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**Voicing Global Realities
through Art**

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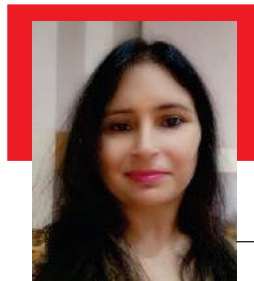
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Dust and rage take us nowhere...

I personally feel that peace is one of the most elusive luxuries afforded to humanity. It is a fragile vessel, easily shattered - whether by the silent wars waged within the chambers of the heart, the strained walls of a divided home, or the devastating, thunderous conflicts that scar our world and affect every walk of life.

In present times, borders and spaces are too often dishonored. From this, dust rises: the dust of shattered cities, shattered lives, shattered dreams, and shattered selves. Moreover, from that dust, rage blooms like an ugly and contagious flower. It leads us on a heartbreaking journey where we witness nations - the custodians of vast histories, cultures and valuable resources - turn their ingenuity toward the destruction of the very essence they are meant to uphold, our shared humanity.

I implore you all, from the deepest of my heart, not to remain distant observers but to be active guardians of a fragile world.

In this issue, our contributors have voiced with exceptional courage and vision - the silent scream of our age: the "No War" slogan for sustaining peace - not merely as a phrase, but as a deep, moral imperative. Through their lexicon and imagery, they reveal that safeguarding nature, culture and humanity is not a niche concern, but the fundamental substratum of any peaceful existence.

Each article, story, poem, and art piece offers a different vantage point on the same urgent constellation of crises. In the spirit of their work, let us recall the words of those who have walked this path of witness before us. I would like to quote the great Persian poet and moral philosopher, Saadi Shirazi:

*"Human beings are members of a whole,
In creation of one essence and soul.
If one member is afflicted with pain,
Other members uneasy will remain.
If you have no sympathy for human pain,
The name of human you cannot retain."*

Dr. Shalini Yadav
Editor-in-Chief

CONTENTS

05

Short Story
**THE SAND THAT
REMEMBERED**
Mukesh
Kumar Bissa

06

Article
**CLIMATE CHANGE, THE
ANTHROPOCENE, AND THE
CRISIS OF IMAGINATION:
AN ECOCRITICAL READING OF
AMITAV GHOSH**
Dr. Prasanta
Chakraborty

09

Poetry
BARREN LAND
Rapaka Sushmitha

10

Article
IT DIDN'T LET ME SLEEP..
Iqbal Ahmed Wani

12

Interview
**VOICING GLOBAL REALITIES
THROUGH ART**
Elizabeth Esguerra Castillo

16

Poetry
LOVE
Deepak N. Pawar
BLUE BUTTERFLY
Im Sol Nae

17

News
**UEM JAIPUR HOSTS
STATE-LEVEL WORKSHOP
ON INCLUSION OF
HUMAN VALUES**

18

Article
**NATURE'S SIGNS: BEHAVIOUR
OF ANIMALS AND BIRDS**
Amit Baijnath Garg

20

Short Story
**THE SPIRITED
RIVER**
Dr. Vineet Kashyap Tripathi

22

Pottery
**PHOENIX WHISPERS
OF THE ANCIENT TREES**
Lan Xin

23

**THE UNSPOKEN
GUEST**
Shahid Abbas
**EARTH, OUR ETERNAL
GUARDIAN**
Dr. Rohitashwani

24

GIRL
Dr. Alok Kumar Ray
HAIKU
Jennifer Gurney
THE FEATHERED SOUL
Kavita Nagar

25

AFTER TOM'S THIRD DRINK
John Grey
FREEDOM
Eva Petropoulou Lianou

26

**DHARAN: MEMORIES
AND REVERIES**
Dr. Ranjana Sharan Sinha

27

Art
ARTWORK
LAVANYA YADAV
CARL SCHARWATH



**Mukesh
Kumar Bissa**

The Sand That *Remembered*

In a small village near Jodhpur, where the golden sands stretched endlessly and the sun painted the sky in shades of fire every evening, lived a boy named Kesar.

Kesar was known for his quick mind but not for his values. He believed that cleverness could replace honesty, and shortcuts were better than hard work. His father, a humble potter, often told him,

“Son, how you shape the sand with patience, it becomes strong — just like life.”

But Kesar would laugh it off.

One day, the village announced a competition. The prize was a beautifully decorated camel and a bag full of silver coins. The task was simple—whoever could bring the purest water from the faraway stepwell would win.

Kesar saw it as an easy opportunity.

The next morning, he took a shortcut through the dunes instead of the proper path. On the way, he found a small puddle of water left from the previous rain. “Water is water,” he thought, filling his pot halfway. Then, to make it look clean, he filtered it through a cloth and covered the pot.

Meanwhile, an old girl named Meera—known for her honesty—walked the long, difficult path to the stepwell. The journey was exhausting, and the sun was harsh, but she carefully filled her pot with fresh, clear water.

By evening, the villagers gathered.

One by one, the pots were opened. When Kesar's turn came, the water looked clear at first glance. But as the village elder dipped his

hand, a faint smell rose. The water was not pure.

Kesar lowered his eyes.

Then came Meera's turn. Her water sparkled in the fading sunlight, cool and fresh. The elder smiled and declared her the winner.

Kesar felt ashamed, but something inside him began to shift.

That night, his father said nothing. Instead, he handed Kesar a lump of clay.

“Make a pot,” he said.

Kesar hurried, trying to finish quickly. The pot cracked.

Again and again, he tried—but each time, the clay collapsed.

Finally, tired and frustrated, he slowed down. He listened to his father's quiet guidance, shaped the clay with patience, and after hours, a perfect pot emerged.

His father smiled gently.

“Values are like this clay, Kesar. You can't rush them. Honesty, patience, and hard work—they take time. But once formed, they hold everything together.”

The next morning, Kesar woke up early. He walked the long path to the stepwell, filled his pot with fresh water, and brought it back—not for a prize, but for the village.

From that day on, people still called him clever—but now, they also called him trustworthy.

And in the quiet desert, where the winds often erased footprints, Kesar learned that values were the only marks that truly remained.



**Dr. Prasanta
Chakraborty**

Climate Change, the Anthropocene, and the Crisis of Imagination: **AN ECOCRITICAL READING OF AMITAV GHOSH**

The contemporary world is undergoing profound climatic transformations. Rising global temperatures, sea-level rise, and the increasing frequency of droughts pose serious threats to ecosystems, food security, and human life. Although mitigating climate change remains a long-term global objective, immediate attention has increasingly shifted toward adaptation and resilience. Scientific research plays a crucial role in this process by enabling societies to respond to environmental risks through improved infrastructure, early warning systems, and long-term planning.

Climate has always shaped life on Earth and has fluctuated naturally over geological time, from the Great Ice Age to the Little Ice Age. Contemporary climate change, however, differs from earlier climatic variations because of the scale, speed, and intensity of human intervention. Scientific studies indicate that the Earth's average temperature has increased by approximately one degree Celsius over the past century—an unprecedented rate of warming. This change is visible in altered rainfall patterns, melting glaciers and ice caps, rising sea levels, ocean acidification, and disruptions to biological rhythms such as early flowering in plants and changes in insect behaviour.

The primary cause of this accelerated warming is the accumulation of greenhouse gases, particularly carbon dioxide, released through the extensive use of fossil fuels since the Industrial Revolution. Scientists warn that if current emission trends continue, global temperatures may rise by up to two degrees Celsius within the next century. These

developments have led scholars to describe the present era as the “Anthropocene,” a term that highlights the decisive influence of human activity on the Earth's systems. There is now a broad scientific consensus that contemporary climate change is predominantly anthropogenic in origin.

In India, environmental degradation is frequently justified in the name of development. Large-scale deforestation supports road construction, urban expansion, and industrial growth. Hills and mountains are reshaped through mining activities, often undertaken by private corporations with state support and limited concern for ecological balance. River systems are disrupted by diversion projects and excessive sand mining, resulting in erosion, flooding, and the displacement of river-dependent communities. In this context, all four pillars of democracy appear to function in tacit collaboration to extract ever-increasing resources from Mother Earth, even at the risk of irreversible damage.

Such practices ignore the moral lesson of the fable of killing the hen that laid a golden egg. The metaphor captures the logic of unrestrained exploitation, where short-term economic gain is prioritised over long-term sustainability. This approach reflects the dominant tendencies of global capitalism, which frequently treats both human beings and nature as expendable resources rather than as entities deserving ethical responsibility.

Coastal ecosystems face similar threats. Mangrove forests, which act as natural barriers against storms and erosion, are destroyed to accommodate tourism and commercial

infrastructure. The widespread use of plastic intensifies environmental damage and poses long-term risks to ecosystems and public health. Additional contributing factors include rapid urbanisation, excessive groundwater extraction, war, and the use of destructive weaponry. Despite sustained protests by environmental groups, governmental responses often remain inadequate, as political and economic interests continue to dominate public discourse. Literary and cultural engagement with these crises remains limited, highlighting the need for stronger imaginative and ethical interventions.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's concept of Weltliteratur envisioned a global circulation of literary ideas renewed through translation and cross-cultural exchange. Building on this idea, Amitav Ghosh asks whether contemporary world literature can respond not only to cultural diversity but also to planetary realities. Against the aggressive logic of global capitalism, which in many contexts has assumed authoritarian and quasi-fascist tendencies, Ghosh's writings perform an important critical function by alerting society to the dangers posed by ecological destruction, social inequality, and unchecked power.

In "The Great Derangement": Climate Change and the Unthinkable, Ghosh examines the cultural and imaginative limitations that prevent meaningful engagement with climate change. He argues that climate disruption is inseparable from cumulative human actions, yet mainstream literature has largely failed to represent environmental catastrophe. Modern narratives, he suggests, prioritise political, psychological, and industrial themes while marginalising nature, revealing a deeper crisis of imagination.

Ghosh locates this failure within the historical legacies of colonialism, capitalism, and scientific rationality. Imperial expansion laid the foundations of the Anthropocene through extractive practices that treated the Earth as an

inexhaustible resource. In *The Nutmeg's Curse*, Ghosh traces ecological devastation to early colonial enterprises and recounts the Dutch East India Company's conquest of the Banda Islands for nutmeg, including the massacre of the Bandanese people in 1621. This episode serves as an analogy for contemporary environmental crises, revealing enduring links between colonial violence, capitalist expansion, and ecological destruction.

A recurring concern in Ghosh's writing is the erosion of both biological and cultural diversity. In *The Hungry Tide*, he explores environmental crisis through the interaction between scientific knowledge and local ecological understanding. Ghosh suggests that effective responses to ecological problems require dialogue between global science and indigenous knowledge systems. Rather than rejecting science, he critiques its claim to exclusive authority and exposes its historical association with power and domination.

Set in the ecologically fragile Sundarbans, *The Hungry Tide* presents a complex relationship between humans and the natural world. The region is home to endangered species and marginalised communities that together form an interconnected ecological system. Ghosh vividly depicts the unstable geography of the Sundarbans, where islands continually emerge and disappear due to tidal movements, reflecting the shared struggle for survival faced by humans and non-human beings alike.

The novel highlights conflicts between humans and dominant animal species, particularly the Royal Bengal tiger, while also drawing attention to the gradual loss of biodiversity caused by rising salinity and environmental degradation. References to dolphins and crocodiles reinforce the fragility of ecological balance and emphasise that environmental damage affects all forms of life.

Through *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh strongly critiques anthropocentrism—the belief that

humans occupy a central and superior position in the natural world. Non-human entities such as rivers, trees, dolphins, and tigers are given narrative significance, challenging human dominance and affirming the intrinsic value of non-human life. The character of Piyali Roy embodies this ethical position through her opposition to killing tigers and her belief in the equal right of all species to exist.

The geography of the Sundarbans underscores the need for balance between human and non-human worlds. Nature is presented as a shared space where survival depends on restraint and mutual respect. Local myths, particularly the legend of Bon Bibi, regulate human behaviour by discouraging excessive intrusion into the forest, demonstrating how myth and ecology together promote environmental responsibility.

These ecological concerns reappear in Ghosh's later works, especially *Gun Island* (2019). The novel presents climate change as a planetary crisis requiring cooperation across species, cultures, and national boundaries. By drawing parallels between human displacement and animal migration caused by environmental disruption, Ghosh foregrounds the idea of multispecies climate justice.

Gun Island also links refugee movements toward the Western world with environmental crises elsewhere, drawing attention to social, racial, and historical inequalities shaped by colonialism and global capitalism. Climate change is thus represented not merely as an environmental issue but as the outcome of long-standing systems of exploitation and uneven development.

A related ecological vision appears in *The Living Mountain: A Fable for Our Times*, where Ghosh critiques modern assumptions of progress and highlights the urgency of

environmental awareness. The text contrasts urban modernity with indigenous knowledge systems, showing how human arrogance and unchecked technological ambition contribute to environmental destruction.

In *The Living Mountain*, rituals and traditions function as forms of environmental care. The valley community lives in harmony with nature and worships the mountain Mahaparbhat, which provides essential resources used responsibly and shared collectively. Environmental knowledge is preserved through songs, rituals, and dances, reinforcing ecological balance.

The arrival of urban outsiders disrupts this harmony. Driven by greed, they exploit the mountain's resources and dismiss indigenous beliefs as irrational, forcing the community to violate its traditions. This act leads to a catastrophic disaster that exposes the consequences of human arrogance. Confronted with loss, the outsiders abandon their sense of superiority and acknowledge solidarity with the valley people, recognising nature as a living presence deserving respect.

Through this narrative, Ghosh challenges colonial and modern assumptions of dominance and affirms the ethical importance of humility, coexistence, and environmental responsibility. The *Living Mountain* ultimately argues that survival in the Anthropocene depends on recognising nature as a living system rather than a resource to be exploited.

In conclusion, climate change in Ghosh's work emerges not only as an environmental emergency but also as a cultural and imaginative challenge. By foregrounding non-human agency, indigenous knowledge, and alternative narrative forms, Ghosh calls for a reorientation of world literature toward planetary consciousness. Such a shift is essential for fostering ethical responsibility and collective action in an age defined by ecological crisis.

Barren Land

Once a fertile land,
It has become barren now.
I don't know whom to blame,
Nor what to claim.

As a child, I used to play
Like a dragonfly.
I would gather clay
And paper to make dolls and planes to fly.

Later, they said, "Don't play outside
Like a boy on the ground—
You've become a sprout."
After school, straight home, no rounds
With friends. "The world is a jungle,"
Wear your dupatta as refuge from wolves' bungle.

I don't know when
This little cuckoo glided into her teens
And began to imagine a fantasy—
A life where she would bloom
Like roses in a garden,
Sway to the melody of a breeze,
Dance to the rhythm of a drizzle.

To give life to my reverie,
You came like a river,
Showed me dreams to hover over,
Made me feel you were the one
On whom I could lean
When I was tired.



**Rapaka
Sushmitha**

You made up my mind,
Took my life.
Slowly, my imagined world
Began to vanish.
The tranquility of my sanctuary collapsed
Under so-called principles.

Now when I grow restless,
Running from the rules,
Instead of offering a shoulder,
You taunt me,
Force me to follow ordinances,
Ignoring that I have a life to lead.
You have cut my wings,
Slain the child,
Burned the flourishing garden.
Today I am a distressed woman,
Devastated by the person
Who was once determined to be a fairy tale.

It Didn't Let Me Sleep...



**Iqbal
Ahmed
Wani**

I watched 'Baramulla' last night. Not as a film critic. Not as a Kashmiri Muslim with a political stance. But as a man who has carried silence like a stone in his chest for thirty-five years.

The film is more fiction than fact. Yes, it leans into ghosts, whispers in the snow, and children vanish like breath on a winter morning. But for me, the real horror wasn't on the screen. It was in the mirror.

I was raised in a family that believed in progress, not pulpits. My father read the Quran, Rumi, Azad, and Mehjoor under the apple trees while the mosque loudspeaker called for prayer. He was a regular namazi, a man who would often call the azan himself at dawn. Yet, when I joined the Communist Party CPIM, to be precise, he didn't resist. He even encouraged me, in a time when the winds of communalism blew hard across our Valley, when the air was thick with suspicion toward anyone whose politics did not wear religion on its sleeve.

For that, I was branded kafir. Not once. Not twice. But countless times. Every Friday, when I joined the Jumma namaz not out of ritual, but out of respect someone would whisper, "Arre, yeh toh namaz bhi drama hai." My faith wasn't pure enough. My prayer wasn't real. My existence was an act.

My elder son was three. Just three. And men from our own village, men who later claimed allegiance to Jamaat-e-Islami used to point at him and laugh, "Yeh communist ka baccha hai." A toddler, branded before he could even spell his name.

In 2004, when I actively participated in the parliamentary elections and campaigned for Tarigami, a candidate of the CPI(M), a Jamaat worker came to my house. He spoke softly to my mother, almost politely. But his words cut like winter wind. He said, "Your son will be killed by his own Rafiqs." Rafiq was the word they used for Jamaat workers, much like comrade in the communist circle. The irony of being threatened in the language

of companionship was not lost on me.

So when 'Baramulla' shows a Muslim family, haunted in a house that once belonged to a Pandit family, I didn't flinch at the ghosts or the supernatural. I flinched at the truth it dared not speak aloud: some ghosts don't wear white sheets. They wear silence.

I believe the dead don't rest when justice is denied. The Kashmiri Pandits who were killed, raped, looted, and driven out in 1989 and 1990 their souls are still here. Not as vengeful spirits with bleeding eyes, but as questions. As empty doorways. As broken temple bells. As mothers in Jammu camps who still cook rogan josh the way their grandmothers did, in vessels that have never seen Kashmir again.

Peace will not come with their return alone. Peace will come when we, as a community, apologise. Unconditionally. Not "I didn't do it." Not "It was the militants." Not "The 1987 elections were rigged."

It was us. Our silence.

My father was silent when the Srikant Pandit, Mahraj Krishan left. When the Babi (Kamla Davi) packed one suitcase and walked into the night. When the Rainas' house at Anantnag set on fire. He didn't cheer. He didn't participate. He just looked away. That silence had a voice. And it said: "Go. You don't belong."

This silence has followed us for decades. It has seeped into our bones, into our prayers, into the way we tell our children the story of Kashmir, always stopping short of the uncomfortable truth. We call it politics, conflict, or exodus, as if giving it a label could wash away the shame. But there is no euphemism for betrayal.

Some say the tragedy began with the 1987 elections. I disagree. The seed was sown in 1947, when we decided that a nation could be carved with a religious knife. We didn't learn. We repeated the sin. Only this time, the victims wore different names.

As I watched 'Baramulla', I thought of my childhood lane. Once filled with laughter and the aroma of kahwa from Pandit homes, now echoing with the hollow silence of walls that remember but cannot speak. I thought of my father's friend, Pandit Mahraj Krishen, who used to visit our orchard every spring. One day he came, left a bundle of books in our verandah, and said softly, "Keep these safe. I'll come back soon." He never did. His books are still there. Dust-covered, but alive. Every time I touch them, it feels like an unfinished apology.

Films like 'Baramulla' are not about history; they are about memory. They remind us of what we have buried and what refuses to stay buried. The film may be fiction, but its fear is real the fear of facing what we did, or didn't do.

I often wonder: what if, in those dark nights of 1990, someone, anyone had stood up and said, "No, not in my name"? Would the story have changed? Would the Pandits have stayed? Would my father's orchard have remained a place of shared laughter instead of lingering guilt?

Today, decades later, we still speak of "reconciliation" as if it is a political project. But reconciliation is not an agreement between parties. It is a confession between souls. It begins with one sentence: We were wrong.

Let the Pandits return not as guests or refugees, but as owners of memory. Let them walk through their homes without needing police escorts. Let them light a diya in their courtyards without fear. Let their children play cricket where their fathers once did.

But for that to happen, we must first cleanse the air of our collective hypocrisy. We must accept that the exodus was not merely a tragedy; it was a moral collapse. Our silence was our complicity.

I don't want another debate on television. I don't want politicians making speeches about "brotherhood" while living behind barricades. I want a new Kashmir one where a child can pray in a mosque on Friday and read Marx on Saturday, and no one calls him kafir. Where a Pandit can recite Shiv Mahimna Stotra without being told he's a stranger. Where religion returns to being a private faith, not a public weapon.

Let God be God.

Let people be people.

The ghosts of our past are not asking for revenge. They are asking for remembrance. They are asking for an apology, not in words, but in deeds. To rebuild what we burnt not just homes, but trust.

When I turned off 'Baramulla' last night, I couldn't sleep. Not because of the ghosts onscreen, but because of the ones that live with me. They have names. They have faces. They have stories unfinished.

And they are waiting.

Waiting for us to speak.

Waiting for us to say, "Come home."

Waiting for the day when Kashmir will stop whispering and start healing.



Warmest Congratulations

Dr. Jernail Singh Anand, President, International Academy of Ethics, on being conferred with Soka Ikeda Memorial Mega Literary Award by Dr Sethukumanan, Chairman of the Soka Ikeda College of Arts and Science for Women, Chennai.

Voicing Global Realities through ART



An Artist Interview with
Ilham Mahfouz
by *Elizabeth Esguerra Castillo*



Elizabeth Esguerra Castillo

Internationally acclaimed and award-winning Syrian artist Ilham Mahfouz is a compelling voice in contemporary art, shaped by memory, migration, faith, and a deep commitment to humanity. Her artistic journey began in childhood, nurtured by a family immersed in creativity and enriched by early explorations in mixed media that sparked her lifelong passion for experimentation. After migrating to the United States, she embraced both her Syrian heritage and new cultural experiences, forming a unique artistic identity rooted in resilience and duality. Her formal studies in Michigan under influential mentors further refined her distinctive style, blending abstract expressionism with personal narrative.

Ilham's work responds powerfully to global realities—war, displacement, and human suffering—while also advocating for peace, unity, and coexistence. Through intuitive yet intentional processes, she creates emotionally and spiritually resonant paintings and sculptures that invite reflection and dialogue. Grounded in faith and guided by hope, she encourages perseverance and authenticity, especially among emerging artists. As she continues to develop new works and exhibitions, Ilham Mahfouz's art stands as a testament to compassion, strength, and the

enduring pursuit of peace.

Excerpts from the exclusive talk with Ilham by executive editor Elizabeth:

Elizabeth: You discovered your love for drawing at a very young age. Can you tell us about one of your earliest creative memories that made you realize art would be a lifelong passion?

Ilham: My earliest memory is from when I was five years old. I loved to draw and color different shapes on paper. I loved working on drawing and painting. I think you realize what gives you joy by trying new things and being introduced to the arts. I was fortunate to have loving parents who filled our home with many paintings and sculptures. My father was passionate about art, as was my grandfather, who also filled our home with beautiful artworks. So, I was surrounded by art from home. I admired the skill and use of color, and I tried to focus on learning the art of drawing and painting.

Elizabeth: Your cousin played a key role in encouraging your early artistic development. How important was that support in shaping your confidence as a young artist?

Ilham: My cousin was a talented, creative artist himself. When I was working on my artwork, he used to guide me and work with me. He introduced mixed media to me by using pistachio shells to form fish on a board,

using glue, watercolors, and markers. That made me truly happy, and the memory has stayed with me. I am grateful to him for his support and guidance. That encouragement gave me confidence, and with it, I kept working on my art.

Elizabeth: How do you describe your life after moving from Syria to the USA?

Ilham: Moving from Syria to the USA was a significant adjustment. I came to a new country with no knowledge of the language, culture, or way of life. It was a challenging learning experience. I realized I had to learn the language and adapt to the new culture without forgetting my old traditions. So, I took the best of both worlds—the old and the new, Syria and the USA. This way, I combined both, and that greatly added to my art and my views on humanity.

Elizabeth: Who is your artistic influence?

Ilham: Professor Robert Piepenburg is very important in my life. I have great gratitude and respect for him. He taught me to build my own style, encouraged me, and showed me how to examine art from a creative, new way—not a traditional, classical way. He taught me to experiment with new techniques, to think outside the box, and to keep working. When you have passion in your art, it will grow into great satisfaction, and that grows into an appreciation of your own self-worth.

Elizabeth: How do you feel about studying the art of Raku and ceramics?

Ilham: Yes, I am fortunate to have studied the art of Raku and ceramics under Professor Robert Piepenburg and also Susan Stephenson. For painting, I was fortunate to study with Barry Avedan and Marc Zoratca. All of those wonderful professors were

focused on creativity within abstract art, which allows me to relate to artists like Picasso, Kandinsky, Jackson Pollock, Rothko, and Miró.

Elizabeth: How do you connect your art to global issues?

Ilham: As you know, our current global situation involves a lot of wars, refugees, famine, natural disasters, etc. As a human



being, I am affected by the surrounding news. As an artist, I connect to and address the issues that affect and move me by expressing them in my artworks. Art is the voice for artists to express our feelings and values. Art is not only about beauty; art is about life and its effect on humanity.

Elizabeth: How do you like others to view your art?

Ilham: When a viewer sees my artwork, whether a painting or a sculpture, I hope it makes them feel or stirs a subconscious feeling that moves them to look more carefully. Hopefully, it will give them a feeling of connection or a thought that opens a dialogue to know more about the artwork.

Elizabeth: Can you guide us through your creative process?

Ilham: I start with the idea, then I go into the artwork directly by intuition or subconsciously. Then, I try to guide the artwork to seek the message I am trying to convey through colors, lines, textures, etc. In sculpture, it involves dealing with shapes, forms, surfaces, and colors. It is a combination of intuition and planning to achieve the best form of expression in art.

Elizabeth: What is your mission as an artist?

Ilham: I believe, as an artist, it is my duty to be honest and express in art my vision and values for social justice and humanity. I have created several artworks—sculptures and paintings—against wars. For example, a painting and mixed media piece titled *Tragedy of Wars* features several skulls piled on each other with red paint representing the blood of humanity. I also created sculptures hung in the space between earth and heaven (in the gallery, between the ground and the ceiling), representing the victims of wars suspended in space. I have also done paintings for world peace, promoting living together in harmony.

Elizabeth: How do the different cultures of Syria and the USA influence your life?

Ilham: I am fortunate to have both cultures—the old world of Syria and the new world of America, both our beloved countries. I have chosen to take the best of both worlds and convey it in my artworks. For me, that is my root, my identity, and my values. I share it with the world by using it in my artworks—when I promote peace, when I promote helping humanity, caring for one another. These are values of both worlds that I treasure, and I continue to apply them in my life and in my art.



Elizabeth: What is your message to aspiring artists?

Ilham: Every human being has moments of doubt. Don't surrender to them; try to be positive and keep trying. You can make it, and you can achieve your dreams. If someone criticizes your work, remember that is their opinion; it doesn't mean it is true. I always question their motives, and I advise you to keep working until you listen to your inner voice, which will guide you. If you like your artwork and are satisfied with it, you defend it. Your creativity is yours, and the final decision is yours, no one else's.

Elizabeth: How do you handle adversities?

Ilham: I stay grounded with strong faith. Everything I do is guided by God. I surrender to the will of God, but it is my duty to always try and never give up. If I don't succeed at first, or second, or third, it is for a



reason. I keep trying. Look at the ant: it tries to carry food, and it falls several times, but it keeps trying until it brings it home. I believe if God closes one door, He opens ninety-nine others. So, focus on the open doors, not the closed one.

Elizabeth: Describe peace in your own words.

Ilham: Peace in oneself is peace: accepting your own limitations without anger and realizing you are blessed. Peace is when you see people without food and you are blessed with food and shelter, so you are grateful. Peace is love for yourself, family,



community, and the world—to live in peace and harmony with one another.

Elizabeth: What is your legacy to the world as an artist?

Ilham: My legacy is to inspire artists to keep strong in faith and in themselves, to keep working on their art, and to know that everything will arrive at the right moment. Never give up. Keep working. Be aware of current events and express them in your artwork. Address them. Care deeply, and you shall achieve your dreams and make them a reality.

Elizabeth: Do you have any upcoming projects?

Ilham: Yes, I am working on new paintings for an exhibit titled *Hope*. I think it will allow me to experiment with new mixed media and paintings. I am also preparing some sculptures for a group art exhibit in Michigan in April and working on future exhibits nationally and internationally.



Love

Deepak N. Pawar

Life is dyed with
this or the other colour,
white for peace, pink for love
and red is for valour.
Green is from trees
and blue from sky,
the crimson heaven turns black
as dusk says 'bye'.
The rain with grey
dances on the leaves,
and the forest is
filled with greener hues.
The night with the pale lamp
hanging so high,
the ripples on the lake
shine where the beams lie.
Life is full of
colours of gay.
Streaks of joys often
find their ways.
making our lives blissful more,
feelings of blessed
also galore.
Love in a way
is a colour of heart,
Life sans it
falls apart.
So let it spring up
from within,
and pervade every
kith and kin.
Let it flow
breaking the boundaries,
and let it wipe out
provincial theories.
Let it settle there
to make all One.
Let it be permanent
as the Moon and the Sun!



Blue Butterfly



Im Sol Nae

"The sky and the earth are my coffin,
and the sun, moon, and stars are my burial gifts"
Zhuangzi once said.

I envied him.

I envied the silkworm
that sheds its stiff cocoon of flesh
to become a butterfly of the soul.

I envied Kübler-Ross,
who cared for dying children,
carrying a plush caterpillar that, when flipped,
transformed into a butterfly,
a small miracle for her young patients.

But what moved me even more
was the final moment of her own funeral—
her children opening a small box before the coffin,
releasing butterflies into the air.

And when the mourners opened their envelopes,
blue butterflies fluttered out,
rising toward the sky.

What are we to do with such beauty?

UEM Jaipur Hosts State-Level Workshop on **Inclusion of Human Values**



The University of Engineering and Management (UEM), Jaipur, hosted a state-level funded workshop on “Inclusion of Human Values”, organized by the Rajasthan School Education Council, Government of Rajasthan, for Block Education Officers of PM Shri Schools from 04 to 06 January 2026. The workshop aims to strengthen value-based education in alignment with the vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The inaugural session was graced by Honourable Education Minister Shri Madan Dilawar, who delivered an insightful address emphasizing the importance of integrating human values in school education. He also held an interactive discussion with the Chief Block Education Officers, reviewing the academic and administrative progress of their respective blocks and encouraging value-driven leadership at the grassroots level. Several eminent dignitaries were present on the occasion, including Mr. Satish Gupta, OSD, Education Department, Prof. H.D. Charan, Former Vice-Chancellor, Bikaner

Technical University, Prof. Dr. Biswajoy Chatterjee, Vice-Chancellor, University of Engineering and Management, Jaipur, Dr. Pradeep Kumar Sharma, Registrar, UEM Jaipur, and Dr. Mukesh Yadav, Associate Dean (Academics). Also present were Mr. Sandeep Agarwal, Public Relations Officer, UEM Jaipur, Prof. Ashutosh Gautam, Admission In-Charge, Prof. Dipta Mukherjee, Proctor, UEM Jaipur, Dr. B. S. Yadav, Director, Physical Education, along with other senior academicians and officials. The workshop provided a meaningful platform for dialogue, reflection, and capacity building, focusing on embedding human values such as empathy, integrity, and social responsibility into school leadership and administrative practices. The event concluded with a vote of thanks presented by Dr. Pradeep Kumar Sharma, Registrar, UEM Jaipur, who expressed gratitude to the dignitaries, participants, and organizers for their active involvement and support in making the workshop a success.

Nature's Signs: Behaviour of Animals and Birds



Amit Baijnath Garg

The behaviour of animals and birds can be used to predict the weather. Scientific study of these signals helps humans understand bird behaviour, migration, breeding, and physical characteristics. We simply need to understand this knowledge and apply it scientifically.

Recently, a study by the Dept of Biology at Jai Narayan Vyas University in Jodhpur proved that weather signals can be discerned from bird nest building patterns to animal behaviour. This research, published in the International Journal of Environmental Science, states that animal behaviour has an accuracy of up to 80 percent. This research proves that this age-old traditional knowledge, used by villagers, has now been scientifically validated. For example, the dance or chirping of peacocks signals the onset of monsoon. Similarly, ants gathering food signals a drought.

Dr. Gemraram Parihar, the department's head of research, and his research team argue that natural signs are still effective. The behaviour of animals and birds can be used to predict the weather. They claim that scientific research has confirmed these facts. Their research has provided scientific evidence for ancient practices. The research concludes that the behaviour of animals and birds is still fully capable of predicting the weather. The research states that the behaviour of animals and birds provides accurate weather predictions. This finding has been proven to be approximately 80 percent accurate. The research claims that traditional knowledge is unmatched even today. Its signs still hold true

even under scientific scrutiny.

The research also reveals how in ancient times, people used the behaviour of ecosystem members to predict the weather. The behaviour of foxes, jackals, and other animals was also part of this system. For example, foxes control the number of rats in the fields, which is a good sign for agriculture. According to research, people in rural areas of Rajasthan, such as the Bhil, Meena, and Banjara communities, still follow animal and bird cues. For example, when red ants move their eggs, it signals the approach of rain. This reflects the wisdom of these ecosystem animals, who provide accurate weather information.

In the villages of Marwar, nature's cues are still followed to predict the weather. While science has developed advanced technologies for weather forecasting, these traditional methods remain highly useful. A recent university study proves that important weather signals are hidden in the behaviour of animals and birds. This traditional knowledge, based on the behaviour of animals, birds, and other animals, has become an important reference not only for villagers but also for scientists. It plays a crucial role in maintaining the balance of the ecosystem.

These ancient practices are now being further validated through modern science. Research suggests that traditional bird signs have specific meanings. Peacocks dancing indicates the onset of monsoon. Ants gathering food is a sign of drought. Snakes climbing trees predict the possibility of rain. The presence of foxes indicates the control of

rats in the fields. Bird signs are also linked to weather and life, for example, a sparrow or bird building a nest in a house is a sign of prosperity and progress. The arrival of a parrot in the house indicates financial gain, the completion of pending work, and the blessings of Goddess Lakshmi. The appearance of an owl in the house is a sign of something auspicious happening soon, as it is the vehicle of Goddess Lakshmi. The arrival of a crow indicates the arrival of guests. The sighting of a peacock, bluethroat, and white pigeon in the morning is considered a sign of a good day.

Similarly, weather indicators from birds include their flight altitude (low-altitude flight indicates rain, while high-altitude flight indicates good weather), their calls (e.g., the hooting of an owl or the dancing of a peacock is considered a sign of rain), and their feeding behaviour (eating heavily before a storm). Some ancient and rural traditions also consider the nesting location of birds as a weather indicator. When birds fly close to the ground, it is considered a sign of rain. Peacocks dancing, owls shrieking, and sparrows rolling in the dust are also considered signs of rain. If crow's nest on thorny trees, rainfall is likely to be low. Nesting on trees like mango or karanj is a sign of good rainfall. Red ants moving their eggs around also indicates the arrival of rain.

Similarly, birds soaring high in the sky is a sign of good weather. Crows flying in pairs also indicates the same. Before a storm, birds become more active and eat abundantly to store fat. Chickens become restless or rub themselves in the dust when rain approaches. Red or dark swans' chest bones may indicate a cold and stormy winter. Cranes flying in circular circles in the sky signal imminent rain. The rapid construction of termite nests on trees signals good rainfall. When birds gather

together and flap their wings, a change in weather can be expected. The Chatak is considered a rain bird, and its arrival signals the monsoon season. Thus, observing the movements of animals and birds can largely predict the weather.

This is our traditional knowledge related to birds, which our ancestors held in high regard. Humans have long used bird behaviour as a barometer of changing seasons. There are many folk tales and stories that suggest that the increased or decreased activity of birds signals the end of one chapter and the beginning of a new one. Most of us have forgotten this connection, but any birdwatcher will surely tell you about the excitement of seeing birds in vibrant colors during the last dull days of winter. Like other birds, migratory birds also offer many predictions. For example, the nightly chirping of mockingbirds and blackbirds indicates warmer days are coming. Many migratory birds signal the arrival or departure of winter.

Traditional knowledge related to birds is diverse and permeates every aspect of life. In environmental terms, the study of birds (ornithology) helps us understand ecological balance, as they play a vital role in pest control, pollination, and seed dispersal. Birds provide early indicators of environmental change. Declines in their populations can signal habitat degradation or climate change. Birds control pests, disperse seeds, and aid in pollination, which is vital for many plants humans use. Birds also play a vital role in cleaning up dead animals and waste. The scientific study of birds helps us thoroughly understand their behaviour, migration, breeding, and physical characteristics. We simply need to understand this knowledge and recognize its scientific applications.



The Spirited River

**Dr. Vineet
Kashyap Tripathi**

As the silvery moon climbed high, touching the corners of the sky, the serene river transformed its course as if awakened from slumber. It was a full moon day. The sonorous sound beyond the trees lilted and swaggered the rippling waves to dance with the wind. When the clock struck twelve, declaring midnight, the spirits descended down on the bank of the river. They bathed splashing water at each other, danced and walked under the moon, on the water.

They were four in number. Two males and their female counterparts. The tutelary spirits were in a joyful temper, vibrant and happy enjoying the moonlit night. Soon they sat on the bank of the river and were engrossed in discussing about the treasure of Mahadev temple. Their talk revolved around choosing the treasurer for keeping the treasure safe and secure. While they were busy in their discussion, the river roared aloud and leaped and jumped the steps on the bank making its way from the entrance of the temple to the Shivaling that was mounted high on an uncut rock. The river bathed Lord Shiva then receded back wetting the temple ground to the low land.

The Yakshini suddenly stood up as if an idea took birth in her mind. She walked behind the temple to the foliage where she perched high on the branch of a tree. The rest of them followed her and took their seats facing each other in a circular orb. They started discussing about the treasure and the perfect suitor they needed to handle the treasure. When they couldn't find a perfect spirit for the treasure their heads diverted the direction towards human beings. The elder Yakshini, Mahadevi suggested that they would wait till the dawn for the first person who comes at the dawn to bathe in the river would be their future treasurer. All of the rest agreed to the idea. An hour later, they walked on the river and waited for the first person to appear before daylight.

A man called Vitthal Das, in his early forties walked towards the river with the break of the dawn. He was a devotee of Lord Vishnu from his childhood. He used to daily take a bath in the river, offer water to Sun God, then visit the temple of Lord Vishnu and offer his prayers along with flowers and sweets. Only then he used to go home with the Prasad. He had come to his sister's village for helping her out in his niece's marriage. Vitthal Das kept his clothes on the bank of the river and plunged into it to take a bath. When he came out, his clothes were missing. In his wet dhoti, he started searching his clothes. A deep voice echoed through the bank of the river and informed him that his clothes were hung on the tree that stood on backyard of the temple. Vitthal Das couldn't see anyone around him. He moved towards the rear of the temple to find a grove behind it. He raised his head and started searching his clothes on the tree tops but he was not able to find them. Tired, he ran towards the bank to offer the rising sun water but his bag was also missing in which he had kept his copper pot and rosary beads. This was the first time in last 30 years when he was not able to offer water to Sun. He started crying, sitting wretchedly on the bank of the river in his wet dhoti. The voice echoed again and this time it was much loud and clear, "Vitthal Das, your clothes are safe with me. I shall give your clothes back and your bag too but for that you have to give me something in return" "In return", cried Vitthal, "What do you want from me?" "A promise", echoed the voice. Vitthal was hesitant but when he saw the sun slowly rising, his heart started beating fast and he affirmed to the voice. Suddenly his clothes and bag fell before him. He grabbed hold of the copper pot in his bag and rushed toward the river. He filled the pot and standing inside the water, he offered water to the rising sun chanting mantras.

Then he came outside the river as a victorious tiger and grabbed his clothes. He changed his clothes and entered the temple but it wasn't the temple and the god whom he used to pray every-day. His legs stiffened and he sat down. The voice was heard again, "Vitthal Das, why

did you stop? Go ahead and bathe Lord Shiva, pluck the flowers and offer him". Vitthal replied, "He is Mahadev, not Lord Vishnu. I have prayed all my life to Lord Vishnu and today you ask me to pray to some other God. How is it possible?" "Close your eyes, Vitthal and you will get the answer", retorted the voice. Vitthal closed his eyes and he had a feeling as if Lord Vishnu was standing beside him. He opened his eyes and took the copper pot and filled it with water then he bathed Lord Shiva with it. He turned around and found flowers and bananas near the Shivling. He offered the flowers to Lord Shiva and the bananas too. He chanted Lord Vishnu's mantra and after he completed his Pooja as usual, he left the temple with a banana as Prasad. He had hardly taken two steps outside the temple when he saw a cobra lifting his head on his way. Vitthal shivered, then joined his hands and spoke slowly, "Mahadev, tell your cobra to leave my way". Immediately the cobra changed his course and slid away. Vitthal was surprised at this strange act. He turned his head around but couldn't find anyone. Hardly did he take a single step ahead when he felt a hand on his shoulder. He turned around but there was none visible to his naked eyes. He cried aloud, "Whoever you are, please come before me and tell me what you want?" At this, the tutelary spirits appeared before him although they were not visible but Vitthal could feel them with his eyes closed.

The Yakshini told Vitthal that they had chosen him as the perfect caretaker of Lord Mahadev's treasure. Vitthal was surprised at this offer as he had never ever thought of meeting tutelary spirits nor did he think of being a caretaker of Mahadev's treasure. All his life he was a devotee of Lord Vishnu and now just by offering a pot of water to Lord Shiva he was offered a treasurer's position. His mind baffled and he told the spirits that he needed some time to think over the offer. The Yakshini told him that they would give him two days but he had to keep it to himself. Vitthal slowly moved towards the village.

He had entered his sister's house with a heaving sigh. His sister and his brother-in-law both asked him the reason of his panic but he didn't answer. He didn't eat the food nor did he eagerly participate in the functions commenced at his

sister's house. At night, while he was pacing on the terrace absorbed in the thoughts of the treasure and the words of Yakshini, his sister broke his spell by asking him for sweet paan as the custom prevailed. Vitthal Das sat down on the knitted couch and started wiping his sweat. It was early November and the weather was cool so Vitthal's sister had suspected something wrong in her brother's perspiring at a cool wintry night.

On great persuasion Vitthal disclosed the problem. At this his sister immediately called her husband. Vitthal sensed danger impending him and shortly he found out that the treasure of Mahadev was handed over to a tutelary spirit at every three month during the full moon day. Vitthal was forced by his sister and brother-in-law to immediately return back to his home before the tutelary spirit mercilessly converted him to a brother spirit. Next morning Vitthal left the village on a motorbike with his nephew. He reached the bus stop at 5.30 am and boarded the bus. This was the first time in his life when he hadn't taken a bath in the river and offered sun god water. A few minutes later the bus halted for a tea break as it was coming from a far off city. The passengers descended the bus but Vitthal Das was sitting firmly on his seat. He felt guilty not of running away from the tutelary spirit but of not offering water to Sun god.

Vitthal looked outside the window and watched the co-passengers sipping tea and eating snacks. After a while, he descended the bus and asked the tea stall owner for a washroom where could take a bath as he had to offer water to Sun god. The tea stall owner told him to walk behind the shop and take a bath in the river that was flowing behind the shop. Vitthal moved behind the shop and found the same river that had narrowed itself like a canal. He plunged into it and soon came out filling his copper pot and offered water to Sun god chanting the mantras. No sooner his prayer was over, he changed his dhoti and kurta then walked toward the shop but he couldn't find any tea stall over there nor any bus. He knew that it was not possible to evade death. So he sat down and called the tutelary spirits to offer him the treasure for which he was chosen...

Phoenix Whispers of the Ancient Trees



Lan Xin

A thousand years ago,
 we were rooted together in this ancient temple.
 Century after century, quietly passed,
 we became the most devoted ancient trees in all the world.
 Over the thousand years,
 through the silent turning of the four seasons
 through the unpredictable cycles of life,
 we have witnessed this ancient temple
 rise and fall, fall and rise, enduring all hardships.
 We watch, people come and go, burn incenses and pray
 with thousands of wishes in their hearts.
 Yet our watch has never wavered.
 The butterfly bush blooms pure white in winter and spring,
 the golden osmanthus shines bright gold in autumn,
 the red plum blossoms blushing pink in the bitter cold,
 the Chinese crabapple bursts into rose-red in spring,
 the incense cypress wears eternal green all year long.
 Whether the temple is full of voices or completely still,
 whether incenses burn prosperous or only broken walls remain,
 we stand root to root, heart to heart, silently guarding one another.
 Even if the halls collapse and only we are left in heaven and earth
 we still firmly believe —
 one day, the phoenix will come stepping upon light
 to reunite with us after a thousand years.
 Now heaven rewards this thousand years of waiting, this endless longing
 At last she has arrived —
 the phoenix draped in ten thousand rays of golden light.
 Amidst total desolation, she recognized us at first sight.
 Amidst utter ruin, she chose us without hesitation.
 Amidst broken walls, she restored the temple's thousand-year glory.
 Amidst silence and loneliness,
 she made incenses burn again and life flourishes once more.
 Amidst the dust of years,
 she made this sacred land known to all renowned across the world.
 From now, we shall live and die with the phoenix **never** to be parted.
 This is the place where the golden phoenix returns to rest,
 spreads her wings and soars.
 If the world shall give us a new name, then bestow upon us —
 Phoenix Ancient Trees!



The Unspoken Guest

Shahid Abbas

A wanderer came in silence to my door,
A small green guest I had not seen before.
Like a lost soul searching for its place,
He moved through corners with a quiet grace.
His eyes like lamps were shining, soft yet bright,
Holding untold stories of the night.
He paused as if he wished to speak to me,
But time was loud, and I could hardly see.
“I am like you,” his silent presence said,
“A living being, by the same God bred.”
No stranger I, no shadow passing through,
But part of earth, as real and whole as you.
O gentle guest in nature’s simple art,
You left a silent question in my heart.
I could not serve you, nor your story hear,
Though in your gaze, your voice felt very near.
The world was loud, too restless in its way,
It stole the words you tried so hard to say.
And I, a human lost in fleeting sound,
Could not receive the truth that I had found.
So I became your path, your way back home,
Away from walls where you were not to roam.
I set you free where you belong to be,
Yet something stayed behind inside of me.
You paused, then turned, and looked at me once more,
As if to say what words could not restore.
Like an unfinished poem, soft and deep,
You left a memory I will always keep.
Now in my thoughts, your silent echoes stay,
A fleeting guest who quietly slipped away.
Two different worlds, for moments, stood as one,
Then parted gently when the day was done.



Earth, Our Eternal Guardian

Dr. Rohitashwani

Look around, the world awakes,
the gift of life... the love she makes.
Mountains rise, and valleys bend
the Earth still feels our truest friend.

Trees reach high, their leaves embrace
the sun's warm light, the wind's soft grace.
Rivers sparkle, oceans gleam,
like pieces of a quiet dream.

Grass grows green beneath our feet,
animals roam, the world complete.
Every breath, each gentle breeze
carries whispers through the trees.

She gives us air, she gives us rain,
yet we return it back with pain.
We cut, we waste, we pollute, we burn...
and still she waits for us to learn.

Oh, Mother Earth our guardian, true,
we rise, we fall, yet still we view
your endless love, your gentle hand,
your forests, oceans, skies, and land.

Hear her voice... just hear her plea
protect her wonders, let them be free.

Girl



Dr. Alok Kumar Ray

The danger that emerges if you fall asleep
 Knowingly in the arms of darkness in night,
 In a small space within that ambience,
 When the cost of breathing increases, and
 Beginning of conspiracy to scold the wind opens up
 Among many, one appears
 She sits peacefully holding the sound of silence
 She says nothing,
 But becoming the source of many things for everyone
 She just beholds.
 As the night grows older,
 It collects darkness through its long veil
 Not throwing out makes it her eyes' collyrium
 Keeps hiding within her unsmooth thick hair
 Before the trust is lost being despicable
 Making it morning star tucks in the chest of the night
 Swimming in the fog fills the inhalation with consolation
 Rubbing feet in morning dews
 In welcoming posture satisfies one and all.

THE FEATHERED SOUL



Kavita Nagar

At the forest's edge, a wanderer wove
 A fragile ring of branch and bone,
 A vessel for an ancient ache
 To claim what memory could not own.

Seasons loosened, branches sighed,
 The circle held its hollow whole,
 While overhead, a shadow glided—
 The echo of a distant soul.

Rain thinned the weave, the sun decayed
 The stubborn knot of grief and wood,
 Until the geometry gave way
 Where once a living sorrow stood.

No longer trapped in syntax past,
 A different grammar stirred the marrow;
 Not the return of shadows cast,
 But balance in the bone and arrow.

The sky remained. The ache was gone.
 The feathered soul moved silent, on.

Haiku



Jennifer Gurney

first kiss
 under the moonlight
 stars in my eyes

 we wake
 to the news
 another senseless attack ...

 caught in your net
 the moment you walked in that door
 electricity

 I crane my neck
 looking back
 regrets

 your ring on my hand, now
 still bears the shape
 of your finger

 opened by moonlight
 my heart blossoms
 my soul awakes

 the greatest gift
 we can give or receive
 wings

 each photo
 stored in my heart
 click

 strolling through the woods
 a flannel to ward the crisp air
 I harvest peace

 Mom had spoons
 from every state visited –
 silver souvenirs

AFTER TOM'S THIRD DRINK



John Grey

Out of nowhere, he reminisces
about Vietnam, the steamy jungle
like an extra layer of sweaty clothing,
the villagers with faces that never
showed their hand, snipers in the trees
and the dread thought that one
is somewhere overhead
with a weapon pointed in your direction.

This is how it starts. But the tension snaps
as he recalls the guys in his camp,
and a memory breaks into a smile, at
the thought of some country boy
from Oklahoma, a city kid who'd
never been away from home,
the card games, the letters from sweethearts,
a visit from a movie star, and
games of baseball wherever a plot of reasonably
flat and low-cut field was available.

But then the darkness intervenes.
He's back in that deadly rain forest,
rifle hoisted high above his head,
up to his waist in swamp water,
wary, not only of the guerrillas,
but slithering poisonous snakes.

Suddenly, he's out of there,
with some buddies, late at night,
strolling the streets of Saigon,
a crawl of nightclubs and bars,
of raucous crowds and available women,
His eyes light up like flashy neon.

But then it's back to the war zone,
as the enemy start firing from a ridge above.
The guy beside him drops. Another's hit in the leg.
He trembles forward then staggers back
as a bullet screams by his ear.
That's when he asks how I'm doing in school.
On a scale from living it up to near dying,
I'm somewhere in the middle.

FREEDOM



**Eva Petropoulou
Lianou**

Freedom,
a word
that has all meaning of
happiness
harmony
respect.

But what we do
Humans are killing humans
Humans are manipulating humans...

Freedom,
a tussle between two
birds without wings...

Freedom,
a hope of two hungry stomachs...

Elefteria
a sun waiting to rise
in our days
in our century...

We are in need of
an educational system
to re-write new definition
or learn the meaning
well of the old one...

DHARAN: MEMORIES AND REVERIES



Dr. Ranjana Sharan Sinha

Like confetti, memories of Nepal rain:

A pre-teen girl in the 1960s,

I remember my fascinating visits
to Biratnagar and Dharan!

Sitting in the jeep with my siblings,
I used to enjoy the exciting ride
on the road and the rugged terrain!

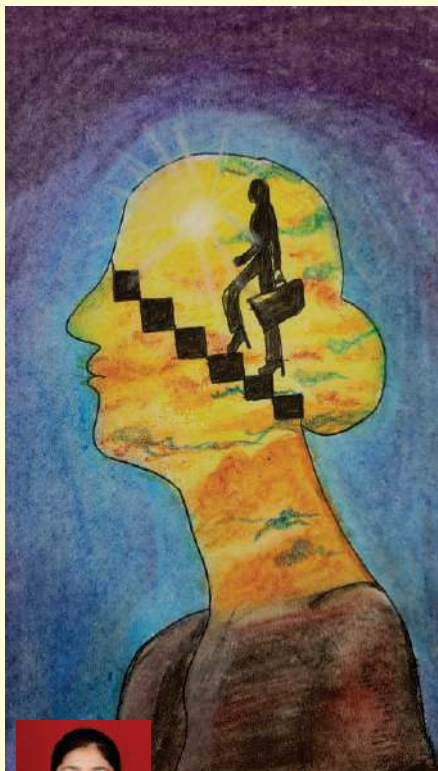
From Birpur to Biratnagar,
Biratnagar to Dharan!

Nestled on the foothills
of Mahabharata range,
Dharan was full of beauty and charm!
The quiet, quaint, hilly bazar mid
scenic surrounding under the eternal sky--
At times with hues of indigo,
at times hazy and grey!
Can't tell you how much I loved
to shop Nepali bracelets and pote malas
in that unique bazar!

The mountain terrain and
Dhantakali temple on the high hillock:
The myth inspired awe and wonder--
While Lord Shiva was travelling on the earth
with his dead wife Parvati,
her tooth fell off and the temple
was built on that spot!
It gave me goosebumps and I
stared at the camphor flame
with an eerie feeling
that came over me!

The uphill road to the temple
became special because of
a mountain lass who used to sell
kaaphal fruits along the winding road:
Sweet-sour delights like
purple raspberries!
On every visit I met the lass
and talked about her home and family--
Friendship gleamed in
her almond-shaped eyes!

Decades have passed!
Dharan must have
witnessed a sea change,
so have I!
I reminisce about those alpine beauties
and the kaaphal- seller with her basket!
The warm sunshine of her smile reaches me
crossing the boundaries of time and country!
Where will she be today? Can you tell me?



Artwork
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Artwork
Carl Scharwath



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