentation of our publication, ensuring that the profound messages conveyed within its pages are delivered effectively. The PR team also deserves all applause for their support. My special thanks to the chief editors for all their hard work in holding meetings and coordinating with the sub-committees.

I extend my warm regards to all contributors and readers, and I look forward to the continued exploration and advancement of vital issues through our literary endeavours.



With sincere appreciation,

Dr. Shefali Rathore

Assistant Professor

Dept. of English

From the Teacher Editor



Greetings!

I am glad to witness this bunch of young budding talents, who aspire for creativity. Let all your imagination fly high and may the Aesthetes be the stage to bring you all closer on becoming an author. I can see the essence of “embracing diversity” in your expressions and thoughts that draw nearer to the horizon of true art and higher level of wisdom.

This year, the Aesthetes is so unique that it incorporates the idea of inclusiveness by inviting various art forms and literary pieces from across the colleges under the University of Delhi and beyond.

I congratulate all the contributors for making this e-magazine a success, and kudos to the editorial team for the tedious work that was done with ease. My humble gratitude goes to our patron and principal, Prof. Vichitra, for her constant support of the academic achievement and career grooming of the students.

Thanks and Regards,

Mr. Sinchuilung Gangmei Kabui

Faculty Member, The Aesthetes Literary

Asst Prof, Department of English

MLNCE

From the Teacher Editor



Dear Students,

First of all, I congratulate the editorial team and all the contributors to this edition of Aesthetes.

You all deserve special applause for selecting the theme “Embracing Diversity”. This theme is relevant not because we have forgotten our age-old principle of ‘Unity in Diversity’ but because we lag behind in the same practice today. Against all the odds, we have survived so far as a civilized society/nation, just owing to our guiding ethos of appreciating diversity. Most of the major religious and spiritual traditions originated and flourished in India. We are rightly called the ‘all-embracing shore’ which graciously offered shelter to all the oppressed, marginalized, and persecuted out-comers.

Taking cue from our fundamental precepts of ‘Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam’ and ‘Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb’, we have to sustain our all-inclusive nature ahead with even more piety and fervour. It is not just a responsibility, it is a privilege for each one of us to recognize that difference is not a reason for discord, a narrow mentality surely is. Difference, in essence, fosters divergent thinking and ensures dynamic progress.

In the era of high virtual influence and promotional uniformity, the power lies with our youth to recognise, respect, accept and preserve the real values of diversity around. Education must make us realize that irrespective of religious/social/cultural/regional/sensory/physical differences, everybody bears the same blood of humanity. A person with a disability, say visually impaired, may adopt different ways of seeing and knowing the world, which is equally valid and valuable. On the other hand, people from distinct regions/cultures can follow different lifestyles and exhibit unique perspectives towards everyday problems.

I urge you to leverage the unique value of diversity in our demography. Eventually, we together have to build a Bharat which will be Viksit for all!

Sincerely,

Sh. Deepak Kumar Gupta

Assistant Professor

Dept. of English

From the Student Chief Editor



As the chief editor of the Aesthetes,

I wanted to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude for all of your hard work and dedication to making our Magazine a success.

It is an honour and privilege to be given this opportunity to contribute to our college community's creative and intellectual vibrancy.

I thank my professors for entrusting me with this and supporting me whenever I needed guidance. It wouldn't have been possible without them.

Completing this edition of the Aesthetes feels like a monumental achievement. This magazine is a collective effort of one of the most hardworking teams I have worked with. Cheers to the editorial team for surpassing my expectations and doing such amazing work. You all were truly amazing, learnt a lot from you guys.

Collaborating with the students has not only been rewarding professionally but also personally fulfilling. Their enthusiasm, creativity, and resilience have been truly inspiring, and I feel privileged to have been part of their journey.

I sincerely thank each and every person who sent in their entries. Aesthetes is truly enriched by your contribution. I encourage you to keep sharing your stories, ideas, and perspectives. Eagerly looking forward to reading your work in future.

Thank you for your continued support and enthusiasm. Here's to many more memorable editions of our college magazine!

Ansh Kasera

Editor-in-chief

The Aesthetes Literary

B A.(Hons) English,

Semester VI

(Batch 2021-2024)

From the Student Chief Editor



I want to take a few lines to thank the most powerful team ever. Thank you to the teachers for entrusting us with such a beautiful opportunity and giving us an experience of a lifetime. I owe all my teachers my gratitude for guidance and support. Teachers have been really helpful and guided me through all the hurdles that came in the way as an obstacle.

Thank You to the incredible team for always being there to support us through the thick and thin and helping us through the process. I am proud of my team, and I want to thank you for teaching us team effort, hard work and patience. The days passed and processed into this piece of work has to be one of the greatest achievements. Their dedication, hard work, and commitment at every stage made the journey smoother and more enjoyable. The collaborative spirit and teamwork have been truly inspiring, making every challenge surmountable.

We have poured our hearts and souls into this project, aiming to create something remarkable. This piece of work is a testament to our collective efforts and our passion for literature. We sincerely hope it reflects our gratitude for the opportunity to be productive and provide our best to this project and our promising commitment to delivering the best results.

Your trust and support have been invaluable, and we look forward to sharing this accomplishment with you.

Chhavi Dua

Editor-in-chief,

The Aesthetes Literary

B.A. Programme (English +
Economics)

Semester VI

We introduce you to the Editorial Board



Started this journey gaslighting myself that indesign is like photoshop. (It's not). Gaslighting turned into actual understanding on the fly and strangers who I saw for the first time in the conference room became brothers and sisters. Couldn't have asked for a more fulfilling experience and doubt that it'll be topped anytime soon

AARAV, GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Completing this project has been an incredible journey, filled with our hard work and dedication. Having a supportive team at every step of the way made it all possible. I hope this work reflects our appreciation and the collective effort we put into it.

VANSHIKA GUJRATI, EDITOR/ GRAPHIC DESIGNER.



I, Garima Malik, a dedicated member of the editorial board, have actively delved deeply into the exploration of diverse perspectives. Serving on this board has been an enriching journey where the members and the teachers put together, deeply moving and stirring stories and insights.

GARIMA MALIK, CONTENT WRITER

Thank you to the entire team for your dedication and hard work in completing this project. Your commitment and collaboration have been invaluable, and I'm grateful for each one of you. Let's celebrate our success together.

PALAK AAROHI, CONTENT WRITER



I'm immensely grateful for the fantastic experience of working with each of you. Our collaborative effort, dedication, and creativity made our project a success. I've learned and grown significantly through our teamwork and interactions. Thank you all for support, and inspiring contributions. It's been a pleasure, and I look forward to more impactful collaborations in the future

ANUSHKA MISHRA, CONTENT WRITER

Working on this magazine has taught me what working with like-minded people feels like. I am grateful to the members and the teachers who gave us their constant support and guided us in making this magazine a success. Thank you.

AKANKSHA, CONTENT WRITER/ PUBLIC RELATIONS



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Chhavi Dua

Chhavi dua, an aspiring poet and a literature enthusiast, is also a third year student doing her degree in English literature. She started writing poems when she was a tenth grader student. Since then, she has been trying to do her best to survive in the world of avid readers, literature analysis and being recognised as a poet.

Poetry has always been her gateway, her safe space, where her worst fear is having a writer's block. She has always tried her best to portray herself the way she is, not just that, she has always been trying to portray the world that she wants to exist someday. One of her dreams is to be someone's comfort poet. A poet that people look up to, and choose to read when they are feeling down. Leaving the fear of judgement away Chhavi decided to showcase the world, her talent to write and express the words out loud, that no one used to hear. In a similar manner, she has tried to portray her view on diversity through her piece of creativity, 'to the face of the world.' The portrayal of the world and the portrayal of the fact that unity might bring diversity with it, but diversity without unity is a pointless realm to this world.

To the Face of the World

~Chhavi Dua

I go outside
To explore this place,
Only to find out the different miracles of grace.
From the color to the race to the taste and the face.
This place feels similar
And yet, so distinct
It's like everyone has their own pace
Yet all of us are synced
From different types of bodies
To a preference that varies
And then different shades
That, this place carries
Yet no distinction
Everyone makes a sacrifice
To the face of the world
To our own paradise
And yet, we create distance
Like fools that we are
When we can stay close
We make ourselves apart
Only if we knew
What unity could do
We wouldn't be wondering
And paying for this prize
To the face of the world we all rise
To the face of the world We all shine.

Ansh Kasera

Ansh Kasera is an aspiring writer. Born and raised in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, he discovered his love for Writings at a young age, finding solace and inspiration in the rhythm of verse and the power of language.

As a student of English Literature at Delhi University, Ansh's passion for literature knows no bounds. He has always been drawn to the beauty and power of language as a means of self-expression and connection.

When he's not lost in the world of words, Ansh can be found exploring the city with his headphones on, capturing moments of beauty and inspiration in the everyday

Shadows in The Night

~Ansh Kasera

In shadows deep, where silence reigns,
A soul, a heart, in quiet pains.
The world around, a distant sea, Yet loneliness is company.
A gentle spirit, colors bold, In love, in passion, once was told.
Yet, in the stillness of the night, Echoes haunt an endless fight.
Through laughter's guise and smiling eyes,
A hidden ache, a soul's disguise.
Though the world may turn its gaze Inside,
a storm forever stays.
In crowds, I still feel alone,
with a longing heart and a silent moan.
Yearning for a touch, a word, a glance,
In love's embrace, to find the dance.
But in a world that often shuns,
The different, the unique, the ones
Who dare to love in their own way,
Loneliness becomes the price to pay.
Yet, in the depths of the darkest night,
There glimmers still a hopeful light.
For love, though scarce, is ever true,
And one day, one heart will find its due.
So let the tears fall like rain,
Washing away the silent pain.
For in the depths of loneliness sea,
A stronger soul will come to be.
And though the journey may seem long,
With every step, with every song,
Remember, dear one, you're not alone,
For in these words, your heart finds home.



Pratik Praiya

Pratik is a B. A. Political Science Hons. student at Motilal Nehru College Evening), University of Delhi. He is from Banka, Bihar, and has completed His schooling at St..Francis School B.Deoghar, Jharkhand. He has analytical and critical thinking which enable him to dissect problems, and he is always eager to help solve problems in the real world. He started writing in his +2 and would love to do something in this field.

The Beauty Of Religion

~Pratik Praiya

Draw your swords, arm your hands;
Seal your hearts, close your eyes;
Kill all women & spare no child;
Oh! We are the humans, and they are the wild;
So, liberate their souls & cage their lives;
‘Why?’ You ask my dear child;

Well, don’t you know the good god is mine?

And which fool would rank,
Humanity over religion?
Love over Hatred?
Sanity over Lunacy?

A million are dead & a million will die;
Our faith will live, and we may die; Did you say,
‘Your god’s better than mine’?

Palak Aarohi

Meet Palak Aaro

hi. At just 18 years old, she's already making waves in the literary world. Palak's journey as an author began at a tender age when she found solace in the pages of books and the rhythm of poetry. With each word she penned, she discovered a piece of herself, weaving her experiences and emotions into stories that resonated deeply with readers.

What sets Palak apart is not just her youth, but her remarkable ability to blend genres seamlessly. Her self-help book offers a guiding light to those navigating the complexities of life, while her poetry captures the raw essence of human emotions with exquisite elegance. Her noticeable works include her 1st book, "A Strive To Find Myself," which is read globally. Despite her age, Palak's wisdom shines through her words, offering insights beyond her years. Her writing is a testament to her empathy and understanding of the human condition, touching the hearts of readers across generations.

As she continues to carve her path in the literary landscape, Palak serves as an inspiration to aspiring writers everywhere. With her boundless creativity and unwavering passion, there's no doubt that she will leave an indelible mark on the world of literature for years to come.

Disability as Diversity

~Palak Aarohi

In a world that prizes perfection, lies a world of unseen struggles,
where every step is an uphill trek,
every word is a mountain to conquer, but even in the shadow of hardships,
they are illuminated with resilience,

In a world that worships perfection,
They're the forgotten fragments,
Yet, within their brokenness,
Resides the beauty of imperfection,
Their voices unheard, their stories untold,
They navigate a world not built for them,
Adapting, overcoming, yet unseen,

In a world that values perfection,
They're relegated to the sidelines,
Societal standards measure their worth,
Narrow minds constrain their potential,
They are unsung heroes,
Travelling through a world not built for them.

But they are perfect in their own way,
For God makes no mistakes.



Aditi Anand

Aditi Anand is a motivated and dedicated college student currently pursuing English as her major. She is also an avid reader. You could even find her writing occasionally. She personally loves being in the world of literature, but it does not stop there. She possesses a secret world in her mind where characters come alive and new stories unfold; these stories sometimes spill on those sheets.

However, Aditi is not all about literature. As an NCC cadet, she is engaged in self-improvement and sharpening her existing skills. In addition, she maintains hobbies like swimming and playing guitar.

These commitments extend beyond academics and make her a better human, painting her as a well-rounded individual. Aditi wants to explore life, fueled by her love for language, with some talent for storytelling.

Roasted Beans

~Aditi Anand

Rahul never loved the smell of coffee, but he found himself inside the four walls of “Career Roasting Company”, a coffee cafe which his now ex-wife was in love with. He hadn’t intended to return, not after the bitter ground of his own divorce had settled. Yet, there he was, in the midst of the familiar clicking of the spoons, a stark contrast to the hollowness in his heart.

“Hey,” a voice pulled him out of the pain. “Rahul? You age like a fine wine, I must say.”

Aditya stood there, with a sprinkle of flour on his apron and starry eyes. He was tall and lean, hair artfully falling on his forehead. Before Rahul could reply, he spoke again, “What can I get you?” his voice an octave lower than before. “Just a Chamomile tea, please.” That was all Rahul could say.

Aditya placed the cup down and spoke, “The memories haven’t faded yet, I see.” Rahul grew blank, not knowing what to say; getting a divorce was not a secret, but he didn’t know it was a headline, too. Minutes later, Aditya spoke again, “They say time heals all wounds. But, it takes a lot longer when the wound is the size of your bank account before a divorce.” The line brought a little laugh out of Rahul and a pea size of confidence was gained by Aditya. “Bhaiya” was what they heard next, and Aditya disappeared in seconds, table to table, behind the counter, and then in the back kitchen. Rahul finished his tea and lingered around for a while, with a small smile on his face, stealing glances at Aditya, who was moving around at an energetic pace.

Rahul stole a glance around the cafe as well. All the customers were engaged in their own conversations, their backs turned towards him. Yet he couldn’t ignore the feeling of being under a microscope, judged for daring to stand that close to a man and have a playful banter with them.

Finally, the cafe grew quiet, and Rahul rose to leave. “Going already?” Aditya asked, wiping the counter. “Yeh,” was all Rahul’s lips, with the help of his tongue, could mutter, his brain telling him to leave with his heart pounding in his head, so that was what he did: ‘ He left.’

Rahul pushed the cafe’s door open the next day. A familiar knot of fidgetiness was twisting in his stomach. The air buzzed with the familiar voice of spoons clicking and the coffee machine working, yet something felt different. Maybe it was the warm sunlight falling on the tables through the curtains, or maybe it was anticipation vibrating beneath Rahul’s chest.

Rahul scanned the room, eyes landing on Aditya, who was expertly swirling milk in latte for a customer, with the same lopsided grin, which seemed brighter today. When the customer left, Aditya’s gaze met with Rahul’s, which brought a small smile spread on his face. He mouthed a playful “back already?” that made Rahul’s skin heat up from neck to cheeks.

Feeling a pinch of self-consciousness, Rahul spoke, “Uh, Yeh,” clearing his throat, he mumbled, approaching the counter.

Aditya raised an eyebrow, a playful glint in his eyes. “what’s your coffee mood today? Classic comfort or something more exotic today? Rahul hesitated, returning Aditya’s playful glint. He said, “Honestly, the coffee you serve here never did it for me. Maybe you all need to work on your roasting a bit.”

The words hung in the air for longer than expected, and a flicker of nervousness passed through Aditya’s eyes. He looked down at the machine and then at Rahul, and the usual confidence on his face was replaced by a sheepish grin.

Aditya stammered and said, “Uh, right. We do get a lot of complaints about the uh...” He trailed off, his eyes widening in horror when he saw a puff of steam coming out from the espresso machine’s steam wand, followed by some dark coffee later.

Rahul yelled, instinctively shielding himself with his hands; unfortunately, his reflex wasn't fast enough. The brown liquid splattered on his white shirt, leaving a brown stain.

The silence was all one could hear in the cafe. Aditya stood across the counter, frozen, the espresso machine making some hissing sounds in the background.

Rahul broke the awkward tension and then spoke with a forced chuckle: "It looks like your coffee is a bit too 'exotic' for me today."

Aditya remained flustered. "I'm so, so sorry!" he exclaimed, grabbing some napkins and handing them to Rahul. He frantically spoke, "This is awful! Let me get you a new shirt or at least some stain remover?" Rahul's gaze met Aditya with a flicker of something, and he spoke, "Shirt would do the work." The scent of laundry detergent and Aditya's cologne was oddly calming amidst the chaos. Rahul slipped on the shirt; the soft cotton felt welcoming. Aditya beamed, a relieved smile stretching across his face, but as the moment stretched, a different kind of tension settled in the air.

As the cafe emptied that evening, a comfortable silence settled between the two.

Aditya took a chance and said something he had been meaning to tell for a while now: "This place might be filled with memories, but maybe we can make some new ones."

Rahul looked up, surprised with a flicker of hope. "I... I don't know." Then he looked around the cafe. Was it that raised eyebrows that he imagined across the tables? The subtle shift in posture, a subconscious moves away from him. He couldn't tell. Aditya understood the unspoken tension.

Adarsh Seema Singh

Adarsh Seema Singh is a first-year undergrad student pursuing his bachelor's at Delhi University, working to get 'kind' as his verb. He is also a travelling enthusiast.

After completing his schooling, he started to express his ideas, thoughts, and, of course, confused opinions in poetry.

This piece of work, "Shady Eyes," is sort of a self-realization that we all are busy being someone else in this temporary body and wasting time not living it but complaining. Why can't we accept people the way they are? How making fun of others has a very harsh impact on their lives.

Shady Eyes

~Adarsh Seema Singh

Heavenly sky glittering with stars,
Reflects as living on earth but hated here?

These glitters are judged.

From their appearance to sexual
feelings, I can't deny the emotion.

A plot full of coloured eyes, isn't the best comfort to watch.
Why did we forget to love leaves while taking flowers to our
hearts? Look at those intricate veins; look once, U will fall in
love.

Everyone wants to be fair,
Everyone wants to be tall,
Everyone wants to be "ILLOGICAL PERFECT".

O beloved child of God,
He made us the best, and He is always right.
These experiencing eyes felt the same.
He loves his skin, His strange hair, and obviously his funny nose.

You are beautiful the way you are.
Remember, Your mother breathes for you,
You are a diamond, and diamonds are RARE
Smile...

Your permanent partner deserves you.



ÉGARÉ

“Jack of all trades, master of none, though oftentimes better than a master of one.” Égaré is a guy who loves to try out new things. He is not afraid of experimenting with new ideas, and the same can be said about his writings. A beginner in literature, ready to dive into the vast ocean of words. He is an ardent reader and a steadfast realist. He finds reading to be a way out of the banality of everyday life. He is interested in theatre, writing, and anime. He adores the nature around him and prefers to live by himself, pondering over music and rhymes.

More The Merrier ~ÉGARÉ

Different races and different castes we made
Fighting each other to impose the culture we follow
Praying for a cheerful day from our different gods
Each one disappointed, watching from heaven in sorrow
We used to love the rainbow in our childhood
So why now hate the rainbow flag around
Let's learn to be open-hearted for everyone
Then it wouldn't be so hard for you to tag along
What's it with making everything the same
Differences are where beauty lies, just
like different flowers in a garden and
different patterns on the wings of
butterflies.
Why should I only choose the grasslands?
When I can also be in a different scenery,
Why should I choose to see only the brown of autumn?
When I can also witness the spring's greenery

Sreepriya Roy Chowdhury

If you ever spot a girl in Kolkata with her head buried in detective novels, someone who loves to debate every topic that comes over, a happy-go-lucky dilettante with an undying passion for poetry and music, you have surely met her, Sreepriya.

She believes in loving and losing yet still being kind. No matter how hard her life gets, she spreads hearts like confetti! A metaphor in the making, she loves to live in words more than anywhere else.

An aspiring student whose interests range from Astrophysics to History, she makes sure that she does something for the betterment of her country!

Midnight Stretched On My Tongue

~Sreepriya Roy Chowdhury

When black and white blend into
monochrome, the prism of my mind
transmits fifty shades of grey;
I trace my feelings jumbled in a pitch-black
hole as the cosmic midnight slowly stretches on
my tongue.

A woman of profound achromatic beauty, her uneven
patches of purity and elegance akin to the moon, a
celestial body adorned with a million scars,
each one a testament to her resilience and grace.

As I open my mouth wide and
stretched, you find tales centuries
untold
of my pride and their prejudices
like the vast universe inside Krishna's mouth.

Every colour tells a story,
and every story portrays a
colour.

It's better we conserve all the hues in our palette
instead of dragging ourselves into a world that deprives us of colours!

Rajasvi Raina

Rajasvi Raina, who grew up in Delhi and is currently residing in Pondicherry, is a writer whose relationship with literature and writing began, like many other self-proclaimed writers, with highly derivative works bordering on fanfiction inspired by the authors she admired. Though she has come a long way from that, she deems herself still far from good.

She continues to write after all these years, albeit sporadically, because she believes in making art - art that might not always be good but will always be hers.

Immersing herself in high fantasy, unravelling a world beyond comprehension, beyond the restrictions of the real world, is what draws her into reading and, in turn, writing. At heart, she will always think of herself as a reader first and a writer only second to that.

LGBTQ

~Rajasvi Raina

The oft-forgotten fifth letter in the ever-increasing and virtually infinitely long abbreviation used to refer to the community of gender and sexual minorities, LGBTQIA+, is Q. It stands for queer and/or questioning, depending on who you ask. And while the term ‘questioning’ is pretty self-explanatory, ‘queer’ is much more complicated in its relation with the community and its history.

The word ‘queer,’ originally meaning strange or eccentric, was used as a slur and a disrespectful word to refer to anyone who wasn’t cishet. And, while still considered a slur amongst some LGBTQ+ communities, it has largely been reclaimed as an umbrella term to refer to all sexual and gender minorities, though I would still suggest not to call someone queer unless you know they are okay with that term.

The label began to be reclaimed from its pejorative use as a neutral or positive self identifier by LGBT people in the late 1980s. Queer Nation, an LGBT organization formed in 1990, circulated an anonymous flier at the New York Gay Pride Parade in June 1990 titled “Queers Read This”. This flier notably contained the following explanation of the adoption of the word ‘queer’ by the organization, “It’s trouble. Every gay person has his or her own take on it. For some, it means strange and eccentric and kind of mysterious, and for others, ‘queer’ conjures up those awful memories of adolescent suffering. Well, yes, ‘gay’ is great. It has its place. But when a lot of lesbians and gay men wake up in the morning, we feel angry and disgusted, not gay. So we’ve chosen to call ourselves queer. Using ‘queer’ is a way of reminding us how the rest of the world perceives us.”

‘Questioning,’ on the other hand, is more straightforward but less accepted as a part of the community. It is seen as a threshold where heterosexuality meets the LGBTQ+ spectrum. It is seen as a phase, as a “diet” version of being gay. People identifying as ‘questioning’ are either immediately labeled as “gay and in denial” or as “straight and pretending”.

It is widely believed that someone identifying as ‘questioning’ would one day find out whether they are cis or not; after all, what is the point of questioning something if you don’t get an answer? And, sure, people do get their answers sometimes, but sometimes they don’t. And that can lead to a life of feeling like an outsider, an impostor who doesn’t fit in any of the communities, feeling pressured into “choosing a side”. People who question their gender or sexual identity but end up finding that they are actually cis and/or straight are labeled as “faking” it; if you identify as ‘questioning’ you better find out you’re gay, or else it’ll mean that you were lying for attention all along. But despite what I’m making it seem like, the community is actually very supportive most of the time. It’s the people outside of it that aren’t.

According to a survey conducted in 2017, around 86% of LGBTQ+ individuals in the East/South Asia Pacific region are “in the closet”, a term popularly used for individuals who have not “come out” yet or, in other words, haven’t told people about their gender and/or sexual identity. India, at its heart, is a conservative country where talking about the LGBTQ+ community is taboo and considered an “adult” topic not fit for casual discussion in a familial or professional setting. And while the abolishment of section 377- an act introduced by the British government that criminalized sexual activities that were “against the law of nature”- was a

a step forward in the right direction, it is still not nearly enough as long as the government does not recognize same-sex marriages.

In conclusion, the Q community, whether identifying as queer or questioning, is subjected to similar treatment as the rest of the LGBTQ+ community. Their rights are denied, their existence is questioned, their safety is under threat, and the general public scrutinizes their personal life. People spend their entire lives “in the closet,” leaving the country for one that would accept who they are and deny themselves happiness and freedom in exchange for a “normal” life. It’s tragic; it’s a big blow to the pillars of equality and freedom that India stands on, and it is not what we deserve.

Ananya Khemani

In the world of literature, Ananya finds comfort and desire. Books are not just words on paper but gateways to new realms, fueling her creativity and expanding her horizons. Whether it's the poetic verses of Gulzar or the philosophical musings of Nietzsche, she finds herself immersed in the beauty of words.

As a music fan, she resonates with the raw energy of artists like Talhah Yunus, Nanku, and Seedhe Maut, their lyrics echoing the rhythm of her soul. Roller Coaster rides are her thrill, a metaphor for life's ups and downs, embraced with open arms and a daring spirit.

Contemporary voices like Murakami and Lahiri became her companions, guiding her through modern complexities with their poignant narratives. Each book and story is a mirror reflecting the kaleidoscope of human experience, urging her to explore the depths of her thoughts and feelings.

In this literary odyssey, she has learned that words are more than just symbols on a page; they are bridges connecting hearts and minds across time and space. They have the power to heal, to inspire, to transform. She continues to navigate the ever-changing seas of literature, seeking new horizons and endless possibilities in the boundless sea of stories.

In essence, she is a storyteller, weaving tales of her own and finding inspiration in the world around her. Her journey is a work of art, a masterpiece in progress, with each day adding a new chapter.

Ananya Khemani

Leo And Nian

~Ananya Khemani

My first pride was a mess,
Crying on the streets
Shoes laced with glitter
Reality was bitter

Who knew when he would confess
Memories never seem to erase
And I will still love you when you're eighty-
three Your scent remains on this shirt

Demolished and tempered, our souls
are How shattered the truth is
Dangerously close to wanting
everything But, in the end, achieving
nothing

Both blue and black
These lines are clear
This tells me a
mystery Can I get a
drag?

Tell me pretty lies
Don't hide the smile
It suits you
Take you to an extraordinary world

This alluring mess I created
The feel of velvet

Just like the blue-violet
Your aesthetically pleasing scent

Lavender and cigarettes
Cherry and roses
Life is a piece of art
And you are the best I've seen

Red whiskey days
A drink for two
Only to attract his gaze
For all I wanted was you

I think you already know
I am yours in every life

Nimish Gulati

Kalakar by day (Astitva's labourer) and delusional thinker by night who draws once in a blue moon to let out his creative juices with a hint of melancholy. Since childhood, he has wanted to work in the media industry, waiting for his big break. So, he started taking small steps, such as being Astitva's (Theatre Society of MLNCE) creative head and a member of the Pia entertainment production house.

He worked on multiple street plays, a few short films, some YouTube videos, and Instagram content to find a way to be famous and successful. With the adaptation of fast-paced life in his daily routine, he likes to dance, read, act, go out anytime, and specifically visit art museums to see the world's point-of-view from a different eye every single time, but that doesn't mean that he doesn't wanna show the world his point-of-view; He loves to capture tiny little moments of life and would whip out his phone to record whenever possible.

With a special love for exploring and making memories, you would always find him out of the house whenever called upon.

As for his love for the media industry, he loves to watch movies and series and would love to hear about their process, storyline, direction, and writing whenever possible.

He is a delulu guy in the world of solulu people.



Raajnandiinee

Introducing Raajnandiinee, a second-year student of English Literature whose work delves into the profound depths of human emotion and memory. Through her poetic prose, she invites readers to peer into the soul's terrain, where memories reside in the gaze of time.

Her eloquent verses weave a tapestry of emotions, reflecting the intricate dance of laughter, love, and sorrow within the windows of wide-eyed eyes. With each stanza, Raajnandiinee invites us to embrace the nostalgia of remembrances, reminding us that every blink is a nostalgic start and every tear a testament to life's vivid art.

As she explores the celestial dance of memories, her words resonate with the eternal echoes of heartfelt sighs and silent cries, urging us to cherish the rich tapestry of life's moments captured in the gaze.

Memories

~Raajnandiinee

In the gaze of time, where moments reside,
Memories linger in the windows of wide-eyed eyes—not in the brain's labyrinth
but in the soul's terrain—a storied vista where emotions refrain.

A gaze holds tales, whispers of the past. Each glance is a chapter, a memory
cast. Not in the tangled web of neurons' chains but in the gaze, where
emotions are sustained.

Eyes are the keepers of time's silent score, reflecting moments forevermore. In
their depths, laughter and tears entwine. They are a gallery of emotions, an art
so fine.

In pupils' reflections, stories unfold, tales of laughter and love
untold. Eyes, the keepers of life's vivid art,
Where every blink is a nostalgic start.

Memories linger in the spark of connection, in a tear's gentle flow,
a silent, vibrant show.

They dance in the iris, a living art,
A gallery of moments, eternally impart.

Through joy and sorrow, a visual song, In the iris, where remembrances throng.
They shimmer in orbs, like stars in the night, A celestial dance, an eternal light.

Glistening tears, a cascade of years, A testament to joy, to sorrows, to fears.

Through the lens of vision, nostalgia weaves,
A symphony of recollections, each heartbeat perceives.

Each twinkle, a chapter, etched in the gaze,
A memoir written in the soul's sunlit maze.
They hold the echoes of a heartfelt sigh,
A gaze that whispers, "Remember, don't deny."
For in those windows, the heart's silent cry,
Memories reside, and never say goodbye.
So gaze deeply into those windows, and see the rich tapestry of a life's memory.

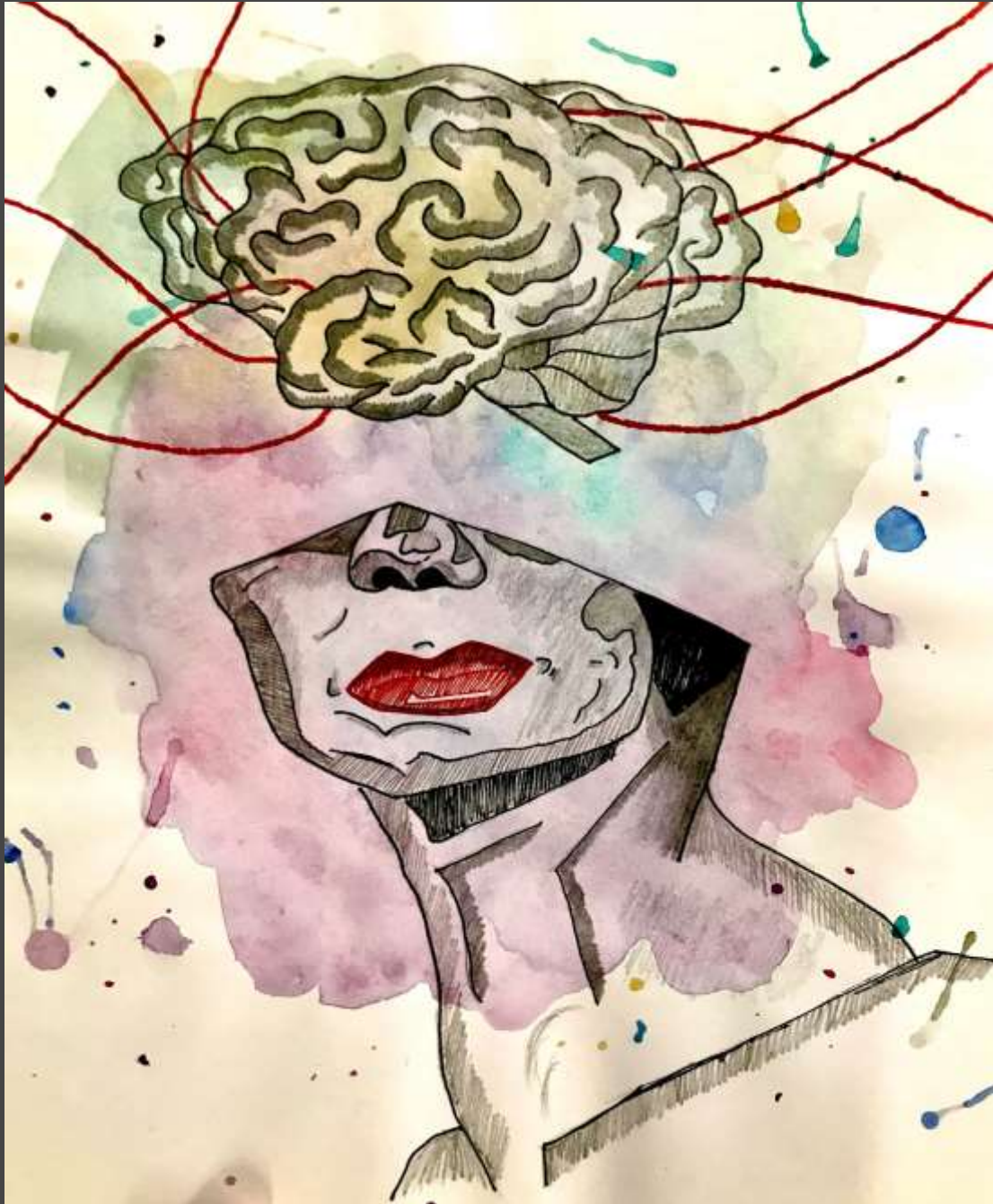


Vanshika Gujrati

Vanshika Gujrati is a vibrant and conscientious student of English Literature at the University of Delhi. She embodies the joy of learning and the responsibility of academic pursuit.

A social butterfly, she thrives on meaningful interactions and finds inspiration in the beauty of nature, which she admires and romanticizes. Her passion for expression finds form in the delicate strokes of watercolors on canvas, where she explores the intricate diversity of the human mind.

Through her art, she celebrates the uniqueness of each individual's thoughts, showcasing the rich tapestry of human experience.



Garima Malik

by Vanshika Gujrati

Garima is an incredible girl with exceptional skills and great qualities. Her sheer sense of curiosity and deep appreciation enrich her life.

When you have a good conversation with her, you will notice her thoughts and ideas delve into profoundness. She is the epitome of literary excellence. Her passion for eloquence and depth-filled novels and writings make her unique from the rest. Her determination and commitment to exploring the prism of literature and contributing to it show how passionate she truly is.

Beyond the confines of books, Garima finds joy in writing and weaving together words to create worlds of her own. She excels not just in academics and literature but also in other activities, like sports and singing. She has a keen interest in sports and makes sure to always keep up with the latest updates on the sports world. She is also very hardworking and smart.

Socioeconomic status encapsulates a family's or an individual's societal status or standards. It is determined by several factors, such as income, education, occupation, assets, wealth, and so on. This status assesses those who can access resources, opportunities, and overall well-being in a community.

The short story written by her focuses on this aspect.

The Beauty of Village Fordland

~Garima Malik

In the middle of nowhere, there was a beautiful village, hidden away from all the bustle of the rest of the world known as Fordland. The village was so beautiful and surreal; it was where the line between reality and myth was very thin. It was covered with pine, cherry, and a variety of trees and cascading waterfalls, and when it rained, it brought gushing winds along, making the village mystical. But also, behind the charming facades of its natural beauty, a stark socioeconomic divide festered. While charming cottages existed on one side of the village, shabby dwellings housed on the other.

Unemployment casts a shadow over the village, leaving a significant portion of its inhabitants without hope or a stable income. The abundance of resources began to attract industries, their success fueled by the natural parks and resources. However, this shift in the economic landscape rendered traditional livelihoods obsolete, leaving many struggling to adapt.

The people in the village who worked for the industries lived happy lives without worrying about bringing bread home or making ends meet. However, an invisible wall was built between successful industrial employees and unemployed people. This divide, which we know as the socioeconomic divide, made the beauty of the village fade.

Amidst all this, there was a figure who stood out—a beacon of hope amidst the shadows of socioeconomic disparity. Meet Lana, a young activist with a fiery spirit and unwavering determination. Growing up in the most beautiful village, watching the marginalised part of the village being oppressed, Lana deeply understood the struggles faced by those on the fringes of society.

Despite her own hardships, Lana refused to succumb to despair. She couldn't sit by and watch the village lose its beauty to the socioeconomic difference. Instead, she channelled her experiences into fuel for change, catalyzing grassroots movements to address the root causes of inequality. With each impassioned speech and organized protest, Lana rallied her fellow villagers to demand equitable opportunities and support for those most in need.

Lana's hard work surmounted, and her efforts did not go in vain as she inspired the villagers to confront the distinct realities of socioeconomic injustice head-on. Her courage emboldened residents to challenge the status quo and to stand in solidarity with their neighbours, regardless of their place on the socioeconomic spectrum of the community, leading the charge for a brighter future.

With her unwavering resolve and boundless compassion, Lana embodied the spirit of unity and resilience that would ultimately transform the village into a beacon of hope and equality for future generations. Eventually, with the balance being restored, the beauty of the village was revived, and the fading enchanting splendour was restored.

Akanksha

Akanksha was born in Uttar Pradesh. She is the author of numerous poems, which are bestsellers among very few people who have read them. Her writing style has won a self-satisfactory prize called 'Getting through a Day.' She lives among daydreams, coffee, raindrops, and poetry. She often romanticizes the world or is appalled by what it offers. In Delhi, she is surviving on low balance, lots of outings with friends, and whatever seldom trees she can find in her neighborhood. If there is an award for being happily sad, she awards herself with it thrice a day. And she belts out wrong lyrics as if her life depended on it every evening.

"Look at you
reading my words
as if
they are the stars waiting to tell you"

To Randomness Of Life

~Akanksha

We have been told not to look past our shapes,
So we close our eyes the moment we see somebody different.
We have been told to favour a color, so we do our best to ignore others.
We have been told, taught, and made well-versed in differentiating,
So, the only math we can apply to life is division.

And the little girl who had a mole on her cheek
Was pushed from the playground.
The other kids thought she was different than them.
And a boy who had autism never really understood
Why was it tough for him to be around people?
The lady who washed the same floor thrice
Because every time a speck of dust would return home
Was named pretentious.

The man who worked twelve hours would return home
And kiss his children goodnight.
He was not man enough for the world on days.

We have been told to look at life a certain way
It is as if the glasses given to everybody are the same.
We change ourselves; we buy creams and lotions
And fall into a labyrinth of sadness when we do not pass the notion.

And the little girl grew up to hate the mole on her cheeks.
She taught her daughter to fear people.
And the boy? He killed himself in rage.
For the world never understood him.
He didn't give the world a chance as well.
The lady still cleaned the kitchen floor thrice till her last day.
And the man made his son a man who ticks boxes of the world.
A man, man enough for the world.

Namrata

Namrata is an empathetic person, and it's reflected in her writings as she easily transforms the raw emotions into written words with shimmering meanings; her work possesses the magic of language to illuminate the human experience.

Her vulnerability is also her strength, as she finds beauty in all spheres of life through her talent.

She understands the value of practicality in both her craft and her life. Her love for literature is visible as there's a step towards a deeper understanding of the human experience in every Stanza.

She finds refuge from the world's chaos in the embrace of literature. Through her words, she invites glimpses of beauty and tragedy surrounding human nature, and she finds meaning in the ever-changing narrative of Nature and life.

She considers literature a mirror reflecting one's own aspirations and fears, joys and pain, where every emotion can be transformed into verse and one can delve into the depths of imagination.

As an aspiring poet, she finds solace in the verses of those who have come before and tries to add her unique voice and perspective to every line she writes.

I Wonder What They See In Me

~Namrata Luthra

I Wonder What They See in Me

All I wanted to be was a part of when they pushed me apart.

I wonder what they see when they look at me.

Just the mere disability?

All I expect is people to show care, but they seem to be scared,
Life would have been easier if people tried instead of mocking our tears.

I wonder what they see when they look at me.

Is it just the fears?

The fear of not being enough, the fear of not being accepted.

Will anyone care if, one day, our existence vanishes?

I wonder what they see when they look at me.

Is it just the mental challenges?

The struggle of regulating emotions and the burden of expenses?

Yes, we do have special needs,

We might not easily fit in,

But all we want is to be seen.

We are different, not abnormal; we are tough

To deal with, but does it nullify our feelings?

Mrunali D.Borkar

Her name is Mrunalini D Borkar. She is a high school student studying in St Xavier High school from Nagpur, She shows her interest in writing and have participated in several such activities as well. She is a tenth standard student and is of 15 years old. Her interests also include dancing, singing, and drawing. She lives with her parents Mother - Mrs. Sonali D Borkar and Father - Mr. Dnyaneshwar N Borkar and is the only child. She can also write stories based on a particular theme or topic given. She always looks forward to participate in such wonderful forums and has a dedication to write for making a change. She believes that forums which give writers participation opportunities, is making future brighter than ever. Her favourite subjects include history and civics. She also loves poems and stories that have wonderful meanings. She developed a sense of love towards stories because of her Grandparents, Mrs. Kumudini D. Shende and Mr Dattatraye Shende.

Being One, Is Equal to Ton..

~Mrunali Borkar

Where rainbows make the sky and art,
Why can't our colors make the world a huge love cart?
Where mother gives life and father gives shelter, Why can't a woman be treated
better?

Where God is hope and being their follower is a choice,
Why can't we respect different life motives and be the followers of being nice?
Where clothes are woven with creativity, love, and the same wounded fingers,
Why can't we appreciate all designs and make this earth a green stage, with us
being the singers?

When a single paper can decide a future, such as money,
Then why can't people be given the rays to their future and given the right to
afford honey?

Earth is green, but our minds are not,
People are humans, but their humanity is as small as a dot!

