

# AZURE

A Newsletter

## Letter From The Editor

Dear Reader,

First off, Team Azure wishes you and your loved ones a very happy and joyous New Year!

I found myself lost for words when I started to write this letter. There was a lot that needed to be said, but it seemed as though no words held the capacity to express all that I wanted to say. That being said, I will try my utmost to materialise in words, perhaps the most inexplicable feelings that I have felt over the course of putting this newsletter together from scratch.

I think Azure was really born from the dire need to create. As one insignificant speck in a sea of incredibly talented students, I often find myself suspended in a whirl of fresh ideas and airy wisps of concepts that surface in one's mind from time to time, but never seem to find the light of day. Azure wishes to find all those of you who have stray ideas playing around in your head. Write them out, watch them mould you as you mould them when you try to breathe a coherent medium into the abstract that swims around in your mind. We seek all those of you, who have interesting opinions on art, science, or even the wise gust of wind that ruffles your hair.

I think what I'm trying to say is that Azure is more a space, a mirror under the guise of an organised newsletter. It is a delightful bundle of human ideas and human expression, drawn from the rarely found insightful corners of this student body.

This being only just the second issue, Azure is still very much in its nascence and was born only six months ago, over a very inspired phone call between two very inspired fifteen year olds. I extend sincere thanks to the Editorial Board, to the Design team that has devoted hours to making this issue what it is and of course, all those of you who have taken out the time to contribute to it.

I hope the contents of this newsletter acquaint you with some interesting thoughts and leave your mind stirred.

Signing off,

Risha Srinivas

One of the people Azure has helped mould

(Sometimes known as Founder and Head Editor)

# A Warm, Serene And Passionate Gentleman: An Interview - Shri Surendra Nath Jauhar 'Faquir'

**Keshav Saib XI-D**

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Shri Surendra Nath Jauhar 'Faquir' – a name that arouses feelings of warmth, love and gratefulness in every person associated with the Mother's International School. Most of us have never seen Chachaji in person, yet we feel his presence in every grey-white stone, every tree, and every flowering vine of our school. We decided to interview Ms. Madhulika Bahadur, a retired teacher of our school who had met Chachaji in 1986, and talk about him and his charismatic and amiable personality.

**K: Good day ma'am! Can you start by talking about your tenure at the school?**

M: Good day! I had joined The Mother's International School on 1st July 1986, as a Mathematics and Science teacher in the primary school. Later, I became a Home Science teacher in the senior school.

**K: How would you describe our school's founder, Shri Surendra Nath Jauhar, who is also lovingly known as Chachaji?**

M: Chachaji had a very good personality. He was a tall, gentle, and charming gentleman. He was a minimalistic man of frugal means and didn't believe in materialism, showing off and extravagance. He was very keen on perfection, and passionate about everything he did.

**K: Can you please describe your first memory of him?**

M: I met him for the first time when I went to the Ashram just after joining the school. Tara Didi had called me there to have a look at the Ashram. He was sitting in his cottage and was not too well at that time so did not talk much. Karuna Didi was sitting with him. That was my first impression of Surendra Nath Jauhar ji. He was a very serene and extremely poised person.

**K: Would you like to recall any particular incident, or anecdote?**

M: Yes. When a teacher was teaching in the class, he would come by. Often, he would see her hands in her shawl, and then he would tap and tell the teacher that she couldn't teach the children with her hands hidden under a shawl. He was a man who looked into smaller details and tried to ensure that students got the best possible education.



**Ms. Madhulika Bahadur**

**K: What is something that you have learnt from him? How have your interactions with him shaped you as a person and as a teacher?**

An important lesson that I learnt from him is that if you are passionate about something, and you feel that is the right thing for you to do, nothing in the world can stop you from achieving what you want. I didn't have too many personal conversations and interactions with him as he wasn't too well by the time I had joined. However, I did learn a lot from his talks and philosophy. His foresight into life was really remarkable. What I heard from other people, about how he founded the school on 23rd April 1956 from scratch, is really incredible, and continues to inspire me.

My daughters and grandchildren have studied in this very school, and I taught here for 30 years till my retirement. I am extremely thankful for his actions, and his foresight of starting a school such as the Mother's International School, as they have given me and my family a very fulfilling life. Although my interactions with him were not very extensive and brief, they were definitely quite impactful on me and my life.

# Gender in Language

Anya Gupta IX-E

We as a society have certain preconceived notions about gender. These ideas and constructs are often reinforced through language. The male gender is seen as default, we are collectively seen as masculine, the masculine form often speaks for all genders, our species is called 'man' and the word 'mankind' is used to unify us. This male bias is so deeply ingrained that even certain gender neutral words like pilot or doctor are read as male.

The way we speak affects the way we think. In many ways, it is our language which creates the stark gender inequalities we see around us every day.

Most languages like English, French and Spanish are gendered and they emphasise the male default. We have to keep the gender in mind while conjugating verbs and nouns. This can influence our thoughts about sexes in general.

Creating a new, reformed language will call attention to the gendered system and make it easier to recognise bias. While language reform takes time, it is possible. This does not necessarily mean dismantling existing systems, but rather making space for more inclusive options.

Instead of allowing language to construct how we view the world, we could push in the other direction, think in another manner and question how we can reflect our world through our choice of language.

# Lives Long Gone

Sampreeti Kar XI-B

It was probably a busy late afternoon. Notes of bargaining ringing through the air in the markets, slaves carrying the burden of work with masters relishing the sweetness of authority. Affluent children playing in their togas with jewellery adorning their body while the poor kids stare.

Or maybe it was something else on that day- August 24, 79 AD. As the ground shook and the day got darker, people watched in horror as thick smoke exploded from the core of Mount Vesuvius. Molten rock shot up approximately 15 km into the sky. It was nothing short of a shower of rocks when they cooled down into pumice stone and ash. The atmosphere, suffused with lethal gas, asphyxiated many, as roofs fell over and rocks and ash covered the entire city like a sheet. The screams of residents were quite possibly drowned by the loud roar of the deathly lava.

Approximately 18 hours later, Pompeii ceased to exist.

Two thousand years later, the world today is not interested in how Pompeii died. "The question is about how the people in Pompeii actually lived" says Mary Beard, an American classicist and author of the book 'Pompeii, The Life of the Roman Town'.

The city's debris has a story to tell rather than the remains of the people. Pompeii was a typical Roman town with the usual difference between the rich and poor, slaves and masters, and men and women. What were probably brothels lined the streets. Acres of land for farming, hot baths and coins that have survived the disaster prove to be an extremely precious source to find out about the daily routines of Romans.

To the east is a grand amphitheatre, standing without its soul. The architectural glory of Romans is an unquestionable treasure. The surviving buildings show a sense of intense planning and hard work of years to yield spectacular notable works of architecture that include the House of Citharist, House of the Silver Wedding and The House of the Labyrinth. Markets were lined on either side of the streets much like what it is today in the modern-day city of Naples. Paintings adorning walls of Pompeii buildings provide a visual description of a typical Roman life, from scenes of bakery shops to that of opulent dinners of royals and merchants.

One of the most exquisite features of the rich Romans was the inclination towards a life of excessive elaboration of their gold. Villas, platforms for intense economic engagements, baths, libraries, farms and fountains - most of them owned by the upper class - still stand today. Open yard dining halls with fountains at a particular angle shows the extent of luxury a rich Roman had, but is also proof of how dependent they were on the slaves for maintenance of such extravagance.



Art by Nandini Chatterjee XI-D

The life of a middle-class man was like one of today. Survival meant intense competition at work to keep one's head above water. These people were above slaves, but not rich enough to frolic all the time. This class of society were the Roman soldiers, bakers, bankers etc.

Pompeii wasn't a town where there was a very 'sharp' gap between the so-called rich and poor. Interesting evidence to prove the above view was found in the undergrounds of Pompeii in a cellar. It provided archaeologists with 54 skeletons. They were classified as rich and poor as some had dazzling jewellery and coins adorning them, while the rest had nothing. The bones of the poor, however, show no signs of malnutrition. The Roman diet was quite rich, and it included a variety of bread, wine, pomegranates, walnuts, meat etc, evidenced by the study of human faeces collected from a sewer for ordinary citizens.

Pompeii has fascinated tourists across the globe. Accustomed to silence before its discovery, it now observes millions of tourists walking through its streets. It's probably the chance of seeing what death looks like.

The caskets of the Pompeii dwellers provide a vision of the spectacular art of nature. The ash from the eruption had ensured that the last moment of life would be frozen in time. Plastering the skeletons of the Pompeians inside, these preservations are treasures in the language of history. Their emotions and body language speak an admixture of despair and hope. Several had had the thought of fleeing. Perhaps their first step towards it was their last.

## The Portrayal of Mental Illness in Film

**Priyanshi XI-F**

Film is arguably one of the most influential mediums in today's entertainment-centric world. Some filmmakers are driven by the goal to enrage our passions, and some just provide us a means of escapism. So naturally, stereotypes of people with mental illness as dangerous and incompetent reduce these individuals to nothing but the most exaggerated and caricaturized versions of their diagnoses. These caricatures are the products of how mental illness are further perceived in society.

There are a few major problems that contribute to the misrepresentation of mental illness in the media. Firstly, the personality argument which explains that in any show or movie about mental illness, the character with mental illness cannot exist by themselves. Their illness is a part of their personality. The book "Culture Theory Disability" critiques filmmakers of an ableist culture. "If you want to make a film that is about disability, then every aspect of the film has to do with the disability."

Secondly, The Good Story Problem presents itself. Oftentimes, writers and authors will write characters with mental illness to be conventionally attractive, funny or poetic. In order to make us more likely to empathise with them. The writers give the character a charming and quirky

personality and their mental illness often manifests itself in an endearing way, which makes the audience have more empathy for the character. However, the empathy the audience has is empathy for mental health experiences that people don't truly face.

Less common disorders are sometimes portrayed when filmmakers have little knowledge of the disorder due to things like rarity or pre-existing stigma and so, the cycle of stigma continues. Many films use mental illness as weaponizing tools, especially disorders like schizophrenia and DID (dissociative identity disorder).

Another major problem with representation of mental illness is representation of minorities. People of colour face specific racial and socioeconomic barriers that affect mental health. It's difficult for people of colour to reach out and receive the help they need and stigma within their own communities contributes to this. Lack of representation in the media can be as harmful as poor representation.

Arguably one of the biggest problems that comes with writing about mental illness is the romanticization of mental illness. Especially when writers write the person with mental illness to be somewhat heroic. This leaves the audience to believe that mental illness results in beautiful things like poetic musings, being able to write better music or being able to make better art. It creates a glamorous and fancy portrayal of mental illness. Social media is particularly awful in pushing this distorted image of mental illness that is sometimes appealing to people, making it an 'aesthetic'. This is also seen in what is usually called the "tortured artist". Artists like Kurt Cobain, Vincent Van Gogh and Michaelangelo all suffered from mental illness, which is often assumed to have contributed to their artistic genius, making mental illness seem appealing in a way.

Media like films are influential on the societal and individual perception of mental illness and can play a huge role in sensitising audiences to the issues people with mental illnesses face. So if the industry relies more on authenticity rather than familiar narratives, the destigmatisation of mental issues wouldn't seem so far away in our future.

## Eternals

**Nandini Menon XI-E**

**Disclaimer: This article contains spoilers for the 2021 film Eternals.**

When one prepares to watch a Marvel film, there are usually a few things one expects: superheroes in aesthetically pleasing costumes, evil villains, and meme-worthy quotes.

'Eternals', however, has been a bit of a disappointment. It is



visually breathtaking, but shallow. It has its share of high-adrenaline sequences, but it does little justice to well-known characters. Overall, it's a mixed bag when compared to the other films Marvel has put out over the past decade.



Art by Shiv Sabharwal XI-F

The good things about Eternals are completely obvious. Director Chloé Zhao, lends a magical touch to capturing landscapes in their natural beauty in a manner that even works with the CGI renderings of old ruins.

And then there are tedious dialogues, muddled scripts, and a tiresome runtime of greater than two and a half hours.

While it is quite different from Marvel's past blockbusters, some of Eternals' contributions should last for long in the franchise. It touches upon themes like the climate crisis, mental health, and sexuality in a way that feels unusual for the MCU. These innovative ideas are welcome but do not gel with the film, primarily because none of them are given the correct amount of attention.

The film begins with an explanation of how the all-powerful God-like Celestials created life in the cosmos, with the familiar good-vs-evil battle, the latter represented by monstrous beings (aka, Deviants) who begin attacking humans, thus bringing the good folk (the Eternals) to defend them. The basic plot is not new. For thousands of years, ten chosen Eternals (expect Greco-Mesopotamian inspired nomenclature such as Sersi and Ikaris) eliminated the evil Deviants and then lived incognito for millennia (immortal, Eternal, yes, we get it) but with the resurgence of evil, the Eternals regroup.

Apart from the traditional qualities of Marvel, Zhao introduces new elements to the superhero genre-- basically moments that reflect the tenderness of humanity. The script takes a healthy and direct approach to subjects that both Marvel and Disney have traditionally shown little enthusiasm for. There is Phastos, a Black gay Eternal who is the 'brains' of the immortal group. Though everything from his connection to his son to the kiss he shares with his husband feels deliberate, his inclusion as a superhero is one step ahead of Disney's usual weak gratification to LGBTQ viewers.

A scene that tugs at the heart strings involves the quandary of the team over the issue of eliminating the mind of Thena, herself prone to episodic fratricide, and the way the director skillfully introduces heavy emotion with an element of community kinship and selfless sacrifice. Perhaps Eternals tries to convey the value of humaneness in what would otherwise be just another battle sequence film. However, one scene where Phastos cries at the destruction of Hiroshima in 1945, blaming himself because his gift for creating technology led human beings to make horrific decisions is a controversial one. The scene does get at the Eternals' biggest problem that they are supposed to protect humanity from the Deviants but cannot protect the human race from itself, because they have been forbidden from interfering in human conflict. For a comic book movie, a reference to a horrific event in human history for the sake of empathy feels unwarranted.

Through the new cast of Eternals, moviegoers are being introduced to a new template of superheroes ostensibly with less crowd pulling abilities as the aggressively marketed Iron Man or Spider-Man with a high nostalgia quotient, but the successful box office run (despite a raging pandemic) of this film underscores the fact that people are willing to overlook a complicated backstory and unknown characters. Eternals feels like a peculiar concoction of what Marvel does best — beautiful yet chaotic action scenes, mind blowing special effects, and stories that speak to us.

It is clear that 'Eternals' is not for everybody – a strange approach from Marvel, usually uncooperative to overt change. Therefore, one can only conclude that Eternals was an experiment. A way for Marvel to tell us that they are changing themselves, slowly and gradually.

## The Photograph

Anantinee Mishra IX-D



'The vulture and the little girl',

Picture Credit: Kevin Carter, <https://www.nytimes.com>

Sometimes, as I look at the vividly gripping photograph, my perplexity blends into desolation; inching from familiar sympathy to uncharted anguish. When Kevin Carter captured the Pulitzer winning image of a child and a vulture under the cruel sun of Sudan; did he realise the turbulent

existence that was the essence of his masterpiece, would be a haunting reminder of the darker side of humanity? Did he, in the glory of his artistic, panther-like swiftness, contemplate the repercussions of the portrait he had commissioned to his camera roll eternally?

Sometimes, as I look at the photograph, I can feel the shift in perspectives; as jarring and memorable as a fast ride on a Ferris wheel. Could the vulture feel the presence of Thanatos in the air; the crushing sense of misery and doom that we only associate with death? Or had it been a usual sight, from the heights of a depraved and torn Sudan?

The child, as he (or she, as was believed then) lay on the ground, awaiting angels to press their blessed hands on his trembling body and take the pain away. Could he taste the dirt and debris from where his parched lips kissed the ground? Could he feel the hunger in his bones, for those were all that was left in that body? Could he sense the presence of the scavenger behind him, or had he been blissfully numb? The photographer, as he had waited in the shadows: Had he been struck by a sense of helplessness as the scene unfolded before him, or had he been hardened by the years of starving children and rotting corpses across Africa? Had he felt voyeuristic; an intruder between the child and the vulture? Had he felt a glimmer of remorse, or had conscience not survived the blazing fires of poverty?

Sometimes, I understand the vulture and its quiet acceptance. Sometimes, I understand the child and the exhaustion he carries as he sinks into the ground. Sometimes, I understand Carter and his helplessness and inability to do anything other than watch the scene unfold too.

Kevin Carter took his own life, three months after winning the prize.

Sometimes, I understand that too.

## On the Degradation of Physical and Digital Media

**Bornik Nag XI-D**

In 2001, musician William Basinski began the long and arduous process of digitizing his entire archive of tape loops, collected and stitched together from recordings originating from the early 1980s. Using a digital recorder, he began to capture the playback from an old tape recorder and then left for a few hours. Upon returning, he noticed that the tape was literally crumbling – the magnetic metals were being shaved off, and the sound of the tapes was becoming more and more degraded every time a loop repeated. Surprised and inspired by this revelation, he proceeded to use this technique to create an almost 12-hour long mix over the next few days. On September 11th, he awoke in his apartment in New York to the completion of the work; and to the worst human tragedy in recent memory.

From his balcony, he played back his music and recorded the slow death of the twin towers of the World Trade Centre on a video camera, depicting the mourning and loss of life. Those recordings were to become *The Disintegration Loops*, one of the greatest ambient albums in our digital era.

The very essence of digital media and recording lends itself to being eternal - unlike tape and vinyl, it will never degrade - the 1s and 0s will never cease to exist. This is a dream come true for many recording artists and filmmakers; never will they ever have to face a lost tape deck or a melted vinyl pressing again, and all files can and will be accessed through a computer, through the silent whirring of a hard drive.

Yet, something is definitely lost during the transition from analog to digital, and we can see that once perfection is achieved, imperfections become infinitely more valuable. Maybe it is the film grain that engineers tried so hard to reduce with 35mm and 70mm film, or maybe it's the noise of old analogue synthesizers which modern digital synths have completely done away with. Once we get rid of the problems of the medium, it becomes a creative choice to introduce those problems back, powered by memories of the past. Degradation becomes a sign of reality, a sign that things end, whether we want them to, or not. Filmmakers like Paul Thomas Anderson or Christopher Nolan swear by film; low fidelity in music is so widespread that it has become a genre.

The true pioneers of lo-fi music believe in the power of the old to influence the new - whether it be warning us against climate change through malfunctioning synths and ambient beats in *Tomorrow's Harvest* by Boards of Canada or the loneliness and worthlessness we feel, exemplified through buzzing guitars and crushing drums in Parannoul's 'To See The Next Part of The Dream', or giving life to the chopped and skewed samples of old 80s and 90s tunes, creating an alternate soundscape of things that could have been and things that could be in Daniel Lopatin's vaporwave classic, 'EccoJams Vol. 1.'

These records exemplify the process of death; the slow knife that painfully twists and turns through our minds, and yet they tell us that there is nothing to fear, that the bliss we had lost in this binary world may still return. The digital files of today may be silent, but deep beneath the surface, they still hum with life.

Maybe by looking for the things we lost, we might find the things that matter most.

## Philosophy

**Vedant Savara VII-A**

The study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence, especially when considered as an academic discipline is known as philosophy.





Art by Aanvi Kumar XI-D

Over the years, the world has had many great thinkers. These people have shared their views and impacted the way we think. Some well-known philosophers are Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, among multiple others.

While all of these thinkers put forth a diverse range of ideas, one that intrigues me the most, is the one of rationalism and empiricism. Empiricism is the belief that knowledge can only be obtained from experience or experimentation. It is believed that we can only learn from our five senses. Rationalism argues the opposite. Rationalists claim that concepts are gained independent of sensory experience. They believe that the mind already has all the knowledge in the world, it simply needs to be awakened.

Another question that seems to have plagued many philosophers is, “what is good and evil?” At first glance, this may seem like a simple question. However, evil is a very relative term. If someone does something wrong for the right reasons, can they be considered wrong? Immanuel Kant’s perspective on this was that an action only had moral virtue if it was done for the right reason, and motive is a very important factor in judging an action. This leads to the question, are people good or evil by nature? Xunzi’s thoughts on this are that humans are evil by nature, and goodness can only be acquired through extensive training. He said, “Human nature at birth consists of instinctual drives, which left to themselves, are selfish, anti – social and anarchic.” Meanwhile, French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau had a different point of view. He said that humans are good by nature. He believed that it is society that corrupts humans. He suggested the catchphrase, “We should return to nature, for nature is good, and man is by nature good, it is civilization that ruins it for him.”

While many people present unique ideas regarding every debate, we can never truly know the nature of the universe. It lies shrouded in this ambiguousness and we may pass one conjecture after another, but perhaps we can never really know the truth of things. There is however, beauty in this relativity, in this subjectivity and I see that essence captured at the crux of philosophy.

## Living Is All

### Renewing Sri Aurobindo’s Mahasamadhi

#### Risha Srinivas XI-A



Art by N. Rajareethiga XI-D

I have always believed that the school grounds and the rest of this city we call Delhi are wholly different dimensions. Sometimes it feels as though time has halted completely and only small remnants of it form like glinting dew drops over the vines that stretch across the grey of the concrete building, vague reminders of the fact that outside our walls, perhaps another world really does exist. For the longest time, I don’t believe I paid any attention to the vastness of our sprawling campus. All attention was demanded by the things I learned in class, the different people I met in the process and the amusing things that those people said and did, but I don’t believe I ever took note of the walls and the sunlight spilling into every corner, the flowers outside the window or even the hexagonal tiles that let us walk all over them.

One day, the world willed it so that I would find myself seated in a classroom with nothing to do, nowhere to go and no one to keep me company. The halls were still, the wind was flightily weaving in and out of everywhere and the wooden chair that I was seated on was lifeless and cold. It felt odd, almost wrong to be the one breathing human being in a long corridor of perfect silence. A disruption in the harmony. It was probably then that I had a realisation. The next draught of wind on that wintry morning struck me right in the chest and with it came a split-second of sudden awareness, awakening me to the world and my conscious living in it. I felt a sense of wholeness for a fleeting moment, and then I didn’t. Ephemeral, teasing, nagging at the ends of

my mind and waking my slumber to see more than tables and chairs and walls and a corridor of the plain. I think I beheld our school to its fullest in that moment.

Sri Aurobindo speaks about making this life divine. The Mother says that to understand everything around us, we must go within. Regardless of whether you believe in any of those thoughts, you, like me, have been hearing quotes, lines, stray snippets of school philosophy for the entire time that you have been a student of this institution. It is woven into the fabric, nay, flesh, of this throbbing, pulsating life that we have the privilege to be a part of.

One of those occasional moments of awakening hit me once again a few weekends ago when I visited the Samadhi. The morning was still young and the sky was still just filling up with the sun's rays, stretching out and yawning after a restful sleep. It was the day of Sri Aurobindo's Mahasamadhi, the fifth of December. It was just one of those times when the day guides you, beckons and you follow unquestioningly, living fully in each moment, unwaveringly present in the multitudes that lapse within the course of one magnified second. That's really just what it is. Letting your thoughts loop in and out as the wind gently does, letting your mind drift as easily as the leaves do, bloom as gracefully as the flowers do, squint into hidey holes on campus as the sun does, really dissolving the self into true living as living does. Feeling a growingly peaceful powerlessness against the lapping tides and giving in to what we often find 'the Divine' refers to. As far as I've been able to understand, it really just speaks of joining the stream of unrestricted living and placing faith in the unchanging constant that is living.

The quotes that speak of consciousness, aspiration, gratitude, faith in the Divine will, might all sound a little lofty and daunting at first. You may have your questions, I definitely had mine. But the supreme simplicity in it all is breathtaking and perhaps as I did, you could just sit down somewhere and blend in with the landscape, shedding material identity. Maybe you could just walk around. It takes living is all.

Before I walked away from the Samadhi, I saw a few white bougainvilleas sitting shyly on the grass. I picked up the nearest few and left.

## Squid Game and Capitalism

**Nandini Menon XI-E**

At this point, almost everyone is in love with Squid Games and it makes sense since the Korean drama is the most watched show in the history of Netflix.

It's difficult enough for new shows to break through the noise with so much content, but Squid Game's success is an astonishing feat for a show that boasts no Hollywood megastars and it's not based on any existing intellectual property that comes with a preloaded fanbase (\*cough\* Disney \*cough\*).

And yet it is the biggest hit for Netflix. If the success of Squid Game is a surprise to you, it shouldn't be. The popularity of Korean shows has grown by 200% among Netflix subscribers in just the last three years. It is because these shows share something in common, they deal with inequality in all aspects of life. Capitalism is the main villain in most of Netflix's worldwide successes. A villain that viewers all over the world can identify with.

The premise of Squid Game is simple. A few hundred people surviving with oppressive debt are approached to take part in a series of games, all variations of Korean childhood favourites like Red Light, Green Light and so forth, but with severe fatal "modifications", with the promise of a cash prize that might change their lives for the better.



Art by Shiv Sabharwal XI-F

Think of it as a child-play-turns-to-Hunger-Games version. Squid Game is good at pulling you in. With the first episode, viewers are plunged into a world that keeps it real when it comes to what people will do to survive. Hwang Dong-Hyuk, the creator of Squid Game even manages to make a game as familiar as tug of war into a high-stakes contest.

At the epicentre of the whole story is Seong Gi-Hun, a chauffeur severely addicted to gambling, played well by Lee Jung-Jae. In his performance, we see the various levels of humiliation caused by capitalism, the worst being the embarrassments we are willing to suffer to afford what we think we deserve. We watch him as he reveals that he is his worst enemy on the journey to financial salvation.

But Squid Game is at its best in the second episode, where the show cycles through the horrors the characters exist in: the pickpocket trying to rescue her brother; the business graduate who isn't able to confront the various ways in which he has let down his mother; the young migrant worker who is unable to provide for his family and the chauffeur who is slowly gnawing away his only chance to become financially independent.

In the episode "Hell" we learn of the cruel situations these characters are in, which make them consider playing around with their lives. Their desperation may be familiar



to viewers all over the world, most of all, those who have succumbed to debt in the wake of the pandemic. Even though inequality was already high, the pandemic made it even worse. Inequality, in return, made the pandemic worse, too. The growing wealth gap between the rich and the poor is not an accidental mishap outcome of capitalism, it is rather quite predictable. Although everything on the show is made up and fictional, its honest exploration of the devastating weight of debt and inequality could not be more timely. Squid Game completely understands the scary consequences of being in debt, and it's easy for most viewers to see themselves in it.

In Lupin, Assane Diop is struggling to pay the bills and is forced to rely on loan sharks in order to pull off a heist. We see Tokyo in Money Heist, being left for the dogs after a botched robbery, before being taken in by the Professor. The Spanish hit show Elite takes on class system inequality, as three lower-income students begin life at a wealthy school and struggle to fit in.

In all of these shows, the protagonists' poverty and their will to survive in their circumstances are the genuine ingredients that make it relatable to most. We cheer for them and empathise for them because we understand that they are up against the same forces as most of us. The fact that it is these shows that Netflix viewers have heavily gravitated to suggests that no matter where we come from, we are all slaves to Capitalism.

## The Mind of a Genius

### Maanya Chaturvedi XI-A

It is close to impossible to find someone who has never heard the name Sherlock Holmes before. Iterations across time, from Arthur Conan Doyle's original book series to the BBC show, have different details but they all establish one fact right from the beginning; Sherlock Holmes is a genius. He can deduce a person's dark secret just by looking at them, solve a case by simply looking at a footprint or a trail of cigarette ash. Of course, he is eccentric, as most geniuses seem to be. But what is often brushed off as an eccentricity, often has a much deeper meaning behind it.

Holmes from Sherlock (2010) famously stated that he was not a psychopath, but a high-functioning sociopath, While his brusque, blunt and almost impolite behaviour might be interpreted as a sign of heartlessness, there is much more to his behaviour than what is shown on the surface.

At times, it may seem like he does not care about anyone and is more than willing to hurt others' feelings to get what he wants. It is even insinuated that he does not understand how to behave in certain settings and has a hard time understanding many social cues.

He only displays his caring side to the people he is close to, who are extremely limited in number. Even John Watson, who Holmes trusts and cares for, admits to not understanding his behaviour.

If there is one thing most people know about Sherlock Holmes, it is that he never relents until he solves a crime, willing to go to extreme measures to find the truth. His personality is obsessive in nature and his life seems to revolve around finding the answers to the mysteries he comes across. On the other hand, he is curiously unaffected by the traumatic events he goes through during the course of some of his investigations. In fact, he seems immune to being shaken, even after close brushes with death.

Considering these two facts, the natural theory which arises is that solving crimes acts as a coping mechanism, which helps him deal with his chaotic and often dangerous



Art by Aanvi Kumar XI-D

experiences. It is an odd mechanism, but one that seems to work well for him.

Holmes also has extremely erratic behavior. It is evident from Conan Doyle's works, where he is described to be in a depressive period for days, not saying a single word, followed by sudden excitability and energy. This often happens during cases, and the course of an investigation severely affects his behavior.

While all of this can be attributed to his substance abuse problem, modern psychologists have noted that he displays

many symptoms of both Asperger's Syndrome, which is a milder form of autism, and bipolar disorder. These observations too have been heavily debated, with many saying that it is simply his personality rather than an indicator for a mental illness.

While we can't be certain which opinion is correct, we can utilize our inner Sherlock Holmes to find our own version of the truth.

## The Magic of Christmas Movies

**Keshav Saib XI-D**



Art by Nandini Chatterjee XI-D

Christmas: the festival of viridescent trees, bright fairy lights and red stockings. Of cheerful carols, warm cups of hot chocolate and delectable fruit pies. Of prayer, remembrance and devotion. Of gifting and of giving. And for many, of movies

Produced by the likes of Netflix, Hallmark and Disney, these direct-to-TV (or streaming, for that matter) heartwarming Christmas specials generally follow a common trope. It's the beginning of December, snow is falling, and a gentle instrumental carol is playing in the background. There is magic in the air, and after viewers get a fair idea of the characters' background, the main clash is introduced. A trip

halfway across the world, a divorce in the family, an accidental meeting with the love of one's life in a cafe. Soon follow a series of twists and turns, not-so-villainous villains, and both humorous as well as emotional moments. In the end, everything works out (a Christmas miracle is a must) and (at the risk of sounding clichè) they all live happily ever after.

What is so wonderful about these simple, predictable, and often cheesy movies? They evoke emotions. Emotions of joy, happiness and comfort. The predictability of storylines and the simplicity of dialogue make it easy for people of all generations to follow and enjoy them. We are reminded that there are still some people who want to be good to others and make their lives merrier. The thrill of drama, the humour of comedy, and the heart-flutters of romance – these feelings are all intensified exponentially when we combine them with the spirit of Christmas. The ethos of holiday cheer penetrates the deepest cores of our sensory systems and joy becomes the predominant emotion.

## Share if You Agree

**Maanya Chaturvedi XI-A**

We have all seen it at some point. A post on Instagram, a simple Black Lives Matter logo emblazoned on perhaps a picture of people protesting or a petition from Change.org, urging people to “end casteism”. Maybe we even see it around us, people denouncing sexism and then making statements like “women are naturally better at cooking so we should leave it to them”.

Performative activism can be defined as activism done to increase one's social standing and project a certain kind of image rather than due to one's devotion to a cause. A relatively new concept, it has become a common sight, especially on social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter. Becoming a mainstream term after the BLM protests against George Floyd's death, performative activism is noticed not just in ordinary users, but also done by celebrities and influencers.

In India, this becomes even more visible when people post about issues trending on an international level, often ignoring controversies and incidents in India itself. While it is commendable to post about a wide array of issues, it cannot come at the cost of important problems which have a direct impact on us fading from the limelight.

Performative activism is characterized by those indulging in it, neglecting to ensure whether the said activism is actually spreading awareness in an appropriate manner. Many are also completely unaware of how their own actions contradict their denouncement of certain issues. It may seem simply useless, but performative activism is more harmful than one might think.



# The Many Stories of Diwali

Keshav Saib XI-D

Diwali, one of the most celebrated festivals in India, is considered by many the celebration of Lord Rama's return to his hometown, Ayodhya after thirteen years of exile and a war with the demon king Ravana who had taken his wife Sita captive. Wow! What a story, right? Yet, apart from this popular Hindu North Indian narrative, there are many other fascinating myths and stories around the festival of lights.

In the southern part of the country, people celebrate Naraka Chaturdashi. On this day, Lord Krishna and his consort Satyabhama defeated the tyrant Narakasura, who, on his deathbed, realised his mistakes and wished for his death anniversary to be celebrated as the killing of evil. Contrary to this, many students of Osmania University, Hyderabad mourn Narakasura's death, and disagree with his demonic depiction, celebrating him as an early Dalit hero. While we are on the subject of deifying those considered evil by the mainstream, the Gond tribe of central India and the residents of the Bistrakh village in UP pray to Lord Ravana, the antagonist of the Ramayana.

In Jainism, Diwali is the day on which the twenty-fourth Tirthankara Mahavira attained Moksha, or freedom from the cycle of life and death. It is said that the night sky was lit by the Gods, and the Earth by the humans, to celebrate this significant occasion. The day after Diwali is celebrated as the Jain New Year, marking the beginning of a new era, Vira Nirvana Samvat.

In Sikhism, the day is celebrated as 'Bandi Chhor Divas', or Day of Liberation, celebrates the sixth Sikh Guru, Guru Hargobind's release from the Gwalior Fort and his subsequent return to Amritsar. When Guru Hargobind was leaving, he decided to help liberate 52 other kings and noblemen who were being held hostage for political reasons, so a condition was put forth, stating that whoever could hold onto Guru Hargobind's cloak could accompany him. Guru Hargobind asked a tailor to attach 52 tassels to his cloak, allowing all the other prisoners to escape comfortably and with dignity. In Sikh teachings as well, light is a metaphor for knowledge which can banish the darkness of ignorance. Many Buddhists celebrate Diwali as the day on which Emperor Ashoka converted to Buddhism, and some believe that it was when he donated thousands of stupas.

Lakshmi Puja on Diwali marks the emergence of Goddess Lakshmi from the sagara manthana, or churning of the ocean by demons and gods to find the drink of immortality.



Art by Keshav Saib XI-D

Firstly, it sets a dangerous precedent by limiting our social responsibility to simply posting on Instagram, even if we are in a position to participate in more effective methods of social justice. Writing a statement or sharing a post is much easier than researching and committing to a cause, and gains much more attention than less publicized methods. In a world where many compete for social media attention, it is the quickest way to gain more influence.

Secondly, as mentioned before, in India, international issues tend to become prominent in a way which blocks domestic issues from the forefront. At times, people are more aware of an incident happening on the other side of the world than a crisis happening within their own country. While international problems are just as deserving of awareness, it makes people develop a sense of ignorance to the suffering in their immediate surroundings. It defeats the entire purpose of activism, and attention is drawn to issues which are already publicized rather than spreading awareness to issues which are invisibilized.

Lastly, it leads to saturation of social justice content. As criticized during the BLM movement, posts explaining or stating the same topic again and again flood social media, and become redundant. This blocks new information and updates from spreading and can potentially have counter-productive effects, where people actually become less educated about a topic due to the lack of new and visible content.

To conclude, activism is something which is meant to have a positive effect on society, but when it becomes performative, it loses its power. In the age of social media, it has become more relevant than ever to not cross the line and to understand the real reasons to commit to a cause.



It is also believed that this was the day on which Lord Vishnu, in his fifth avatar, Vamana, rescued Goddess Lakshmi from the demon-king Mahabali. Dhanteras, one of the festivals preceding Diwali, is celebrated by purchasing new gold, silver coins, steel utensils, etc. This custom has roots in the legend of sixteen-year-old King Hima, who was destined to die on the fourth day of his wedding. To protect him, his wife (adolescent marriage was the norm back then) emptied the royal treasuries to cover the entire room and bed with gold and silver, and lit up hundreds of diyas to produce a dazzling light display. Lord Yama, the Hindu god of death had come disguised as a snake, who was blinded by the light and went away; and the prince was saved. Dhanteras is also the birthday of Lord Dhanvantri, the Hindu god of medicine or Ayurveda. He had emerged during the sagara manthana mentioned previously, carrying with him the elixir of life.

These stories and legends around Diwali may be from a diverse variety of regions and religions, but at the end, all of them symbolise the victory of light over darkness; good over evil; truth over ignorance; and we all must understand that the true essence of every festive story is to help us be better human beings.



Art by Nandini Chatterjee XI-D

"Light must illumine the consciousness and the shadows of Ignorance must be dissolved in all."

- The Mother

# ART SECTION

The aim of art is to represent not  
the outward appearance of things,  
but their inward significance.

— Aristotle



## An Existing Correlation

Charika Singh XI-B

A unicorn, I believe is a virtue of purity and innocence. It's linked to dreams and magic. Irrespective of how close unicorns are, to existence, one identifies unicorns as the correlation between the reality and the imaginary world. It isn't the creature we centralise, it's the ultimate potential to dream big and having that faith to make your fantasies come to life.

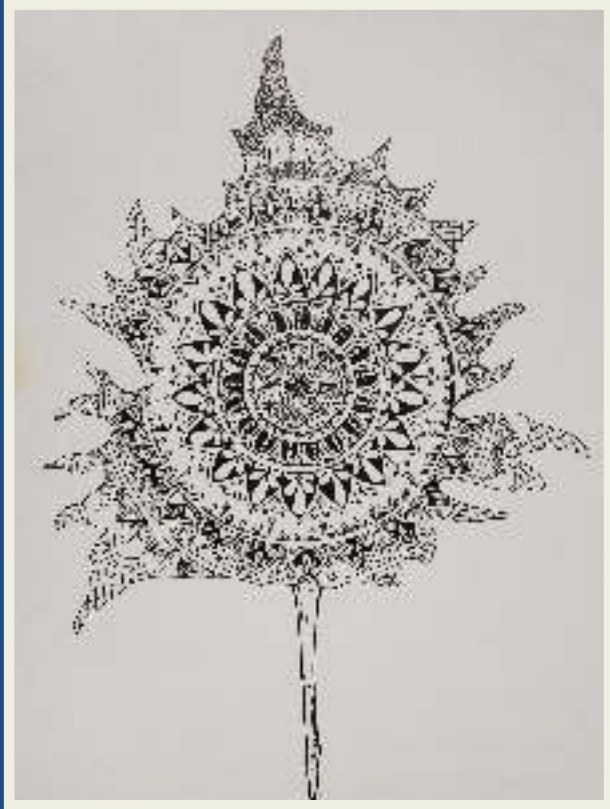
## ISER

Charika Singh XI-B

One must lead their own way, listen to their heart, identify and conquer their problems in an individualised manner and not seek sources for imitation, for a king- is visionary who not only dreams big but also stays committed to his intent in order to fabricate a journey that the world admires.







## Wabi -Sabi

Charika Singh XI-B

Wabi-sabi, from a Japanese philosophy, is a state of consciousness that enables one to notice the beauty hidden in the ordinary, insignificant details that perhaps prove to be significant for they hold the capability of making one's day. A leaf, for instance is one of the aesthetics that can be embraced in a simplistic life where one releases its needs for materialistic things.

## Chrysalis

Shanvi Tanisha IX-E

One must lead their own way, listen to their heart, identify and conquer their problems in an individualised manner and not seek sources for imitation, for a king- is visionary who not only dreams big but also stays committed to his intent in order to fabricate a journey that the world admires.



# CALENDAR

Date	Event
17 Jan	School resumes after winter vacation
20 Jan	Special Assembly: Shri Anil Kumar Jauhar's Birthday
21-22 Jan	Khelo MIS : Shri Anil Kumar Jauhar Memorial Sports Workshop : Classes 6-9
25 Jan	Republic Day Celebration Voter's Day : Special Assembly
26 Jan	Republic Day
28 Jan	Annual Art Exhibition
5 Feb	Parent-Teacher Meeting -Senior Section
11 Feb	Special Assembly: Ashram Foundation Day
12 Feb	Ashram Foundation Day
14-15 Feb	Athletic Talent Hunt : Class 6
21 Feb	Special Assembly: The Mother's Birthday Celebration
28-11 Mar	Annual Examination
26 Mar	Parent-Teacher Meeting - Senior Section

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