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From the Principal's Desk

It gives me great pleasure that the Department of English is releasing the second issue of its magazine: Bitacora. The theme for the current volume is *Patloon Englishtani*, inspired by the famous Raj Kapoor song from the movie *Shree 420*. I find the theme to be an enthralling one, depicting a fine blend of Asian, European and Russian cultures and truly representative of cultural hybridity. Hybridity is certainly not a new cultural or historical phenomenon. It is an amalgam of distinct races or cultures which is responsible for shaping of all civilizations since time immemorial.

We at Gargi, are always keen to tap the vast potential of our students through such magazines and newsletters. I eagerly look forward to reading our students' perspective on the subject undertaken.

I congratulate the entire editorial team & contributors and enthusiastically await the next issue of Bitacora.

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Acting Principal,
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March 21, 2017

MESSAGE

We are happy to know that the Department of English is coming out with its second issue of their annual magazine- Bitacora. College is a valuable time for experiencing new spaces and growth that is not limited to acquisition of knowledge but also a discovery towards the extent of your creative streaks and talents. To that end, a magazine is a most wonderful platform for students to express their voices/thoughts, to share their interests/passions, to showcase their literary flair, and to work towards honing their writing skills, all of which are essential to the all round development of a student.

Knowledge and the empowerment that comes through it cannot be self-centered but shared. Those who are engaged in academic pursuits have a great social responsibility towards change and the community and this magazine of yours is one such step towards the same. So we would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the entire team of Bitacora for taking up this task of creating a corner for an exchange of ideas and encouraging writing, which we are sure will be greatly beneficial for all the readers, students' and teachers' alike. We also convey our sincere greetings to the students and the teachers of the Department of English, Gargi College and extend our best wishes for the success of the magazine and for all their future endeavors.

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From the Editorial Board

After the success of our previous (and first) edition in our minds, we set out afresh to walk the path of creating a magazine that will continue to provide a platform for creativity and self-expression. Our brainstorming sessions were filled with multiple ideas, ranging from scientific concepts to creativity as escapism, the search for individuality and societal amalgamation; and many other very contradictory ideas. While each idea was appealing, our endeavour was to unify our myriad realities in a globalised world without forgetting our colonial histories; our individualities without overlooking the contexts that shape us while pondering over something as fundamental as the clothes we wear or the food we eat.

Before long, we found ourselves humming “Mera joota hai Jaapani/, Yeh Patloon Englishtaani/ Sar pe laal topi Rusi, Phir bhi dil hai Hindustani...” from the 1955 film *Shree 420*. While we were all familiar with the song made famous by the iconic Chaplinesque Raj Kapoor, we now perceived it in a wholly new light – that of the post-capitalist global Indian. The presence of the words patloon and Englishtaani, the former a misnomer for pantaloons and the latter, a hybridised 'Hinglish' phrase was representative of the diverse cultural and socio-political scenario of post Independent India that the Nehruvian government had to hold together. Interestingly, *Shree 420* was also a reference to the Indian penal code that dealt with crimes, which foreshadowed the rising crimes in modernised India and by extension the possibility of surviving in such a state only when one resorted to crimes. The character of Raj heavily influenced by Chaplin's Tramp followed the trope of the vagabond who sets out to carve a niche for himself in this newly free, expanded world. Unlike the Tramp who arrived in America, Raj Kapoor's Raj arrives in Bombay and finds ways in which to make easy money. In today's context, it serves to highlight what Salman Rushdie termed the 'chutnification' of not only the language(s) but also the global Indian who not only (re)fashions a niche for her/himself, writing back and (ad)dressing the languages and cultures that we appropriate.

The song now epitomizes for us the conflicts the post-colonial Indian wo(man) faces: s/he associates with a global identity, while still identifying with her 'nation'. With different cultural influences coming together in India through the colonial and now neo-colonial and neo-imperial invasions in the form of globalisation and capitalism, we see many fusions which are usually, and interestingly, simultaneously positive and negative, but no less real. We, have interpreted this theme to explore the multiplicities within each of us, in terms of not only culture but gender and sexuality, urbanity, tradition and modernity, nationality, and the colour of our skins. This edition of the magazine is thus saturated with possibilities which the contributions within have explored to the fullest, questioning all our assumptions of *identities*. This, our second edition of Bitacora is, more than a simple black-and-white portrayal of cultural assimilation or appropriation, encompassing so much more than clothing and food habits and is saturated with possibilities exploring and questioning all assumptions of identity through the music we listen to, the books we read and through all aspects of our everyday lives.

“The Broken Bottle” and “Third Culture Kid” explore identity formation and cultural assimilation in a globalised world where youngsters try to measure themselves against fluctuating cultural yardsticks while “Losing Touch” is a sharp critique of Indian youth losing their own 'roots' and being enchanted by the West. “People Say”, “Ghungroo” and “Meant to be” deal with how hybridity is an inevitable part of our lives. However, this hybridization does not take place in a smooth continuum. When cultures clash with one another there is always the fear of one culture taking the place of another. It is a dynamic exchange filled with insecurities, fear and rebellion. This theme is addressed in poems like “Revolution” and “Stammering Lips” while “India through my lens” visually portrays the Indian culture as an amalgamation of many other cultures, “Indo-Islamic Architecture” specifically focuses on Mughal architecture as a historical evidence of the past coexisting with the present.

“St+arting with Street Art in India” discusses the initiative of the St+Art India Foundation to make art more visible and democratic, and through this, it provides light to the art of Graffiti and the various artists all over the world who use it as a medium of expression. The role of media in taking art forms beyond their traditional boundaries is highlighted in “Bollywood-Hollywood Haya Rabba” which portrays how the two film industries constantly draw

inspiration from one another, thereby blurring the cultural divides in the life of common people everywhere. This edition also includes an interview with Ms. Pragya Gupta, the Teacher-in-Charge of the English Department and details of various activities of the department thus far in the last academic session in our Captain's log book.

We would like to express our gratitude towards the teachers and students of the department for their keenness and cooperation. A special word of thanks is due to the Principal Dr. Promila Kumar, who has encouraged our endeavour. We are also grateful to Interior Crafts and Associates, Prenita Dutt, Sulabh International and the Department's Literary Society for the funds to publish this issue, and its contributions for our workshops. Special thanks are due to the teachers of the magazine committee, Ms. Nzanmongi Patton, Ms. Jeyakirthana J., Ms. Gayatri Mehra, Mr. Sameer Chopra, Mr. Aditya Bahl and Mr. Maisnam Arnopal. This edition would not have been possible but for the contributors for the articles and photos and the interest in writing beyond what the classroom demands. We look forward to more from you next year too!

We hope that amidst the raging debates over nationalism, we don't forget that what constitutes an Indian identity is much too complex to be ever subjected to a single monolithic definition. After all we are ever changing products of cultural and ideological fusions from centuries of dynamic change, in constant flux, adopting and adapting. In this sense, we are all tramps (and pirates) cheating—read negotiating with—more than just the Indian Penal Code.

Teas

Sandhita Chandra
III year

The clouds did not look in any way oppressed that morning
when a table held teacups and saucers all scattered about,
Staining light brown on the fine bone china.
Scraping cutlery, cutting deep.

Leaves of a crisp newspaper thumbed through.
Polite guffaws and 'gentle' conversation.

A man laid out a map
at the table and smoothed it down.

Slurp, clink, *ab*

Whips lash, sweat breaks.

Backs break.

Skin glistens, brown grunts muffle into screams across millions of miles.
Lakhs of kilometers?

It's the *weather* that's oppressive, I'm sure.
while: "Spices and gold by the fistful,
get your bags of gold and spices here!"

Tea, poured into saucers from cups.
Thickly accented words, in a foreign dialect,
sitting oddly on strange, dark tongues.

Men that, years later, were imprisoned for keeping silent
Hanged were those who did not.
What are we aping? echoing in the streets.
Shattered cups and splintered saucers,
strewn neglected on the ground.

A heel crushes out a stub of ashy clove
and the bitter smell of stale coffee
lingers overhead.

Dylan and the Literary Revolution of 2016: Here Comes the Story of a Hurricane

Arushi Mathur
III Year

The year gone by created more throbbing voids in our hearts than an entire season of *Gilmore Girls* did. We were, with utmost cruelty, left to live in a world where David Bowie, Alan Rickman, Harper Lee, Prince, Muhammad Ali, Leonard Cohen, George Michael and Carrie Fisher no longer existed. But before the countdown to midnight began on New Year's Eve and I merrily drank to celebrate the end of a devastating year, I itched to continue searching for that one bright, sparkling moment in 2016 that, in the years ahead, would perhaps make me look back and say, "Aw, c'mon. It wasn't all that bad." And that moment, I realized upon some late-night contemplation, was a couple of months ago in October when my phone screen came alive and flashed the news alert: "Bob Dylan Wins Nobel Prize, Redefining Boundaries of Literature".

Articles commenting on the controversy surrounding the Prize washed over my Facebook News Feed in the days to follow, drowning out every other piece of news. I, however, sat feeling warm and tingly in my toes, experiencing the same satisfaction one gets when they consume a melted cheese fondue. The week before the grand announcement, I'd shut myself in my bedroom with the new U2 album *Songs of Innocence* on full blast. I'd been comparing the album's song lyrics to the poetry of William Blake, published in a volume by the same name which had inspired the band. U2, in the manner of Blake, I observed, had talked about living in a world of corruption, child abuse and religious oppression while still desperately attempting to clutch onto a thin ray of hope. "Why could I not analyse this modern take on romantic poetry for my college assessment?" I'd wondered out loud. I would've produced a thesis-level paper if given the chance. Despite academic work being done on Dylan, the controversy around Dylan's prize symptomatizes the still existing gap between popular music/culture and 'literature'. The truth is that song lyrics, like accepted forms of literature through the ages, are (and have always been) reflective of society's moods, fears, anxieties, hopes, flaws, and are inextricably linked to cultural and social change. Lyrics are poetry, waiting to be 'read' and analysed. When studied independently of the various guitar riffs and drumming patterns that accompany them, lyrics will find their way of tugging at your heartstrings, burrowing into your thoughts and carving a space for themselves within you. So when the news of Dylan broke, I heaved a sigh of relief, for this marked a new literary revolution: a revolution which brought music and literature together and gave lyricists the same credibility as poets and authors. It was a revolution which, in one great leap, closed a major gap between so-called high art and low-brow commercial art.

Dylan's music in the roaring 1960s was an integral part of the Beat Generation culture. His hobo character and song lyrics about his travels across the country attracted masses of people to the vagabond, "on the road" lifestyle previously popularised by Jack Kerouac. His music was also in tune with the "hippie movement" which started in retaliation to America's intervention in the Vietnam War, and through his lyrics, he popularised ideals of peace, love, humanity and spirituality as against the turmoil of American capitalism and the breakdown of values. Take, for instance, the anthem *Blowin' in the Wind* where he asked the pertinent question: "How many times must the cannon balls fly before they're forever banned?" – A direct remark on the brutality of Uncle Sam and the terror of a war-inflicted world. Using the universal symbol of "white dove" in the same song, he encouraged harmonious living, and with the references to wind, sand, mountains, sea and sky, he proposed a reconnect with nature in order to find "the answer" to life's miseries – "the answer" which was "blowin' in the wind". Similarly, in the song *Mr. Tambourine Man*, he commented on the squalor of big cities, the disintegration of values, and his dissatisfaction with the uptight middle classes, much like Charles Baudelaire and T.S. Eliot did in their poetry. The lines from Baudelaire's *Anywhere Out of the World* "Let us go farther still to the extreme end of the Baltic; or farther still from life, if that is possible... At last my soul explodes, and wisely cries out to me: "No matter where! No matter where! As long as it's out of the world!" anticipate Dylan's hashish-fuelled lyrics from *Mr. Tambourine Man* – "Take me disappearing through the smoke rings of my mind, down the foggy ruins of time, far past the frozen leaves, the haunted frightened trees, out to the windy bench, far from the twisted reach of crazy sorrow". Dylan also critiqued the division of humans into the proletariat and the bourgeois amidst capitalism-driven chaos and in the song, *All*

Along the Watchtower, re-named these groups as the “Joker” and the “Thief” respectively. In the song, the Joker’s remark to the Thief – “There must be some kind of way outta here [...] there’s too much confusion, I can’t get no relief” – is reflective of the working class’s oppression and embittering experiences in the modern world. Echoing Langston Hughes’ lamentation of “a dream deferred” in the poem *Harlem*, Dylan wrote of missed opportunities and hopeless lives of the lowest rung crowd in society in the song *Subterranean Homesick Blues*. And taking inspiration from war poets like Wilfred Owen, he wrote *A Hard Rain’s a-Gonna Fall* about the threat of nuclear apocalypse. Clearly, all movements of social change and politics filtered into Dylan’s songs. He is a literary genius who compiled his thoughts into unforgettable ballads with a deep, meditative murk. It is no surprise then, that upon his literary accomplishment, *Rolling Stones* magazine recognised him as “as timeless as a 1600s Scotch border ballad and as visionary as Isaiah”.

Dylan’s lyrics were more important to him than the tunes he composed to accompany them, and with every song, he attempted to tell a story and to connect to the people on a personal level. He incorporated more poetic devices and techniques into his lyrics than did any other musician of his generation. He took inspiration from the theatre of Bertolt Brecht and commenting on his reaction upon seeing the theatre performances, said, “My little shack in the universe was about to expand into some glorious cathedral, at least in song-writing terms.” Brecht’s song sequences particularly fascinated Dylan – “I took the song apart and unzipped it – it was the form, the free-verse association, the structure and disregard for the known certainty of melodic patterns to make it seriously matter, give it its cutting edge.” To create his own lyrical ballads, Dylan also closely examined the elementary poetry of past songwriters such as the American blues legend Robert Johnson. “Johnson’s words made my nerves quiver like piano wires,” Dylan later wrote. “The free association that he used, the sparkling allegories, big-ass truths wrapped in the hard shell of nonsensical abstractions.” Dylan associated himself closely with the proto-surrealist Arthur Rimbaud, adopting his ambiguous use of words, phrasing and context, at once literal and abstract, and also embraced the maddened, opium-induced Romantic-era poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.”

In spite of these allusions, references, inspirations and commentaries, however, audiences questioned Bob Dylan’s literary prowess when he won the Nobel Prize. People contested the notion of a songwriter as a poet. A *New York Times* article, condemning the Nobel committee’s decision, claimed – “when the Nobel committee gives the literature prize to a musician, it misses the opportunity to honour a writer.” But that’s exactly where the problem lies. Firstly, the committee did not award Bob Dylan the ‘musician’. It awarded Bob Dylan the ‘writer’ for “having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition”. Bob Dylan was, and has always been, an accomplished writer in terms of his lyrics. His literary brilliance was further cemented and acknowledged worldwide when *The Oxford Book of American Poetry* included his song *Desolation Row*, in its 2006 edition, and Cambridge University Press released *The Cambridge Companion to Bob Dylan* in 2009. Secondly, on what basis does one declare the art of song-writing as inferior to other literary form? Blindly overlooked is the fact that song-writing requires the same effort and careful consideration as does the writing of a poem, a play or a short story. It is the meticulous act of picking one’s brain, delving into the recesses of the heart and mind, and pouring one’s thoughts and emotions out on paper. And thirdly, when (and why in the world) did we begin separating songs from poetry in the first place? Those Greek and Sanskrit epics that we worship as part of the literary canon - were they not written as *verses* intended to be *sung* aloud? What is a song but a few lines of poetry with an insistent beat or rhythm added to it? If literature is defined as the written word representative of culture, society and tradition of a language, then song lyrics qualify as literature. The text of song lyrics can be decoded using literary theory, with a mythological, sociological, psychological or historical approach. In fact, the text of song lyrics *must* be decoded, for like other forms of literature, they reflect social attitudes and help construct a blueprint of human civilisation.

Dylan isn’t of course the only artist to have inspired generations through words and attempted social commentary. Back in the early 20th century, the artistic explosion of the Harlem Renaissance (also known as the New Negro Movement) brought forth African-American jazz and blues musicians whose lyrics revealed a celebration of their black identities. After enduring centuries of racism, the African-American community now took up the cause of reigniting cultural pride through their music. This was visible in the song lyrics of Billie “Lady Day” Holiday, Louis Armstrong, Bessie Smith and Willie “The Lion” Smith. In the 1960s, Pink Floyd produced countless songs about the post-war trauma after the Second World War. The band’s lyricist and vocalist Roger Waters had watched his father die at the hands of the Nazis, and this memory of his troubled childhood led him to write lyrics like “Did

you ever wonder why we had to run for shelter, when the promise of a brave new world unfurled beneath a clear blue sky?” in the song *Goodbye Blue Sky*. Similarly, in a fit of rage against the American armed forces in the Vietnam War, the heavy metal band Black Sabbath sang, “Politicians hide themselves away, they only started the war. Why should they go out to fight, they leave that role to the poor,” in the song *War Pigs?* Metal and rock bands of the 80s and early 90s wrote passionately against religious oppression of the church. Iron Maiden openly mocked the church with satanic lyrics in *Number of the Beast* – “The ritual has begun; Satan's work is done. 666, the number of the beast, sacrifice is going on tonight.” In recent times, punk rock bands like Green Day started a modern revolution against American imperialism, and through albums like *American Idiot*, expressed the disillusionment of a generation that grew up in tumultuous times shaped by events like the Iraq War.

Can we really afford to overlook all of these literary endeavors just because they fall under the category of mainstream music and not ‘proper’ or ‘refined’ literature? Song lyrics *need* to be examined more closely and critically. There is sophistication and a carefully cultivated aesthetic in the ideas propounded by musicians through their lyrics. And not giving lyricists their due credit as contributors to literature would be one of the grossest mistakes the human race could make. Luckily enough, however, after the decision of the Nobel committee, the para-literature created by lyricists and music artists will perhaps be taken more seriously. Song lyrics truly are, and have always been, an undervalued genre of literature reflective of the human condition. What I wish to lay particular emphasis on here is the fact that the inclusion of songwriters into the literary hall of fame in no way dilutes the institution of literature; it only evolves and enhances it. The act of writing and producing literary masterpieces is still as sacrosanct as it has always been, and broadening the scope of literature is always in our benefit. Dylan’s literary accomplishment is therefore a step forward in bringing together popular culture and canonical literature in the modern age; a step which has been long overdue. The times they are a-changin’, and thank heavens for that!

Hybridity in Music- a Hegemonic Discourse

Aqsa Khan

II Year

To be a hybrid means to be mixed. Originating in scientific discourse, the concept of hybridity was subsequently adopted for use in social, political, and cultural discourses. Through this concept, we are now in a position to think about various hybrid musics in circulation today. The influx of foreign ideas due to colonisation and globalisation results in the inter-mingling of cultures which is visible in various forms of art like music. This musical hybridity which can now be seen in some of the most popular styles, both in the West and in the East, is a subject of debate due to the various ways in which these hybrids are appropriated and defined with respect to their original culture.

In this article, I will explore the different approaches to hybrid music and try to bring out the problematic issues like misinterpretation, misappropriation and unauthorised or uncredited usage that arise when these hybrids are created.

The blending of foreign and 'local' music is the easiest way of introducing newer categories to the masses, because in the absence of the latter anything foreign can be readily considered alien and even dangerous to the native cultures. In light of this, platforms like Coke Studio, which experiment with fusion music, act as celebratory forums combining different musical influences and popularising the result. It not only helps in increasing audiences for particular musical categories but also helps in cultural assimilation on foreign soil, thus bringing the world closer. It becomes both, a consequence and a medium of globalisation. However, the idea of fusion music is often a romanticised and utopian vision, which ignores the more dangerous forms of cultural hegemony at work today in the movement of any entity, ranging from people, commodities and capital to culture, ideas, and art, in our globalised world. J. Macgregor Wise in his book, *Cultural Globalisation: A User's Guide* defines 'World Music' as 'a category of music in the West that tends to encompass non-Western musical artists, especially so-called traditional musics'. By this definition, world music becomes a medium through which the empowered West is giving voice and platform to the non-Western artists. It is impossible for any cultural or art form to exist in a vacuum unaffected by the structures of power when its definition itself is given by the hegemonic group. Defining and representing musical categories then becomes a magnanimous and philanthropic act by the West claiming to save the local music from extinction. In an attempt to provide people with 'native' or 'tribal' music, it is often accused of misrepresenting culture, over-looking history and exploiting the Third World artists.

Fusion music is a result of the inevitability of cultural mixing by bringing together previously existing categories, to form new categories which are essentially a hybrid. An example of this is Hip-hop which developed in America in the 1970s and was initially limited to Black American culture till it was embraced by the world as one type of popular music. With newer categories being formed, older categories sometimes lose their value unless they are brought together with the more popular contemporary styles. It sometimes results in the unfortunate loss of certain musical styles, like the Arabic music parameter named Maqam which in the Arab American musical culture is declining over the years. Thus, fusion music is an ever-changing concept that can never be defined in fixed categories or stable definitions. It relies heavily on popular acceptance by the audience, which can vary from one place to another. A musical category accepted in one culture may not be accepted in another. In this scenario, the onus of deciding whether or not a musical style forms a separate category is often taken up by the powerful, whether politically or by number, which can result in ignoring the wishes and demands of the less powerful.

In this dynamic relationship between different musical categories it becomes difficult and controversial to consider a musical style as a representative of a larger group. Any artist experimenting with mixing different types of music needs to give credit to the actual roots of the style and represent it rightfully. However, there is a very fine line between this rightful representation and mistaken appropriation. Hegemonic groups are often accused of appropriating the culture of the local people, and snatching it from its roots. This appropriation if not checked results in a loss of cultural identity for the minority or the less powerful.

The concept of musical hybridity redefines boundaries and creates new meaning through the dialogic aspect of art. It is of utmost importance for people particularly artists creating this music, to understand the negative and positive possibilities associated with creating these hybrids. In an increasingly globalised world, which is also deeply affected by colonialism and immigration, hybridity is inevitable. With the right knowledge of its impacts and a closer eye on the process of creating these hybrids, musical mingling can be effectively used as a means of enriching culture universally rather than creating a challenge for the less powerful groups to save their culture from being overridden by the culture of the dominant groups.

Hybridity in Indo-Islamic Architecture

By Asmita Pandey and Tuba Firoz
II Year

Architecture in India has always been a representation of the various cultures and traditions brought in by foreign countries. The style of architecture that evolved in the thirteenth century not only served as the emblem of foreign power, but also symbolised the cultural ambience of the period in which they were created. The origin of these amalgamated styles can be traced back hundreds of years to the Delhi Sultanate, the Mughal Empire, and the British Raj as well. It came to be known as the Indo-Islamic style which was a fusion of the Islamic and Hindu traditions of arts.

The Qutub Complex in the Mehrauli region of Delhi enjoys the eminence of the initiation of presenting this blend of Indian and Turko-Persian art tradition which has produced enchanting effects on the viewers by its beauty, grandeur and magnificence. The first structure to use this style is the Alai Darwaza which is built with red sandstone. Commemorating the achievements of the sultanate ruler Alauddin Khilji, it has a square shape with rectangular windows and doors which are outlined by marble trimmings and epigraphs carrying Quranic inscription. The Alai Darwaza has many features of Indian architecture like the *Jali* and *chhatri* with the use of indigenous working techniques and motifs, making it a superb example of the Indo-Islamic form of architecture.

The Mughal period marked a striking revival of Islamic architecture in northern India. Under the patronage of the Mughal emperors, Persian and various provincials' styles from India were fused to produce works of unusual quality and refinement. Some of the means of decorations in Indo - Islamic architecture were the *jalis*, calligraphy and Arabesque technique, the pietra-dura technique, the use of geometry for drawing symmetrical patterns and the *charbagh* pattern. Where on the one hand we see features like *charbagh* and dome which have their origins in Persia, on the other, features like *jali*, *jharokha* and *chhatri* were taken from Rajput architectural style. Calligraphy, originally Arabic scripts, was the most important factor in the evolution of the art of Islamic calligraphy as due to iconoclasm in Islam there was a rejection of the depiction of religious images. Hence, the written words were made so beautiful that the interiors of buildings could be decorated. Calligraphy in Mughal architecture can be seen on Taj Mahal and on graves inside the tombs.

The purpose of this amalgamated form of architecture always remained strategic and political. They represented the might of the emperor and, in some cases, the might of Islam under the veil of cultural harmony of the foreign and native traditions. One of the main purposes of the use of this style was to gain the legitimacy and acceptance from the people. One of the best examples of such structures would be the fort of Fatehpur Sikri, the capital established by Akbar. This city was imbued with the idea of harmony and this could be seen in the Ibadat Khana where one can see the symbols of the lotus, *kalash* and star, representing the policy of Din-i-Ilahi, which was a syncretic religion promoted by Akbar to merge the best elements of the religions of his empire, and thereby reconcile the differences that divided his subjects.

Rulers after Akbar continued to promote political harmony through cultural forms. Shahjahan's capital, Shahjahanabad, which is now also known as Old Delhi, serves as one such example. Stephen P. Blake in his essay "Cityscape of an imperial capital: Shahjahanabad in 1739" argues, that Shahjahan instructed his architect-planners to collaborate with the native astrologers for the selection of the "divine" site. The Mughal rulers, he continues, "conceived the (city as a) meeting place of the heaven and earth...the city was therefore a sacred centre that was considered to encompass the empire and the universe."

Architecture has always served as an emblem of power and in the age of the British Raj as well, it symbolised the power of the colonisers. The British regime, when constructing the city of New Delhi, debated if the older architectural styles should be retained or whether the city should be purely imperial—a contrast to the Mughal capital of Shahjahanabad. It was decided that the new city had to capture the spirit of the British imperial power and at the same time had to preserve the indigenous cultural elements. Therefore, the existing Indian styles like the

chattris, jalis, and domes with some depictions of Indian animals were used in the construction of New Delhi and thus the imperial architecture wasn't purely European.

This kind of hybridity seen in architecture across time not only created amazing architectural examples but also brought in various cultures across the world. Foreign invaders, be it the Mughals or the Europeans, who wanted to cement their power in different parts of the country and win acceptance from local populations, used these structures in order to do so. This blend of architecture not only gave a hybrid identity to India, but also formed a new unique identity of its own.

Getting St+arted on Street Art in India

Sandhita Chandra
III year

St+art's initiative is beautiful: They have been adding colourful street art to India and making it brighter, prettier, and more interesting, as part of their campaign to give young Indians a fresh perspective on art. Their aim is to "provide a platform for street artists from all over the world to come and connect with the Indian movement". It is also a platform for Indian artists to showcase their work and exchange ideas with the global community. These artists are successfully making our streets more interactive through the various urban art festivals they are bringing to Delhi and around the world. In this global yet local art movement, artists transform the seemingly unchangeable spaces we live in. Turning public space and city walls into laboratories for experimentation and discovery, artworks are made for the space that frames them, resulting in a far more provocative area than a gallery or museum with no rules or restrictions imposed on the streets.

Read on to learn more about eight of the street artists involved with bringing the art of graffiti to India.

1. Tracing Faces

Henrik Beikirch, a German street artist, also known by his tag 'ECB', is known for producing works of gigantic proportions. His works are also provocative as they touch on the social issues of the area he is creating art in. His portrait of a fisherman in South Korea, for instance, which is the highest mural in Asia, is about the displacement of many Busan fishermen due to the building of skyscrapers. Furthermore, his "Lavanya" in India, which took him 72 hours to complete, is based on Vimla, a woman who sells parathas in Khan Market; an unusual occupation for a woman of her social class. Beyond his extensive work in India with St+art, he has also traced faces all through Morocco as well. Beikirch finds it exciting to work with dimensions, and according to his website, his is a "modern take on classical portraiture, reduced in its colour palette, ambivalent in its reserved presentation, yet full of warmth and infused with a rich sense of humanity."

2. Turning Streets into Neverland

The Swiss-based artistic duo Nevercrew—Christian Rebecchi and Pablo Togni—try to explore through their work a new language, provoking ideas of confrontation. Their art is a discussion and a memory. It is not only larger than life and innovative, fresh, creative, etc., but is free of any restrictions, seemingly finding its own space to express itself. Nevercrew's projects are also always thought-provoking, and consistently strike the balance between attractive and meaningful.

These guys definitely make street art look easy and effortless. We suggest looking at more of their pieces; they are all visual delights. As Issue 28 of Graffiti Art Magazine writes, they "seem to be artistically united yet attentive to their differences, proclaiming their own contradictions." The Swiss-based artistic duo Nevercrew's work is consistently challenging. The group contains Christian Rebecchi and Pablo Togni whose work attempts to create new sets of meanings.

3. A Flair for Fusion

Australian artist Reko Rennie is someone who travels to spray paint the Berlin Wall, the streets of Melbourne, Shanghai, Paris and more, drawing on both contemporary street art and Australian Aboriginal art. His use of intricate and colourful patterns reflects his Aboriginal heritage, as does the presence of family and history in his works. He says, "my work often references the hip-hop and graffiti subcultures that were influential on my artistic practice in my formative years." An indigenous, urban Australian, Rennie nevertheless uses modern mediums to express the experiences of the natives. He deals with recurring images of luxury and royalty in his works, in an attempt at "reclaiming" and interrogating them.

4. Word on the Street

Niels Muelman, also referred to by his tag 'Shoe' of Unruly Gallery has a unique motto: "We are unruly, we make art", his website proclaims. With "abstract vandalism" as one of the forms mentioned, we can tell Unruly Gallery does not abide by the rules. Surrealistic plots become real and manifest in elements in the artists' works. That the viewer relates to his own personal conflicts and dilemmas. Shoe's almost-calligraphic, mesmerising strokes evoke traditional and classical elements whereas his choice of genre is placed firmly in the present, contrasting cleverly and in such a way that it can be juxtaposed. He describes his 'calligraffiti' as 'abstract expressionism' with traditional origins.

5. Spray it, Don't Say it

Gaia, who has been listed in Forbes's 30 Under 30, is a Baltimore-based street artist. Concerned about the disappearance of nature from urban community, his work uses animal imagery to show the necessity to bring back what is being destroyed. Over the last few years, he has been in the process of creating large-scale murals, all over the world, to persuade and enable urban citizens to participate in this rebuilding through referencing the neighborhoods he paints in. He has said of his interest in civil and human rights, "It may be super naïve, but if I've been given this opportunity to speak, I might as well speak well." Being a 'white kid from the Upper East Side' doesn't stop Gaia from identifying with his work on many different levels.

6. Tones of Anarchy

Iranian street artist Nafir has been revolutionising street art in Iran since 2008. Drawing from contemporary social issues as well as his own cultural background, Nafir's works are always a beautiful blend of modernity and heritage. He creates mostly stencils on several Tehran walls, and his witty and direct art tends to speak for itself. Nafir believes that his art work is no more vandalism than that already done by the common citizens, as he feels "every single man and woman" in Iran has anarchy in them, out of defiance for the government.

7. Dvice the Art

Dwa Zeta, one of the most creative street artist duos from Poland comprised of the pair Karolina Zają czkowska and Zbiok Czajkowski, was involved with St+art India at WIP as well as in previous projects. Their installation in Lodi Art District uses abstract forms referring to "the flow of Delhi streets which reflect their impressions of the hectic and crowded yet potently colourful nature of the city." As they also felt a lack of feminine equality in the flow of the city, they chose bright pink as the main colour for their wall to figuratively mark the feminine element in a public space, to pay a tribute to women who are afraid of being visible, so as to empower them and establish the city as their own. The layers and colours in their work keep it exciting and fresh.

8. Borondo's Mondo Art

The street artist Borondo grew up painting the hallways of his house in Spain and strengthening his relationship with graffiti over the years. In his Lodhi colony piece, he uses the facade to create a transcendental classical architectural piece. St+art explains, "Since this wall is located opposite a maternity hospital, Borondo [...] interprets the concepts of life and birth. The open arch in the middle of the wall and the tree [that] inhabits it are a metaphor for the origin of life, while a river flows through the arches into infinity, reflecting the journey of life." Borondo regards this entire scene as being synonymous with the birth of a child who has to pass through a mother's womb to begin its journey. Borondo finds pleasure in experimenting with different techniques, in studying the old masters of painting, and working predominantly in public spaces which are, "his favourite galler(ies)." This "prolific, diverse and unlabelled" movement, as St+art India calls itself, brings hope for more new 'st+artists' to continue bringing dull cities to life and reaching a wider audience than conventional two-dimensional art does, taking it to the streets (literally).

Deconstructing the Idea of Indianness

Srishti Walia

III Year

Mera joota hai Japani

Ye patloon Englishtani

Sar pe laal topi Rusi

Phir bhi dil hai Hindustani

Before I begin, I'd like to warn the reader that I suffer from an illness which is said to be as fatal as cancer by many. It is called Digression. It is so firmly rooted in my cell structures that it's almost impossible to battle. So, I will understand if you wish to skip through some sections. Perhaps I'd do the same as a reader. It is an arduous task for me to pay attention only to the phrase "Patloon Englishtani" and forget the other parts of the stanza because the image that immediately pops in my head when I hear these two words, is one of Raj Kapoor singing the song in a Charlie Chaplinesque attire amidst a black and white setting.

What if I take the liberty extended by Article 19 (quite debatable an article) to change or rather distort (as some would preferably say) the famous lyrics of this song and make it look something like this-

Mera joota hai Afghani

Ye patloon Pakistani

Sar pe laal topi Chini

Phir bhi dil hai Hindustani

Is it weird that I cannot simply read these lines and always sing them in my head? Anyway. How would this alteration be regarded in contemporary India? Let's not forget a few "facts" here - (a.) Saif Ali Khan went through some major bashing at keeping his own son's name Taimur. Whatever happened centuries ago should never be forgotten even if Afghanistan just conferred our Prime Minister with the highest civilian award. (b.) Pakistan will always inhabit the position of Cinderella's stepsister and we'd always of Cinderella. (c.) Sino-Indian relations? *coughs* Tawang. *coughs* Aksai Chin. *coughs* Dalai Lama. Thus, the conclusion easily drawn could be that I am not an Indian at heart and the last line then becomes farcical. Our idea of being an Indian is so absurdly complex that it cannot be defined altogether. If this were to be my motto song for cultural diffusion, my integrity to be discerned as an Indian would have been questioned vigorously. My "dil" would be anything but Hindustani (probably back to occupying its place as a body organ). Moreover, the term Hindustani is a faux pas. I'd never want to be addressed like that. I can see the rival Section 124A seeping in through the corner.

Therefore, is Cultural Expansion limited while defying its own literal meaning? In a country like India, cultural integration is an immensely broad term for it does not only include cross-country relations in its purview but cross-state assimilation as well. Comprising of 29 states (and counting. Our goal is 100. Impossible?), we are a nation which is perpetually debating upon international ties when our own diversity is not yet unified. This, in no possible way implies I am no game for a global cultural exchange but not at the expense of regional cultural amalgamation. How many of us can claim to be aware of "Indian culture"? Is there any synthesis whatsoever possible? And does this term even exist considering the current scenario?

We have to be comfortable in our own skin before adorning it with poly-cultural clothing; prior to even this, is to be able to identify our skin. We have a long way to go.

I have penned my thoughts in the hope of reaching, what my response to song would have been. Adieu, reader. I hope it gave you something to ponder about at night. (Well, night for the dramatic effect, it could be daylight.)

Jhelum Speaks

Manpreet Kaur
I year

I flow down to the ethereal place-Kashmir,
Feeling the magic of the crown of India.

From the warmth of *Kangri**, to the simplicity of *Pheran**,
this paradise holds joy for all.

From skiing on snow clad mountains,
to riding in the *shikara** on the Dal lake*,
I have felt every pleasure here.

From chastity of hearts, to the tenderness of hands,
I have felt its generosity.

From the *Shivling* of *Amarnath** to the *Stupa** of Ladakh,
From the holy shrine of *Hazratbal** to the chanting of Sufis,
From the calmness of Churches to the hymns of the Gurudwaras,
I have learned every religion here.

I have enjoyed the aroma of saffron, and the freshness of apples,
From spring of splendour, autumn of fire to winter of numbness,
I have lived every season here.

From the mountains standing tall, to the bodies buried deep in its lap,
I have experienced the zenith and nadir here.

Witnessing innocence changing into violence, like heaven changing into hell,
I have felt every emotion here.

From the mesmerising beauty of nature, to the unknown stories it unfolds,
A little India in the valley of heaven it holds.

From dawn to dusk, from uprisings to unrest,
I, Jhelum, bring to you, my journey within Kashmir.

Glossary:

Kangri: A small pot filled with lightened charcoal, carried close to the body to keep it warm.

Pheran: Long coat or cloak made by wool or tweed worn both by women and men.

Shikara: A light, flat-bottomed boat.

Dal Lake: A famous lake in Srinagar.

Amarnath: A Hindu shrine in Pahalgam (Jammu and Kashmir).

Stupa: Mound-like or hemispherical structure containing remains of Buddhists monks and nuns, used as a place of meditation.

Hazratbal: A Muslim shrine in Srinagar (Jammu and Kashmir)

Losing Touch

Prachi Hota
II year

The youth of 21st Century India deals with a peculiar phenomenon in their lives, that of balancing their global and domestic identities. We are opening up, freely criticizing 'our' culture, learning to 'logically' analyze our traditions and discarding those we find problematic, while retaining those that enrich our lives and debate with the problems we think are uniquely 'Indian'. We are clearly concerned with the development of our nation and understand that growth will result from a balance of indigenous and western influences, and adopting only those practices from each tradition that seem to be logical and rational (also qualities associated with the West). "Be weary of nativism and an over-glorification of Indian traditions," seems to be our motto. We seem to have managed to create a creature that observes and examines traditions and culture, of both the West and of India with absolute clarity and picks the best of each. Really, no country has a better set of young adults than we do.

There is one problem, however. This Ideal Creature, the wonderfully logical and rational youth of today does NOT see the best of both worlds. It has lost touch with its roots, has a rather superficial understanding of both, native and Western cultures and does not take responsibility of its actions or words. We have stopped acting as citizens and have instead turned into bedroom, or rather Facebook diplomats. We choose to watch our country from outside-in and claim to be objective observers. That would help, sure, if we chose to act, instead of merely shaking our heads at 'poor little India'. It would be nice if we truly examined ourselves and our nation and understood that the Ideal Creature is asphyxiating the one thing that makes any nation, especially ours, unique – its cultural heritage.

We must be weary of nativism, yes, but when the so-called educated, urban population of our country takes that stance, do they take responsibility for the hundreds and thousands of starving, poverty stricken Indian classical artists who live in houses (provided by the government), and have cupboards bursting at the seams with awards, but not enough food to get from one day to the next? When the 'intellectuals' of our country sit and criticize our culture and traditions, do they take account of the fact that it is this attitude that has led to an India where artists that practice Indian Classical art forms, are the poorest of the lot while artists who practice Western art forms are among the most well-to-do artists in the country? Do we realize that artists who practice Western dance forms have enough money to own studios that have all the facilities to ensure that the dancers' health stays at its optimum while Indian Classical dancers have to make do with conditions that lead to rapid deterioration of the body?

I am reminded of an incident, a quiz during one of our school assemblies. It started with this question: "How many Classical dance forms does India have?" I heard many people trying to come up with the number, none of them correct. What was worse was every time they would say a number out loud, they'd look at me for confirmation, and every time I shook my head, they would snigger like it was a matter of pride to not know how many classical dances there are in India, with not even a bit of regret. When the question was asked, in fact, most of them looked like they had been asked to dispose of carcinogens with bare hands.

It is quite sad that many people of my age as well as those younger than me aren't aware of the entire history of classical art. There are very few, if any, art forms in the world as deeply embedded in a historical, cultural, and most importantly, literary system as the Indian Classical arts. These art forms do not just lead to intellectual development by disciplining individuals, like most other art forms, but as they are also academic disciplines that allow artists to engage with a complex system of literature and philosophy sentence incomplete-what happens when the artist gets in touch with literature and philosophy? How is it different from other art systems? And in losing these, we lose touch with all that is good in our society.

What is worse, is that the few who do realize the importance of protecting our traditional art and craft forms, are not allowed by the current social system to single-mindedly dedicate their lives to practicing these art forms. The Indian Classical arts, for instance, are not self-sustaining professions yet. This is despite the fact that they require the dedication, perseverance, energy, time and work of the average profession. However, the lack of adequate

remuneration means one has to pick another profession that provides the capital required to pay for the travel, stay and other expenses generated by a 'career' in Indian Classical Arts. Art, is meditation, yes, but people must remember that artists need adequate nutrition, and shelter to continue to practice their art to the best of their ability, and that cannot happen if every performance generates new bills with little to no real earning. An Indian Classical dancer, for example, is expected to perform for up to an hour for free, while dancers who practice Western dance forms earn a fair amount of money for performances that last for five minutes.

The *Englishmani Patloon* that India has donned most visibly since the time we were colonized, provides an excellent vantage point from which to view the world as long as we are conscious of our roots, and use that as the base from which to begin exploring the world with an open mind. The India we see in the metropolitan cities today, however, wears pants instead of *Patloons* and is almost entirely sold to the hegemon, better known as the Global North.

Christopher Columbus set out for the East Indies, and ended up in America because of the dearth of technology required for navigating the oceans. I fear that an explorer of the future will set out for America and end up on our shores because India has completely ceased to look like herself.

Third Culture Kid

Shunthingrin Luithui

II year

I think many of us who come to Delhi for higher studies, are among those young people around the world who leave their homes or birthplace for a better chance at life in a new city, or country. Although a big city such as Delhi gives us the freedom to explore a completely different space, it fails to let us belong. We find ourselves existing in a confused space—we cease to belong to our hometowns, and neither do we belong to the new city.

This state of being has been analyzed. The researchers John and Ruth Hill Useem coined the term "Third Culture Kid" in the 1950s to refer to those who are trapped in this chaotic web of multiple identities. David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken, in their book - *The Third Culture Kid Experience: Growing Up Among Worlds*, define a third culture kid as "a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parent's culture". They go on to explain that "a Third Culture Kid builds a relationship with to all of the cultures while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into a third culture kid's life experience, the sense of belonging is in a relationship with to others from a similar background".

I believe many of us can relate quite well with the statement above. I used to live in Ukhrul, a small town in Manipur, till the age of 12. I belong to the Tangkhul tribe, a race in a tribal community where the way of living is still dictated by simple traditions. The community in which I grew up emphasized family values and community support. In villages, everyone was involved in community work, big or small, which gave us a sense of solidarity and oneness. Women and men worked together in harmony and there were no societal restrictions regarding interaction between the opposite genders. Sundays were one of those days which I looked forward to eagerly. One of the reasons was that I got to wear my traditional attire - *Kashan* and *Changkhom* (a traditional shawl) to church. As a child, I would often look at the distant hills encircling our little town and try to conjure an image of the world beyond those hills, but my imagination wouldn't allow me to go beyond my definite realm. As a result, my world revolved around my house, our neighborhood, and the school where I studied for a short while.

When I finally moved to Delhi at the age of 13, my initial experience with the people, food, clothing, etc. filled me with awe. Being a part of a metropolitan city which is also the "melting pot" of diverse cultures was when I experienced what may be termed a "cultural shock". Everything was radically different back home. As time passed, I began to miss Tangkhul food, specially rice as it had been the main part of the meal, and had a hard time eating '*roti* and *subji*'. Having meals thrice a day was what I found quite amusing and at the same time welcoming, as we usually had two main meals a day and a light tea-time in the afternoon back in Ukhrul. Getting to wear 'Indian' clothes like '*salwar-kameez*, *saree*' and so on rare occasions, *lehengas* and *kurtas* were an exciting experience for me, as I was only used to wearing my traditional and western clothes.

At present, I live with people hailing from different parts of the country, a situation that I find in college as well. I guess one could say that there's an atmosphere of cultural mixing at both, 'home' in Delhi as well as outside. However, even though it's a big, culturally-rich city, I have come to find that differences, at times, are rejected too.

Now, these various cultures are a part of me, but that makes it difficult to relate to my Tangkhul culture. For instance, going back to my hometown after a long gap of 8-10 years, I am made aware of how much I have changed, how various customs and traditions which seemed pretty ordinary to me, are not commonplace anymore.

This space that I inhabit is a lens; it gives me a new perspective towards all things. I consider myself a Third Culture Kid and can only be content with the awareness of belonging to a unique category, as at the moment I am, not completely sure of what to hold on to.

Ugly

Aarushi Chadha
II year

I stare
at the short strings of hair
curling on my toes.
My short chubby toes,
with unevenly shaped toenails.
The weekly haphazard gnawing
of the nail cutter
only added to
the manufacturing defect.

Ugly. Ugly. Ugly.
My brain rhythmically chimes.

Every time my reflection
catches me off guard.
Every time I feel my skin roll
as I bend forward.
Every time my hair
refuses to fall straight,
a neither here nor there
thin mass
hanging around my face.

Ugly. Ugly. Ugly.
My brain rhythmically chimes.

Every time I sip
cheap sugar-laden fizzy sodas
in the summer,
the folds
grow multiple and
the skin wrinkles,
an unmade pale bed-sheet spread
on an always unsure 18 year old.

Ugly. Ugly. Ugly.
My brain rhythmically chimes.

Every time a smooth
30 something,
coffee coloured curves and
strong legs,
markets a sugar free,
palm-sized box,
to my face.

Ug-gly? Ugly? Ugl-ly?
My brain questions
in staccato.

In our feminist age, where
instant acceptance
of what had been made to seem
unnatural,
for what feels like eons,
is now to be hurriedly
clutched,
unhesitatingly claimed
and held close
like a battered animal
making a slow recovery.

The Broken Bottle

Kathakali Dutta
III year

The sticky summer air hit my face as soon as I rolled down the car's window. The warm air blew the tendrils of my hair and dulled the cloudiness in my head. I hurled my beer bottle at a stone through the car window. The bottle fell limply by the edge of the road. It didn't even hit the stone. *A bad shot, indeed.* My face fell as a boom of laughter erupted from behind me as my eyes fell on the bottle lying pathetically intact by the side of the road. It was my first bottle of beer; I had to commemorate the occasion by breaking it.

"It's okay, kiddo. You don't have to". But I *had* to. Hearing the bottle smash against the stone, watching the glass shatter into smithereens on the broken pavement was an achievement for me. All my friends had done it before me and I wanted to do it too. I turned around in my seat and demanded another bottle but all I got in return was the cackling guffaw of my friends. Huffing and scowling, angry and annoyed with myself more than at my friends, I opened the door and jumped out. A sudden wave of dizziness hit me and for a moment my entire world blurred. Hiking my white cotton *sabwar* up, not out of concern for them getting soiled but out of sheer fear of my mum's wrath, I stomped on my way to the lying bottle. I wondered what my mother would say if she saw me now; tipsy and wandering alone on the streets of Delhi trying to break a beer bottle. But I had to do it, had to prove to myself that I could do this. Making up my mind, I jumped over the puddles and picked up the bottle to examine it. Not even a single crack. *Wow! I was bad.*

I came back to the car with disoriented yet purposeful steps and turned around and faced the rock. The laughter and the music from the car disappeared in the background as I took deep breaths to calm myself. The only sound I could hear were the beatings of my heart and the clinking of my silver bangles. I hurled the bottle at the large stone with all the strength my disoriented body could muster. I saw it happen in slow motion, crystal clear in the dark night as the bottle hit the stone and shattered. Pieces of green glass flew everywhere and a yelp left my mouth as I punched the air. *I had done it.* Arms enveloped around me and I could feel myself being congratulated but I couldn't take my eyes away from the shards of green glass scattered on the road. The shards twinkled under the moonlight and I couldn't help but wonder if it maybe reflected the twinkle in my eyes.

As I rode back home, I leaned my head against the glass window and watched the road pass by with Kishore Kumar playing in the background, realizing that for the first time that breaking something caused me immense pleasure. On a deserted road, far away from home, a broken beer bottle ended my confidence in a way nothing ever had. The realization made me smile as I settled back into my seat and watched the night pass by lazily.

Ghungroo

Sonalee Das

I year

The striking of little routine bells
Stringed together to make dancing
Audible to those who've always been
Unable to listen, hear, let it tiptoe
Though layers of skin and lift them up
Like you do, to your silhouette when
You hit your feet against the ground
In such vigour, astounding the solid
Marble tiles that seem to come alive
Rejoicing so, it's perplexing to me
The constant coming together of
Those little bells when struck has always
Perked me up with their unceasing sound
Echo all around, narrow silent corridors
As you move and slide obeying them
In perfect rhythmic sanity I see how they make you feel they are
Have always been the reason, of and
For, your existence, life and time
As you order them you glide across
For all wee hours they remain tied
As though they've always belonged
To your curved perfect ankles, inviting
It perplexes me as I witness
Your stature as you take them off
The light going out of your eyes in gold
You seem empty again till the time when
You shall wear those little ringing pieces
Bound with the harmony of your soul.

When East Met West: Young Indian Artists Redefining Art

Sandhita Chandra
III year

The diversity in Indian art today is at a new height. With influences from around the country and across the world now available to our indigenous artists, the confluence of cultures has led to the creation of a new beauty. Young Indian artists from all over the country are increasingly entering the global art scene, each of them with her/his own individualistic take to offer.

While some of these quirky artists use Indian symbols and motifs to take them to a new level, others draw from their surroundings and culture, and others still create altogether unique things, finding inspiration inside their own heads.

These eight incredible individuals are making the country an even more stunning place, one brush stroke at a time, making Western popular trends and genres relatable, transforming them into beautiful, intrinsically “Indian” works of art.

1. Artist(s) Anonymous

Kochi's newest street artist is here to give Banksy (the popular graffiti artist) a run for their money. Guess who, as they call themselves, have been covering any available surface in the Fort Kochi region with art that strikes the exact balance between pop-culture and progressive. After rising to fame through a Reddit thread and then being covered by BuzzFeed, Guess who's real identity, like that of any good street artist, is unknown. Their cross-cultural work brings together Indian tropes and Western symbols in their curious yet entertaining graffiti. Funny, thought-provoking, relatable - they do it all. From figures like Michael Jackson, Jimmy Hendrix and Bob Marley shredding on their *sitars* and *veenas*, to Mona Lisa carrying a *matka*, and . . . well, just scroll through their artwork at Imgur; we assure you, it's fantastic.

2. Going Dotty

This artist uses the traditional Indian *bindi* motif in all her artwork. Fascinated by the ritualistic use of the *bindi* by millions of people every day, Bharti Kher examines all the different interpretations of this symbol's significance and draws them as one, merging the diversity of Indian cultures into a single force. She considers the traditions and customs of the country to be its unifying as opposed to dividing factor and therefore attempts to bring out this unity and sense of collectiveness in her work. With paintings and fibre glass sculptures as her mediums of choice, Bharti attempts to push herself further with every piece.

Her spectacular work can be accessed at her Saatchi page.

3. Heroes of India

Illustrator Raj Kamal Aich says he likes to spend his time imagining different things - and that he did when he created his series featuring Western superheroes as Indians, drawing from various superstitions and cultures to re-imagine them. Whether it's Thor smoking a *beedi* (the local, cheaper variant of a cigarette) or a turbaned Spider-Man, Aich has explored them all hilariously. His quirky, cheeky illustrations are a response to his feeling that, other than Chacha Chaudhary, there have been no real Indian superheroes. One day, he wishes for his Superheroes project to be adapted for animated movies or TV shows. He is also building the background stories of his heroes, developing plotlines about their lives and is exploring new things with each story.

To stay updated with his work, superhero-related or otherwise, you can follow him on Twitter or Kyoorius.

4. Photo Synthesis

Mumbai's Anil Saxena does photo manipulations that range between the playful and profound, but each of them is sure to make you look twice. The artist started out with retouching conventional darkroom photos before he began his experiments with Photoshop and painting. A true perfectionist of his art, he says his goal is to have the work he does on the picture go unnoticed. Saxena merges Indian themes with Western images in his fascinating works that touch topics from social issues to humour. His objective is to please the eye, and he finds that without little surprises and things that make you take note, life would be rather bland.

His contributions towards adding a little spice to life can be seen on Behance.

5. Fairy-tale Wedding

Amrit Grewal was like any other wedding photographer before inspiration struck. By manipulating photos, he re-imagines Indian brides as Disney princesses! Or is it Disney princesses re-imagined as Indian brides? We're not entirely sure, but what we can definitely tell you is that the effect is striking, to say the least. These pictures perfectly hit the mark with their gorgeous ethnicity, and are a delightful blend of East and West.

You can find out more about his work (and maybe hire him to be your wedding photographer!) at his website.

6. Mad Hatter Party

The collection of eccentric artistic work by a modern artists' group in the Sikri Bagh in Modinagar is, per the India Today article that covered it, like a Mad Hatter party. Sudarshan Shetty's huge, fake-velvet aeroplane lies on a sofa; C.K. Rajan has painted eggplant and carrots in purple and pink, while Ajay Desai has painted bits and pieces of shrubbery that he found in the jungle-like garden; Subodh Gupta is building a walled enclosure with *gobar* (dung cakes). Iftikar Dadi is superimposing translucent lice combs over cards of Bollywood stars to show how Pakistan's efforts to censor Indian popular culture only makes it more seductive. There's even a cloth-covered tunnel winding towards nowhere that Jyoti Kolte is making.

This motley crew flouts every rule, making up their own as they go along, because what is art if not spontaneous and a little bit crazy? They work in a free space with no boundaries and encourage others to do the same in their workshop 'Khoj,' with twelve artists from India and twelve from around the world. You can read more about their workshops on their website.

7. Being Indian

Dhruvi Acharya reveals in her works a passion for the Western genres of street art and comic strips. However, as she wants to express the everyday struggles of her life as a woman and a mother, she Indianizes these forms of art in a way that suits her subject. She uses Indian motifs and patterns, repeated across her body of work to express the emotional aspect of an urban Indian woman's everyday life. She sometimes uses images with an indication of text but no words properly shown in order to tantalize, while at other times she provides only text with the images eliminated in a provocative assertion of revelation. Either way, speech bubbles are a regular feature in her art. Therefore, for her, an image is the garment that clothes the body; it must be represented in just the right way so as to simultaneously leave enough to the imagination as well as offer the suggestion of something more.

Her works can be seen at her Saatchi or Saffron pages, or her website.

8. Take it to the Street

This initiative is beautiful, simple and made for the ordinary everyman artist in India wanting to share their work with a larger audience.

St+art India has been adding colourful new street art to Mumbai, and making the city a lot brighter, prettier, and more interesting. As part of their campaign to give young Indians a fresh perspective on art, they have been working to put up graffiti and murals all over Bandra, Dharavi and Peddar Road. Hanif Qureshi, the Creative Director, says they want to make the city's landscape a more exciting and colourful place rather than one of only grey building after grey building.

You can read more about their movement as well as browse through all their lovely work on their website

Bollywood - Hollywood, Haya Rabba!

Siddhi Sehgal

III year

Is there any year when movies don't matter? The movie industry has captured widespread attention in recent years. What really interests us about watching a film is good content, good characters, the variety of songs, and of course the very new trend of mixed language. Even though Hollywood and Bollywood are extremely different formally and thematically, the lines between the two are starting to blur. Bollywood movie directors have always had a keen eye on their Hollywood counterparts. Indian cinema has for several times been criticised for this; what we call being a copy cat! Bollywood is famous for making remakes of Hollywood movies, and though it takes tremendous effort to keep it "original," the truth always comes out! But what is praiseworthy is the creativity. To create similar characters and plot is not an easy task, especially when it is about two deeply contrasting cultures. Bollywood movies like *Hate Story 3*, *Brothers*, *Queen*, *Jo Jeeta Wohi Sikandar*, and *Hum Tum*, have found inspiration from movies like *Indecent Proposal*, *Warrior*, *The Art Of Travel*, *Breaking Away*, and *When Harry Met Sally* respectively.

What is much more interesting is that it is not just Bollywood but even Hollywood movies which have remakes of Bollywood films. Western films have picked up ideas, scenes, and story lines of Indian films and used in their movies. This calls for a big applause and is a moment of pride. International films have taken 'inspiration' from Indian cinema and in fact have used the best of Bollywood and regional movies. BR Chopra's *Chhoti Si Baat* (1975), a story about a shy man who wanted to make a strong connection with a woman he liked is seen to have inspired the character of Will Smith in *Hitch* (2005). The story of *Leap Year* (2010) runs on the similar lines of the very famous movie *Jab We Met* (2007). The award winning film, *A Common Man* (2013) was an official remake of Neeraj Pandey's *A Wednesday* (2008). Hollywood and Bollywood's unique friendship doesn't end here. Bollywood movies like *Balle Balle*, *Amritsar to LA* and *Football Shootball Hai Rabba*, are the Hindi versions of *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Bend It like Beckham* respectively, stole the hearts of Indian movie lovers with their twists and turns. Simply put, it is like Jane Austen meets Yash Chopra, ballrooms make way for *bhangra*, *ghagra* replaces gowns, England meets India, and 'hey!' becomes '*wadhiya ji?*'

Not only the plot line of movies but also the songs are a combination of English and Hindi. Bollywood songs are no longer purely Hindi; it is the 'Hinglish' songs that are the new swag! This is not a recent phenomenon, however; it is an age old tradition. Songs like '*Mera Naam Chin Chin Chu... Hello Mister, how do you do?*', '*My name is Anthony Gonsalves*,' '*Ae hip-hopper mujhe pyaar to kar*,' and '*Indi pump up the jam*,' are from the category of 'Hinglish' songs. We all like a bit of mix-and-match, and it is no wonder that just as we enjoy conversing in 'Hinglish', most of our songs have 'Hinglish' lyrics too. Playback singers enjoy such music and for them 'the English influence in songs is natural and not forced.' Surely the trend is here to stay and is continuing well even today with songs like '*Tumbi ho bandhu*' (Cocktail) and '*Tukurtukur*' which says- "*Aiyaiyaiya Vasco da Gama, aiyaiyaiyapagdi pajama*." The other side is not free from such influences. Songs from Hindi films have been used in commercially successful Hollywood films, too. AR Rahman's track '*Chaiyaa Chaiyaa*' from *Dil Se* was used as opening credits for the film *Inside Man*. The *thumka* song '*Chamma Chamma*' from *China Gate* was a fascination for Baz Luhrmann who talked to his producers to use the remix of this song. Known as one of the first rock and roll songs in Bollywood, '*Jaan pehchan ho*' from *Gumnaam* was used in the Hollywood film *Ghost World*. Even actors are working interchangeably in Bollywood and Hollywood; take for instance the very famous Deepika Padukone and Priyanka Chopra, Jackie Chan and Sylvester Stallone. Several foreign producers and production houses are financing Bollywood movies and similarly big producers like Reliance are making pacts with foreign companies. The gap between the East and West seems to be diminishing and the movies are significant in this ongoing dynamic. The fusion of Hindi and English in movies and songs has gained much popularity across the world. If Indians enjoy the tunes of Rihanna and Bieber, the English love to dance on the sound of *dhool* and do *bhangra*.

If Captain America were Indian

Prithiva Sharma and Sonalee Das

1 year

If Captain America were Indian...

...the first thing that would have been noticed would not have been his heroism

Neither his strength

Nor his shield

The first thing to be noticed would have been his costume

For, it would have been a man participating in a fancy-dress competition

Clothed as "a walking tiranga!"

The second thing to be noticed would have been his accent

Amidst the laughter would lie whispers, "oh that accent smells like a prospective groom"

And "beta did you study abroad?"

The third thing to be noticed would have been his fairness

And when you think, I mean he's just,---

Oh no! it's just native obsession with

Fairness.

The next thing they would,

perhaps would want

Would be the services

Of the mobile man

Handsome mobile man

They'd say.

If he ever fought crime for us

He'd be bashed up

Probably shot

Not forgetting the million

And billion new words

He'd have heard.

If he ever fought crime for us

Do you think his being with the girls

Would be because they want him

Or because they always need him.

If he ever fought crime for us

Surely, he'd be aware of the

Loud arguing wives downstairs

And then they'd call out for him

Kaptaan Amreeka

Where, where?

A Chain Broken

Shyama Sadasivan
III year

Living in a 'third world country' where English is considered as the yardstick of judging one's classiness, all of us walk around with a deep schism within us, where we are rived between fitting into the English speaking 'elite' section of the society, and staying true to our roots. Imagine how deep the rupture would be within a person who speaks, hears, and thinks in three different languages! I study English literature, speak Malayalam at home, and ultimately speak in Hindi for social purposes. Yes, you guessed it right! It's a mess inside my head. Most of the time I end up translating the whole sentence literally from one language to another, and don't even get me started on all the Freudian slips.

I hail from a tiny part of this third world country. Like many people, my parents migrated to the big city of New Delhi because clearly there weren't many job opportunities back home. After they were married, they situated themselves in a relatively Malayali-oriented place. Our area has four schools, one convent, two public schools and one government aided Kerala School. They definitely preferred the convent school; and so I was naturally admitted into that. Although my class had many Malayali students; for obvious reasons, I ended up befriending either students who were from Kerala but never spoke Malayalam, or people who were not from my state. As a result, I ended up looking down on people who spoke Malayalam in school, and anyhow that was strictly forbidden. Oh yes! That is the beauty of English-medium schools. They force you into talking, walking, and behaving English. Funny! They had prizes for those who spoke English the most. Anyhow, what this ended up doing to my psyche was that I was condescending to all those who spoke Malayalam in school and I myself started speaking Malayalam in a funny way. I kept fumbling, deliberately trying to bring people's attention to how I didn't know how to speak Malayalam and how I thought it was a base form of communication and started being disdainful of my own people. It wouldn't have been much of a problem if my parents did not insist on speaking Malayalam at home. Sigh. That was something. So, I ended up hating it a bit more. Add to that, they were forcing me to learn how to read and write my regional language. Well the hatred that brewed within me was only imaginable when I had to drag my ass to those Malayalam classes during scorching Sunday afternoons.

Time flew by and I entered high school, my attitude remaining pretty much the same (yeah, yeah, I was a frivolous kid). I didn't only judge people who spoke Malayalam within the school premises, but also my dad for speaking improper Hindi. Every time he said "*bhaiyya chalega?*" to a rickshaw driver instead of "*chalogé?*", I cringed internally. I would shake my head and slowly start walking away. I had all these set rules for what 'proper' English and Hindi ought to be, mostly drilled into my head due to years of disciplining my psyche, knowingly or unknowingly.

As a person who belongs to Kerala, and whose parents still long for their hometown so dearly even after having moved out of it, thus approximating its rhythms in the way they go about their everyday lives, it kind of becomes an unspoken rule at home to speak in Malayalam, and that too as perfectly as one can. But as a teenager, at that moment, it became not only desirable for me to speak good English due to academic necessities, but also good Hindi, due to social necessity. So, you need to get all those 'subject, verb, object' and the '*hai*', '*hun*', '*ho's* right. And if you fail to deliver the proper '*shudh*' Hindi, heads turn, lips curl up in a smirk, throats are cleared and fingers are raised to correct you. Every variation of Hindi (except Urdu, of course!) thus becomes vulgar. And anyone who gets their grammar wrong can always get their throats cut by the grammar Nazis. Dedicating your life to learning 'proper' Hindi and English thus become eternal goals.

Fast forward and I reach college. I took up English honors, as expected from a frivolous young girl. While everyone feared that it would make things worse, I was adamant. And today, I have no regrets. Because this discipline actually helped me put aside all my prejudices and made me face each of the things that I evaded all my life. I finally learnt to love all languages and not to set one language against the other; to see the beauty of every language. I learnt to actually appreciate Malayalam. Malayalam literature, culture and even the language, which I realized was so rich and

tremendously beautiful. I started reading more Malayalam poetry and prose. I started acting in regional theatre. Met people who were proud to walk, talk and behave in Malayalam. They had no shame at not knowing Hindi fully or of speaking it in a broken way. Finally, I learnt to wear my language on my sleeves, proudly. And I realized how colonized my own mind was. But I ultimately let that all past me, and today I am proud to be a Malayali. Or am I? I have finally accepted my fault and embraced my language, but will all the discourses that ruled my mind for eighteen long years go away so easily?

P.S.: Every time I wrote Malayali or Malayalam in this essay, I had to go back and read it twice because it sounded off to me. Maybe not to anyone else, maybe just to my ears.

People Say

Pavini Suri

I year

Every house has a certain vocal colloquial syntax to it that seems out of place outside it. As a person who has held serious debates over the gender of *dahi* (yogurt) I can say with the utmost confidence; household registers do exist. Another revelation I came to was that sometimes the phrases you use every day don't make sense to the people around you. So, I present to you some unique phrases that my family uses on a daily basis. These Punjabi phrases were in fact coined by my father's grandmother and have somehow made their way into the conversation of a 4th generation millennial with admittedly western sensibilities.

1. ***Sini Makkai:*** *This* one literally means wet corn (that by extension can't pop). It's a metaphor for a person that has no spark in him. **English equivalent:** wet rag
2. ***Thipar di Thipar:*** *thipar* is the Punjabi word for turnip, which, let's be honest, isn't the prettiest of vegetables. So, this phrase comes in handy when you want to describe someone that's the turnip of people – an unattractive person. **Usage:** *thipar di thipar*
3. ***Ke pe kaniyo?:*** Simply translated would mean "What are you trying to say?" However, the sentiment runs so much deeper than that: depending on the tone it could convey a variety of meaning, from 'Repeat yourself', to 'I didn't understand you', to 'You don't deserve to have an opinion' simply by an extended stress on the first word. **Pronunciation:** *kə paɪ Kan~e~yo.*
4. ***Dande talle gitti:*** The act of taking a betel seed and placing it under your tooth so that you can't talk in an effort to keep your peace or curb your desires. **Common usage:** you've run out of money for shopping, *ab dande talle gitti rakho!*

This trend of creating our own idioms doesn't seem to go out of fashion. It's renewed with every generation and I view it as something intrinsically Indian.

For instance, my mom calls me *kochikame*. My fellow 90s kids will recognize this to be, the name of a Japanese cartoon dubbed in Hindi, which used to air when I was 8. In our house, it means cute (if I understand the logic I'll let you know.)

It probably makes even less sense to people reading this now. But bear the fluidity of language in mind as I ask you a very profound question:

Kya apke ghar mai dahi jamti hai ki jamta hai?

Indianisation and *Chutnification* of Language

Muskan Khanna
II year

The new millennium is undoubtedly proving to be the dawn of a reversal of history. Our religious scriptures have proclaimed that there will be a 'reversal of historical antecedents' that would be applicable to the existential being of man. Values have changed drastically. Indian family traditions rooted in the efficacy of its value systems, and owed their genesis to the *Ramayana*, are crumbling. Today, every urban house lives by the new philosophy: 'child is the father of man', where the elderly/senior citizens are marginalized and consumerism is dominated by infantile and juvenile decisions. Outside the home too, society has assumed anomalies that either loudly proclaim the new wisdom of the modern man or plainly spell his folderol. While there is a reversal in the historical Indian value system, there is also re-working towards a reversal of class and caste domination. We have pushed ourselves to the edge of all forms of living: social, economic and religious. Man has come close to being omniscient as he has succeeded in going beyond the frontiers of knowledge.

On the intellectual front as well, there is an urge to breathe freely. The last traces of a dogmatic adherence to imperialist traditions have given way to a very cosmopolitan and global interface. The legacy of the English language has taken India to immense heights in world economy and has brought laurels to the brilliance of the Indian genius which is dominating every aspect of the global hurricane of economic liberalization, westernization, and the proliferation of new information technologies. While the English language has largely contributed to India's new international status, it is also the language that is quantitatively spoken more by Indians than its native speakers. Macaulay's minutes had established English in India as a language of study from middle school onwards. Gradually the language spread its reach with the growth of the imperial rule. All along, patriots and proponents of nationalism advocated the use of the vernacular Hindi as the national language to be used for all official and social purposes. While the emphasis on the 'correct', 'national' language still prevails, English has taken over all forms of communication rather surreptitiously.

Our politicians have been screaming themselves hoarse about doing away with the 'foreign' language, but send their own offspring to elite private and public schools and later to 'foreign' universities to become '*angrezi babus*'. In short, there is a reversal in the fortunes of English language in India today. Globalization has made English geographically and culturally appropriate. Further, Indians in South Asia and elsewhere have enhanced and molded the language as per the requirements of our milieu. Publishers and lexicographers all over the world need to cater to an entirely new set of Indian savants in India, coupled with the vast number of South Asian diaspora and NRIs for whom the English language is the new mother tongue. In such a situation, the Indianisation of the English language is inevitable, with more and more vernacular and regional words being incorporated into the English language. Indians are contributing immensely to the hectic global scientific, economic and cultural activity. The target users and audience are opinion leaders, reporters, newscasters, scientists, teachers, students, and migrants who have to deal with proliferating concepts in different geographical and cultural milieus. The use of Indianized English is inevitable and users are now credited with innovations that are variants of the native form of the language. '*Chutnification*' of English is the new mantra of the day. The word "*chutnification*" ("*chutney* + -fication = *chutnification*"), meaning "the process of becoming *chutney*") was coined by Salman Rushdie in his novel, *Midnight's Children*. *Chutney* is an ancient way of preserving seasonal fruits or vegetables so that it can be eaten all year round. In a similar fashion, *Chutnification* of language made the language tangy, flavored, and exciting. The process of *chutnification* is rampant not only among lay users but also among Indian English writers, as the language gets set in newer molds. Truly, we have '*chutnified*' and 'Indianized' the English language.

Wonderfully, every new edition of the renowned Oxford Dictionary gets appended with a new list of words of Indian origin. While the English language exhibits a flexibility to evolve and expand, there is also a growing tendency to blend Hindi with English (type of English used by speakers of Hindi – '*Hinglish*'). However, the word '*Hinglish*' is another new entry in the Oxford Dictionary. Among the roughly 355,000 words and phrases in the

Oxford dictionary, about 700 of them find their roots in some of the most ancient and notable Indian languages like Sanskrit, Hindi, and Tamil.

These additions are a delectable list of words typically used in an 'utterly-butterly' Indian setting. To cite some examples: '*badmash*' (a worthless or a clever person), '*hawala*' (illegal currency exchange), '*bandb*' (curfew), '*dhaba*' (open air highway-side eatery), '*bhelpuri*' (a popular snack made of puffed rice and spices from Western India) and '*chamcha*' (an obsequious person), that have earned respect due to their inclusion in the dictionary. Other Indian words including '*bindaas*' (carefree), '*lehnga*' (an ankle-length skirt) and '*masala*' (a variety mix of spices), '*Bhagwan*' (Indian God), '*bhakti*' (devotional worship directed to a supreme deity), '*bhajan*' (a devotional song), '*bhang*' (cannabis) and '*adda*' (a place where people gather for conversation) are also listed in the Oxford Dictionary of English. Truly, there is a fusion of the East and the West taking place as English language gets Indianized.

The last couple of decades have seen a considerable rise in the usage of many words associated with spirituality (like *Yoga*, *Mantra*, *Guru*, *Pundit*, *Karma*, *Dharma*, *Nirvana*) and these have also found their way into the media sphere. The most famous word of Indian origin today could indisputably be "*Yoga*", owing to the global interest in this ancient art form. Literally, the word in Sanskrit means "a seamless integration of the mind, body and spirit"; the word has found tremendous resonance in the global context. The words "*Guru*," used in phrases like "language *guru*" or "Get the *Guru*'s blessings," and '*dharma*' are used widely. "*Tandoor*" is one word almost all Brits would know because of "*Tandoori Chicken*", the second-most famous Indian delicacy in Britain. It is prepared in a '*tandoor*', a cylindrical clay oven in which food is cooked over hot coals. Words like '*curry*' and '*chutney*', 'bungalow' from '*bungla*' and 'pyjamas' are all of Indian origin and have found their way into the vocabularies of native speakers of English. The global multi-ethnic population has contributed to the expansion of the language: "*Chacha*", a Hindi word for uncle, occurs frequently in Indian English writings.

Writers like Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, and Salman Rushdie have contributed significantly to the '*chutnification*' of language, but unfortunately for the western audience, they could do better by providing a glossary of the Indianized or '*chutnified*' words (not translating these words is one of the key strategies of post-colonial 'writing back'). There are some more interesting additions with roots in Sanskrit and Hindi: *avatar*, *mahatma*, *swastika*, *bandanna*, *bangle*, *chintz*, *cot*, *cummerbund*, *dungaree*, *juggernaut*, *jungle*, *loot*, *maharaja*, *nabob*, *punch* (the drink), *shampoo*, *thug* and many more. Desi forums claim that it is no longer safe using the word "*badmash*" loudly within the hearing of an '*angrez*', as *goras* (white people) know the meaning. It is not only English cuisine which has been spiced up with spicy Indian *curry*, but also their language, with a large number of Indian origin words being used in everyday conversation. This is in a way due to our 'writing back' to the Empire. In several parts of Britain, "*achha*", "*arre*", and "*am chey*" are commonly understood.

Thanks, are certainly due to the award-winning novels of the growing tribe of Indian English writers based in the homeland as well as part of the diaspora, such as Salman Rushdie, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Vikram Seth and Arundhati Roy, who have ensured with their brilliance that words of Indian origin become part of English. But these are mostly 'elitist' writers who intend their works for a western audience. There are many Indian words in the rich tapestries of their prose, especially the words for food and the 'dirty' words. If glossaries have become *passé*, it is unkind to allow the reader to be left with unfamiliar words. On the flip side, 'Indianisation' and '*chutnification*' of the English language by the common man or the lay man often results in grave errors difficult to digest by native speakers. Rapid progress has ushered in a new form of socialism where the house maid freely intersperses her vernacular communication with English words like: "*Memsabib*, *aaj aap ko ek 'secret' batani hai*" or "*Madam badi 'fast' gaadi 'drive' kar rahi hai*"!! Such Indianisms abound aplenty both in oral and written forms. Other common examples are: the use of a generalized question tag, 'isn't it?' (you are liking it here, isn't it?) and repeating a word for emphasis (it was a small small box; Put put; Take take). Then there are calques from local languages: *dining-leaf* (a banana leaf used to serve food), *cousin brother* (a male cousin), *cousin sister* (a female cousin) and *co-brother-in-law* (one who is also a brother-in-law). More '*chutnification*' is evident in words which are coined by joining a component from English and Hindi each, as in *brahminhood* (the condition of being a Brahmin), *coconut payasam* (a dish made of coconut), *goonda ordinance* (an ordinance against goondas), *grameen bank* (a village bank), *kaccha road* (a mud road), *lathi charge* (a charge using lathis), *pan/paan shop*

(a shop that sells betel nut and lime for chewing, wrapped in a pepper leaf), *policewala* (a policeman), swadeshi cloth (home-made cloth), tiffin-box (a lunch-box.) etc. This includes local variations and inflections of English words: batch-mate (a classmate or fellow student), body-bath (an ordinary bath), by-two coffee (in the South, a restaurant order by two customers asking for half a cup of coffee each), communal used with reference to Hindus and Muslims (as in communal riots), condole (to offer condolences to someone), England-returned (used of one who has been to England), Eve-teasing (teasing or harassing young women), and four-twenty (a cheat or swindler). Words that are otherwise archaic continue to be used in Indian English such as dicky (the boot/trunk of a car), needful ('Please do the needful, Sri Patel') and stepney (a spare wheel or tyre). If the craze for curry has brought in words like *balti*, *tikki*, *pulao* and *pappadom*, music has introduced *bhangra*, *mujra* and *ghazal*. The craze for Bollywood films had added to the general awareness of Hindi words, including swear-words like "*sala*". Globally Bollywood films have a large international audience which fully comprehends terms like: *theek*, *yaar*, *naach* and *gaana* amongst several others.

It is important for any language to have organic growth and be constantly adapting itself. Moreover, as an Indian one feels both proud and happy about the fact that India is the only country that seems to have added all the color and fun to the dictionary.

Thus, this new blend of a hybridized language structure that the country has produced, brings forth the massive evolution that English has gone through and how the diverse, secular country has internalized it in its everyday realm.

Meant to Be

Pavini Suri
I year

Folded into a warm embrace
Despite difference of color or race;
Intertwined and indistinct,
They become as they sink
To again rise.
Joy at the union no one can disguise;
From different corners of the world they came
To become one whole, the same,
The union made to please:
Prantha and cheese.

Plastic Crystals (haiku)

Sandhita Chandra
III year

Lack-lustre, in dull
Clumps, pylons, and penthouses
Shine on Diwali.

Nuptial

Sayantani Chowdhury
III year

Modernity stood there smiling
Three piece suit and necktie.
Inked in vermilion,
Draped in *kanjivaram*,
Complementing him thus-
Another symbol stood
Our beloved, India's mother!

Michael (and) Madhusudan: A Literati of Conjoined Cultures

Sayantani Chowdhury
III year

Unlike his contemporaries in the mid-nineteenth century, Madhusudan Dutta, a pioneering figure in Bengali literature, was fascinated at once by Anglican culture. Familiar with English literature from an early age, the English Romantics like Wordsworth and Byron majorly inspired him. Converted to the faith of Christianity and married to a European woman (the first Indian to do so, averse as he was to the idea of caste-based endogamous marriage), he adopted his '*bilati*' (foreign) name - 'Michael'. Determined to make a mark for himself as an English poet, he wrote several poems desiring to have them published in English magazines abroad. Having failed in this endeavour, he decided upon crossing the seas himself. Interestingly however, as he ventured on his European tour, he penned a poem (somewhere between June 1862 and October 1863) fraught with anxiety of failure in that undertaking and expressing his wish to be immortalized in the memory of his motherland Bengal. Following I present to you my translation of that poem - 'Bangabhumir Proti'.

To the Land of Bengal

Hold in your memory thy slave, Mother, this I entreat you.

In course of pursuing passion
If life is brought to cessation
Oust me not of your lotus-heart's benison.

If in the land far and foreign
Perchance, my breath is stolen
Like a breaking star from the sky, that I shall not complain.

Death awaits all that is hither born
Was an invincible ever borne?
In the rill of life was the water ever still?

But if kept in thy memory's store
Mother, unfearing I face death's door.
Drowned in elixir, even as a fly perishes nevermore!

Worthy is he amongst the men
Who lives on, unforgotten,
Cherished forever in the mind of all his brethren.

But brandishing which virtue
Shall I implore of you
Immortality thus, O verdant mother, tell me thou.

Lest mercy you choose to confer
Past vices, regard virtues fewer
Bless this slave with perpetuity, O you boon- bestower!

In memory's expanse let me blossom
As in the lake of mind's envision-

Nectarous lilies adorn, be it spring or autumn.

His anxieties were proven true. Without having earned any fame, the 'bilat' son of Bengal came back to his mother, dejected by his ideal, and his withered literary capabilities. But the mother kept his request. Bengal remembers Dutta as the 'bilatikobi' (foreigner poet) who introduced free verse (*amitraksharchhanda*) to Bengali poetry and developed the Bengali sonnet form. His heroic verses like 'Meghnadbadh Kabya' are unparalleled for their Dantesque and Homeric styles. He often wrote English plays like *King Porus*, *The Captive Lady*, *Visions of Past* based on Indian contexts while at other times he translated his own plays written in Bengali like 'Sarmishthba', to English (*Sermista*).

Interview with Ms. Pragma Gupta (Teacher-in- Charge)

"No culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive" - Mahatma Gandhi

Taking the discussion on cultural hybridity forward, we spoke to the Teacher-in-charge of the English Department of Gargi College, Ms. Pragma Gupta.

Q. What has been your experience in teaching Shakespeare to millennials? Since there isn't only an era gap and a nationality gap, but also a cultural gap.

A. Why just Shakespeare? There are so many authors we teach who'd qualify for this kind of a 'gap'. But since you ask about Shakespeare - it's always fun teaching Shakespeare. I think the students enjoy the kind of mischief he creates. On a more serious note - the bourgeois subject in the making - with extraneous ideologies crystallising as consensual beliefs, Europe setting itself up vis-a-vis the non-European world - Shakespeare's canvas is immense. What fascinates me personally about Shakespeare is his dialogism. There are so many ideologies grating against each other. His sonnets of course are the most fun I think. The way he deconstructs this whole rhetoric of love and beauty and sincerity. I find it very liberating.

Q. If you have taught translations, how do you think they are different from the English text? In translations, do you think the addition of the audience's preferred cultural idioms is important? Or does the resonance come directly from the universality of emotions?

A. Doing a text in translation can always be tricky. One always talks of the loss and the gain in the act of translation, but one also wonders what the original/primary text would have read like. What always intrigues me the most are some of the words that go untranslated. For me, they anchor the text more than the translated pages put together. Not so much from the 'universality of emotions' but a wedge that separates and yet holds the two different cultural spaces - of the writer and the reader - together.

Q. According to you, is there a reduced curiosity to explore literature because of technology and other developments? And are students intolerant to the portrayal of characters that do not really have the similar, contemporaneous lifestyle?

A. No, I wouldn't say that at all. Some students put technology to some serious good use. Technology can't be an alibi for non-performance. If there is indifference, it is primarily because we have chosen to become insular. The kind of "reduced curiosity" that worries me is not necessarily about the syllabus text at hand. I mean we have all got pulled up/punished for not reading up in time as students. The 'reduced curiosity' that actually frightens me is the kind of indifference, a myopia that students show at times about what is happening around us. When the Ramjas episode happened for instance - how some of my students had not really wanted to think it out, for no better reason than boredom. That's the kind of indifference to critical spaces that actually frightens me. I mean how much closer will it need to get to get us interested in it?

Q. Also, being a teacher in Delhi University exposes you to students from across India. Did that diversity ever become a hindrance in teaching certain cultural specific concepts?

A. Oh, never at all. How claustrophobic would a monochromatic classroom be?! It's always fun having a disparate, disjointed class. It can also be very humbling. I remember in one of my non-honours class rooms - when I was holding forth full steam about some feminist ideas, this student said to me "I feel very cheated. You talk of life choices here and I go back to a home where I can't even wear what I want." Not that I disbelieve in anything that I had been saying to that class, but it did make me think - how enclosed, how safe and convenient I had made that class room space into.

Creative Writing Winners from *Beat Them Bards*
Lit Fest 2016-17, Commemorating Shakespeare & Cervantes

A Tryst with Don Quixote

By Nidhi Verma
Jesus and Mary College
First position, Creative Writing Competition, Literary Fest 2017

He sat across the table, reading a book by Goethe, and after having read just the first page, the man broke into a puddle of tears. Silently amused, I watched him intently, drawn towards his, grand display of emotion. I must have been looking too much because shortly our eyes met and the rest is what I shall elucidate upon with the coming sentences.

I hid behind my book, mentally explaining myself to not look up again but since human desire, when repressed, tends to show up in uglier ways later, I decided to give in. As I looked up again, I caught him staring and then he spoke a word that led to my worst fears coming alive, he said, 'Declined.'

Declined? Do I like a fallen woman? and as the thought annoyed me and its further contemplation absolutely ripped apart sense of self and pride, he walked up to me.

'Dulcinea?' he asked. At least I presumed he was asking me, only later did I realize that he simply decided that I was Dulcinea.

'Oh, my Dulcinea!'

'Could you be quiet?' I interjected 'This is a library!'

'Oh, no my dear, all the world's a stage!'

'But that's Shakespeare.' It's funny how well it suited Don Quixote instead.

'Shakespeare? Is that the man who's been troubling you? I shall take this sword and...'

'Alright firstly, this is a library and you can't speak so loudly and secondly that's not a sword, that's a pen. Though a pen is mightier than a sword, but never mind.' He stood, there perplexed and before he could say anything, I stood up and shall deal with this creep, but not inside the damned library.'

Once we were out, we resumed.

'Shakespeare is the man who wrote the. All the world's a stage.'

Seems like a foolish fellow! Oh, my Dulcinea, not talk of another man in front of me and I alone shall be your knight in the shining armor...'

'No thank you. I don't understand what your deal is, but I am a self-sufficient woman, I don't need a knight in shining armor!'

'Nay, you are just a winsome young lass, every such lass need a knight!'

'What are you? Medieval? Oh, funny you are! But that made me realize that times haven't changed much have they, all the men today shall think...'

'Ah! A fool mouthed, sharp toothed monster, fear not my love, I shall protect you!'

'It's a dog.'

'Ah, the monsters called a dog!'

‘Yeah, you really are like the society, you’ll call the most adorable thing a monster!’

‘Oh, do not touch him Dulcinea!’

‘I will.’

And before I could cuddle with the little bundle of joy and fur, Don Quixote shooed him away using a book which he thought was his shield

‘You’ve really messed up buddy!’

‘Messed up? Why ma’am I am the most finely dressed man you shall ever meet!’

I ignored his rubbish and perambulated towards the metro station. By the time we reached the metro, Don Quixote had killed the monster in the way, challenged every electric pole monster and laughed on their cowardice for standing still out of fear, run after every moving vehicle to kill and laughed even more since they were more cowardly than electric poles for running away.

All the while, he walked before me, like a knight, just like he intended and oh how this weird situation began to seem not so weird at all. All my boyfriends were probably as bizarre and possessive as him, at least dear Don Quixote was honest.

‘So, I can assure you, you won’t find your favorite monster here.’

‘I fail to understand you.’

‘There are no windmills around here buddy.’

The joke of course did not make him laugh, because a cat monster caught his eye. As we walked inside the metro station, he exclaimed ‘Is there a dragon at the end of this cave? I shall protect you from it I shall fight it with bare hands...’

‘Don’t make such grand plans Quixote, it’s just the metro.’

‘Ah! The dragon is called the metro!’

I had by this time decided to let him indulge in his fantasies. What else would a mind so full of sentimental novels take pleasure in. But this every other story, my tryst with Don Quixote also had to come to an end. I wondered what could possibly make a good ending since I was not going to burn the library down.

‘Ha! My Dulcinea, it isn’t a dragon, it’s a humongous snake that comes our way!’

And thus, my dear Don Quixote, who loved me, in order to save me, jumped to stop the snake and disappeared forever. As I walked on the metro, the snake that Don Quixote fought and lost to, I finished reading the last page of Don Quixote and found myself smiling at the Quixote within me.

The Divine Cat, The Cat Divine

By Anne Bose

Jesus and Mary College

Second position, Creative Writing Competition, Literary Fest 2017

As I'm only beginning this, I haven't yet decided on the form this is going to take. However, a few clarifications I believe are needed, before I commence. I've changed names or given nicknames to characters as you can see below: Desdemona as Deedee, Juliet as Juliet, Lady Macbeth as L. Mac, Miranda as Mira

As I begin to tell you this story,
Not of an epic romance, with details gory,
It is however my responsibility to tell you
That where this is going, I haven't a clue.
I've been slapped this morning with a Shakespearean task
Why? What's this about? You ask
Or rather, who,
I tell you.
The answer's right in front of you, can't you see?
If Shakespeare is what you want, then Shakespearean I shall be
This is a story about Mira, L. Man., Juliet, Deedee,
And it's about a gentleman called Jerry.
Patience, I ask of you, to let me let this story unfold
To let me tell you this story, this story untold.
But first I must pray to that Divine Cat
For she's the one who pinned at Deedee's Zara Hat.
Oh, yes, the Hat is where it all started and ended for Deedee
Because it was the Hat's fault that she met Jerry.
(and the Divine Cat's fault too of course
Who for her actions has shown no remorse)
The girls sat together where they always sat
And three of them listened while the forth whined about her Hat.
"These beautiful frills, and the oh-so-pretty pink,"
Deedee moaned as she felt her heart sink.
Ah, the tragedy of losing one's loved, most precious Hat!
"Fie on you!" in unison, they cursed, they cursed that blasted Cat.
While they sat at the bar, each with a glass of wine
Deedee narrated the story of how she lost her prime.
"I was on the ferry, a few days ago,"

(She pauses to wipe a tear.)

“I never would have worn the hat, if I knew how the mind would blow!”

And while Deedee explained the matter in excruciating detail,

(While the other three oo-ed and aah-ed at all the right parts.)

Your present writer will save you the pain.

No, no, no, here the story won't halt,

But now's the time to reveal to you that wind was the Cat's fault!

Let's face it, it was a banal evening and the Cat was bored

So, she turned her back to the world, fell asleep and snored.

And because she was the Cat Divine,

She didn't care if blowing off a pretty girl's hut is out of line

The hat of course flew away,

Which is why Deedee is so sad today.

What she didn't consider in this,

(And neither did you, Miss!)

What falls in space always lands

And that is how the Hat fell in the most capable hands.

Oh, yes, the capable, very eligible Jerry,

Who also happened to be on that ferry.

Clueless he was and broke too,

Where his love life was going, he hadn't a clue.

But it was in the Cat's design to bring Jerry love

And Jerry took it as a sign from above

The honorable thing to do would be to return what he found

But he was a fool for love

And it was love that made his world go around, (not gravity!)

“Something so precious should only belong to that girl I saw in the bar,” he thought

The cat smirked, for the trap is set and now the poor victim is caught.

Now for the lack of time I cannot

Tell you how he got there at the same bar

Let's just say, the palace wasn't that far.

Time and distance in love stories haven't ever made any sense anyway.

The following predictable end is a dead- giveaway.

Hiding the Hat, he walls up to a group of four girls

And looks into the eyes of the one with curls.

“I think you're beautiful, may I know your name?”

He asks and she smiles,” I'm Deedee, but don't waste your time, I know your game.”

He replies, “You're beautiful and I'm honest, I'm Jerry by the way.”

Deedee smiled, "You look like you've a lot to say."

Seeing some cake and candles on the table, Jerry knew he had to make his move

The music was right, and so was the girl, he had no time to lose.

Taking out the hat and presenting it to her, he says to her,

Expectantly, "Happy Birthday, Deedee!"

Deedee looks at him teary-eyed,

Points to Juliet and laughs,

"It's not my birthday Jerry!"

Revolution

Prithiva Sharma

I year

i. Heat milk and water till it begins to simmer.

(Heat the two different cultures till they blend together and simmer. Years of colonial influences ready to boil and overflow out of the saucepan)

ii. Remove them from heat.

(Let the heat overtake. Let them simmer but never quite boil so that they quietly continue to blend. Years of simmering never coming to an end. The cultures quietly mixing without anyone knowing, to the point where the boil surprises them all.)

iii. Add tea bags, honey, cinnamon, cardamom, nutmeg, cloves and ground ginger.

(Add the spices, each one standing for a different era in a different culture, giving color to this beautiful, albeit strange amalgamation of two different worlds. Still slowly boiling, now accompanied with the sweetness of the union and the sharpness of its immediacy. Two different products of colonialism coming together to create something new.)

iv. Put the mixture over heat and let it simmer slowly.

(The blend is almost ready. The cultures have mixed, interacted with a sweet tanginess that stems from two different worlds coming together. Let them continue to simmer for the boil hasn't yet come, the blend hasn't yet been tasted entirely by all, the revolution is yet to come.)

v. Remove from heat and filter liquid. Serve the chai latte hot.

(Take away the heat. Splash water over years of colonial influences, trying to calm the wounds. Filter the experiences, let the unheard voices go. A revolution is created. Serve it hot, let it sting and burn.)

Soviets, Americans and Co.

Sarah Jalil

I year

“A bomb a day, keeps the sanity at bay”

Dear Soviets,

Thank you for raising the red raisin.

For the hook and wheat

And those crinkling membranes of young shoots of my homeland.

You watered it with your tanks and guns,

Sprinkling the gun powder pesticides so that the roots of the plant carrying the genes of genuineness

Are replaced with weeds of the Brezhnev breed.

You,

Converted my father, a dauntless sage into stripper of sorts.

Made my mother, subject to the gaze of your socialist face.

Made my future full of regrets, empty promises and adding one more name to the list of “never again”.

Dear Americans,

Thank you for your unmatched cooperation. The relentless hunt for chiseling out the aged stones and fractured souls of my countrymen was illuminating.

Bathing my Banyan Buddha in blood,

My Rumi’s refuge in mud and my ego in your finest curd.

Your secret strategy, awakened by the voice of the god’s chosen people

Built a bridge based on breach of faith. It is a never-ending tryst between the Taliban and me.

Now,

After 39 years of cruel existence, the supply of beer and vodka is more intact than the cardamom tea.

Perhaps it is the ultimate cure to a population that boasts of 27 million millennial suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

As a first-generation Afghan born in the Indian nation,

This journey is an existential commotion of an American-Russian-Indian backyard.

“Perhaps, we will meet on our way to the bridge of judgment.”

said my 65 years old father.

Stammering Lips

Simran Arora

I year

The following poem speaks on behalf of first generation Indian English writers and their struggles. Their warm embrace of the language as a mother to give it a very personalized upbringing yet dealing with the society's not so welcoming attitude towards the unconventional medium is what the poem aims to delineate.

An adopted tongue
Wears my complexion
And renders me its foster mother
When it dips itself
Into the hues of my Indianness;

The brush unable to be kept stationary
Sheds noisily some inherent colour,
Yet unapologetically the artist in me
Paints to create art for posterity
Lacking a pursuit for linguistic precision;

But I do dig deep into my seasoned flesh
That coaxes undiscovered jewels
To find words that resonate;
To voice many a muffled sounds
That sleep silent on my stammering lips;

But only the uninterrupted liberty
To select my channel of catharsis
Unshackled by presumption and expectancy
Will let my work dress immortality.

Bitacora

Department Activities: 2016-2017

The English Department had an eventful year as a number of extra-curricular activities were organized for the students to enhance their curricular development and encourage critical thinking to take them beyond the prescribed syllabus and also to bring a fresh spin to the sometimes monotonous college routine.

Bitacora, the English Department magazine and the Literary Society collaborated, as well as independently organized events throughout the year to keep the students engaged.

August

- **24th August 2016:** The Literary Society organized a lecture on “Babasaheb Ambedkar: In the Graphic Mode, and in Flesh and Blood” and the department had the immense pleasure to host Dr. Tapan Basu who was the guest speaker.
- Bitacora organized a workshop on Copy-Editing and Proofreading for the Student Editorial Team of the magazine with faculty member Ms. Jeyakirthana J.

September

- Faculty member Ms. Gayatri Mehra conducted an Editing workshop for the Student Editorial Team of the magazine. The workshop focused on how to edit pieces written in different styles (poems, prose, articles etc.)
- **30th September 2016:** The Literary Society organized a lecture by Dr. Radha Chakravarty on “Textual Interventions: Mahasweta Devi and Translation Practices”

October

- **October 6th 2016:** The Literary Society and Bitacora collaborated and organized a creative writing workshop with acclaimed writer of the book- *The Vague Woman's Handbook*, Devapriya Roy for the entire student body of the English Department.
- **October 24th 2016:** the Literary Society invited Dr. Naina Dayal of the Department of History, LSR, who delivered a lecture on the historical contexts of Sanskrit epics. Deeksha Bharadwaj of the Department of History chaired the session.
- Faculty member Mr. Aditya Mohan Bahl conducted a workshop on poetry and short stories with the Student Editorial Board of the magazine.
- Faculty member Mr. Sameer Chopra conducted a Referencing and Editing workshop with the Student Editorial Board of the magazine.

January

* The Literary Society, Department of English organized a three-day seminar and Literary Fest from 17th to 19th January, 2017 on Commemorations, Legacies, Afterlives: Four Hundred years of Shakespeare and Cervantes to mark the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare and Miguel de Cervantes. Shakespeare and Cervantes both lived in times where the modern world was being shaped. Many of their preoccupations in theme and style which they frequently used in their works are still being used by us in our modern lives. The seminar was an attempt to examine their legacies and their afterlives in a land and time far away from the sixteenth century Europe.

Day 1 (17th January, 2017): Shri Navtej Johar's performance of Shakespeare's Sonnet 86 marked the beginning of the seminar and the event was chaired by Dr. Anjana Neira Dev. It was followed by the Creative Writing Competition- Beat them Bards.

Day 2 (18th January, 2017): The next day began with the Quiz Competition which was followed by the plenary session chaired by Dr Aneeta Rajendran. Prof. Vibha Maurya of University of Delhi gave a talk on - An "Other" Reading of Don Quixote which was followed by Prof. Shirshendu Chakrabarti of University of Delhi. He spoke on- 'The Bankim-Tagore Disagreement on Shakespeare'.

The next session was chaired by Dr. N. P. Ashley of St. Stephen's College, University of Delhi. The first speaker for this session was Prof. K. Madhavane of Jawaharlal Nehru University who talked about, 'Directing Shakespeare in the Twenty First Century: Hamlet, A Case Study' which was followed by Prof. Soumyabrata Choudhury also of Jawaharlal Nehru University who talked about- A Contemporary Performance/Play Reading based on Ian Kott's 1964 Classic.

The next session was chaired by, Dr. Krishnanunni of Deshbandhu College, University of Delhi. Prof. Sambuddha Sen of Shiv Nadar University began the session by talking about 'Don Quixote and Novel Writing' which was followed by the last speaker of the day, Ryan Lobo, author and artist who talked about and read from *Mr. Iyer Goes to War*.

Day 3 (19th January, 2017): The session for the next day was chaired by Prof. Sonia Surabhi Gupta of Jamia Millia Islamia. Prof. S. P. Ganguly of Jawaharlal Nehru University spoke about- 'The Reception of El Quijote in India' which was followed by Prof. Vijaya Venkataraman of University of Delhi who spoke about 'Adapting Cervantes for Contemporary Times'.

The session was followed by Comic-Strip Art Competition- Go(ne) Graphic. The three-day seminar came to an end with a movie screening of *Kaliyattam*, a modern adaptation of William Shakespeare's Othello which was followed by a discussion between the students and the teachers.

February

* Faculty members Ms. Gayatri Mehra and Mr. Sameer Chopra conducted a joint-workshop for Editing with the Student Editorial Board of the magazine.

The English Department also organized movie screenings for the entire department. Movies like- *Becoming Jane*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *The Greatest Game ever played* were screened for the entire student body so that the students can look at various inter-textualities which would help the students to come to a better understanding of texts in the syllabus.

March

The Literary Society invited Dr. Saba Bashir to speak about Urdu poetry in Hindustani cinema. This lecture saw an examination of the same through a focus on Gulzar's poetry. (A student's report of this event follows).

31st March 2017: The English Literary Society in collaboration with Upstage, Dramatics Society, Gargi College, organised a production of 'Ismat's Love Stories', by Pandie's Theatre - an English play penned by Anuradha Marwah and directed by Sanjay Kumar. The play explored Ismat Chughtai's early writings and her relationship with Saadat Hasan Manto, and their individual approaches to the social mores of their time.

“In Other Rooms, Other Wonders”¹ **‘Urdu Poetry in Hindustani Cinema’: A Report**

Aarushi Chadha
II Year

Eager heads poked into the bracing cool of the second lecture theatre of Gargi College; a room offering respite from the heat of the mid-day sun. Amidst the students’ busy phone feeds, an informative ping pertaining to a guest lecture by Dr Saba Mahmood Bashir had pulled attention to itself, two days prior to March 24th, 2017, the day of the talk. As the session began, Dr Bashir, author of *I Swallowed the Moon: The Poetry of Gulzar*, drew in the audience with a bright beam and a thoroughly-researched understanding on the subject matter of ‘Urdu poetry in Hindustani cinema’. At the very beginning, an elaboration on her conscious usage of the word ‘Hindustani’ in place of common replacements such as ‘Indian’ and ‘Bollywood’ was offered to the audience.

A sizeable number of listeners, being young-adults, perhaps had had frequent brushes with Hindustani music (from 1930s and onwards) often only through the music preferences of elders in the family. Possibly keeping them in mind, Dr Bashir succinctly summarised the evolution of music accompanying Hindustani cinema. Acknowledging the frequently repeated remark, made by older generations, on the rich lyrics of music of yester, she explained the then interchangeable position of Urdu poets and lyricists, as they worked to support their art.

The session’s focus thereafter gravitated towards her PhD on the much-acclaimed Indian poet and lyricist, Gulzar. A crisp account of Gulzar’s initiation into the world of verse was offered. Dr Bashir, moreover, discussed the ideas and metaphors that he made his tools while writing, even as he ensured a simultaneous and meticulous effort to appropriately place them within the social and cultural context. She additionally highlighted the variation in lyrics that had accompanied the change in the prevalent lexicon over the years; often illustrating her explanations with dulcet audio clips or by reading out lines from stanzas of songs under study. Gulzar’s poetic style of using metaphors, was often frowned upon by his contemporaries. Given this understanding, the audience knowingly grinned at the mention of the widely-loved song “*Humne dekhi hai un aankhon ki mehakti khushboo*”, which was highlighted to exemplify the point.

A question-answer round followed the talk. It raised important themes, including a query about the possibility of Urdu being a dying mode of expression or having become hybridised over time. A teaching member of the English department further enquired about a possible historical connection between the traditions of both the Sufi movement and Urdu poetry that involve borrowing couplets from previous, famous works as a mark of respect to the artist.

To faculty and students immersed neck-deep in a daily routine of assignments and projects anchored by strict lesson plans, Dr Bashir threw a rope of respite. For those two hours, occupants of lecture theatre two floated free in the calming waters of verse of the Urdu greats.

¹ The name of a collection of short stories written by Pakistani-American author Daniyal Mueenuddin.

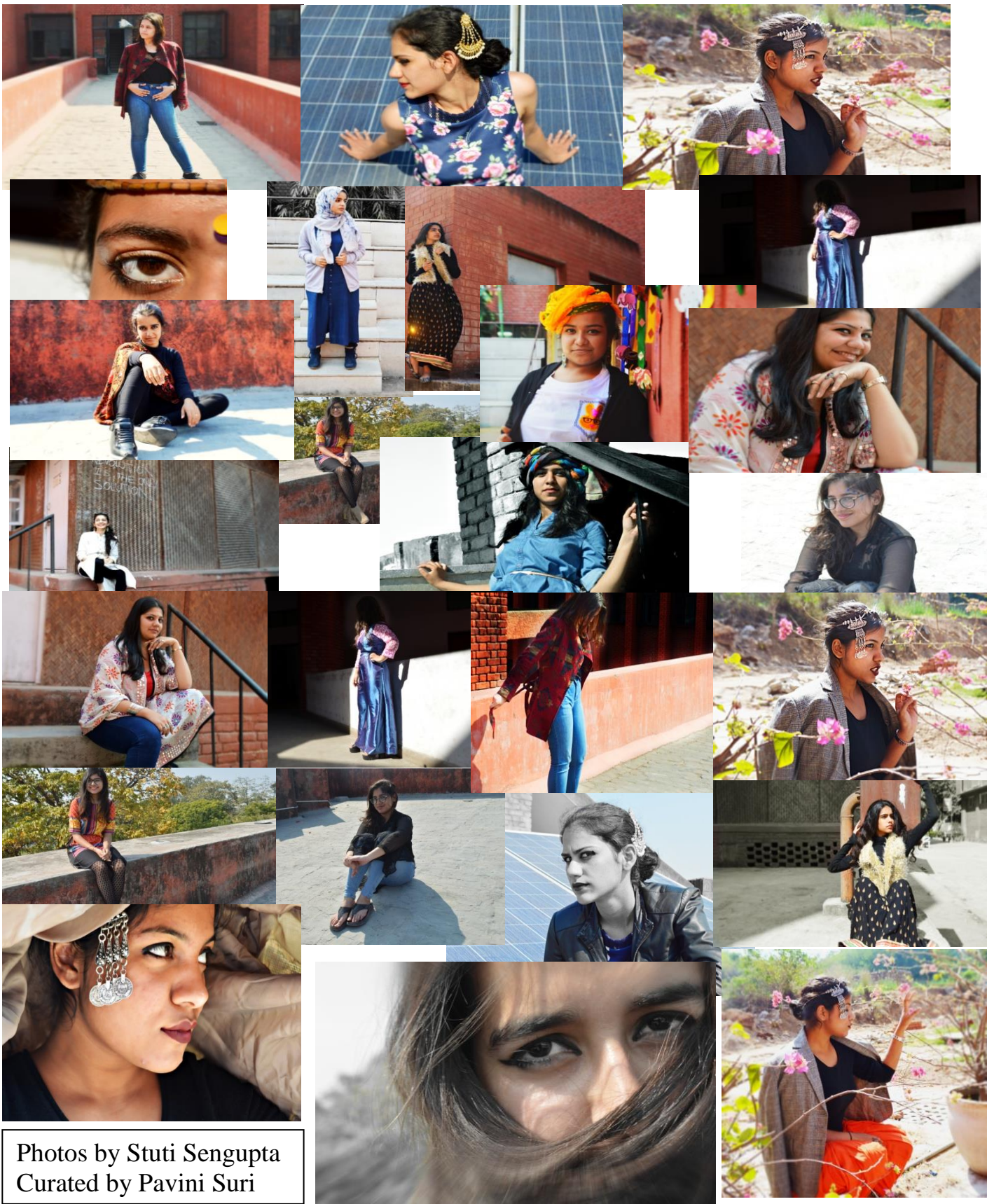
Bitacora Entries for Department Activities & Seminar 2016-2017



We are Englishtaani



Swati Bhardwaj
II year



Photos by Stuti Sengupta
 Curated by Pavini Suri

India Through my Lens

Kanika Kimtani and Simran Arora
I year

"The camera is an instrument that teaches people how to see without a camera." - Dorothea Lange

For both an inhabitant and an outsider, India epitomizes hybridity. This series shows us some of the things that characterise this hybridity.



Resonant of the demanding and bustling work culture of India, this photograph captures a local *dhaba* worker rolling flour to make delicious breads.



Taken in Potter's village in New Delhi, this doesn't only show the growth of an individual, but also the coexistence of different generations in harmony. The society of India gives place to both traditions and modernity.



Tying threads while chanting prayers has been a part of a number of traditions in our different cultures. It depicts the deep belief that we, as a community, have in divinity.



Sometimes, when voices clamour, a few go unheard. Shackled by bounds of convention and orthodoxy, some women find themselves muted.



Having a long history in music, India is known for its variety in forms of music. Being an integral part of the socio-cultural environment it has always been an agent of unity in diversity



This photograph was snapped in Chandni Chowk, the hub of India's most famous spice markets. The Spice trade in India dates back to as early as the Harappan Civilization.



This one shows us the vibrancy of India due to the blending of various cultures, traditions and customs. It also depicts the fashion industry in India that blends elements from our cultural heritage and modern, contemporary avant-garde traditions.



The photo shows that despite cultural differences, we have a relieving sense of solidarity in heterogeneity.

"Art is a hybridization in itself, the mixing of colors and styles, like cultures blending into each other."

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