



PHOENIX

E-magazine | English Department |

Victoria Institution College | 2nd Volume

Message from *P*rincipal's Desk



Dr. Maitreyi Ray Kanjilal
M.Sc, Ph.D

It is extremely heartening to see that the students of the Department of English, have brought out this unique E-Magazine 'Phoenix'. It is very encouraging that the students are raising voices of women , and exploring new areas of social concern and study. On behalf of the College, I encourage this kind of endeavour and welcome more such attempts.

Message from the English Department



Dr. Uma Ray Srinivasan



Dr. Debasmita Chakrabarti



Prof. Anuradha Basu



Dr. Madhumita Basu



Prof. Sananda Laha



Prof. Saroj Das

Phoenix the E-Magazine of the Department of English, Victoria Institution (College) is seeing its second volume. Once again the students have surprised us with their unique contributions on women's rights and women's empowerment; through their contributions, the voice of a woman rises like a Phoenix from the ashes of repression, marginalisation, silencing, suppressing, and societal domination. This time, we come across their ideas on Queer theory, LGBT rights, and laws - which is the thrust area of Phoenix 2023. The students have spoken through Articles, Poems, Paintings, and Photographs. The Department of English is happy to present this E-Magazine PHOENIX.

Message from the Editorial Team



Pradipta Mallick



Awishi Biswas



Anisha Ghosh



Bidisha Chakraborty



Debasmita Saha



Riti Biswas



Antara Bose

Dear Valued Readers,

Greetings from the Editorial team of "Phoenix", we hope this message finds you well and excited about the second edition of our beloved magazine. As the Editorial Department, we are thrilled to unveil the captivating theme that will take center stage in our upcoming issue. Brace yourselves for an enthralling journey that will challenge your perspectives, ignite your curiosity, and leave you inspired.

In this extraordinary issue, we have dedicated ourselves to venturing beyond the confines of the familiar and delving into unexplored territories, both literally and metaphorically. The theme of our magazine is women empowerment and since we have the honor of launching our magazine during the celebration of The Pride month, we've also extended our support to the LGBTQ community through various sections of our magazine.

Warm regards.

— Editorial Team (Semester IV)

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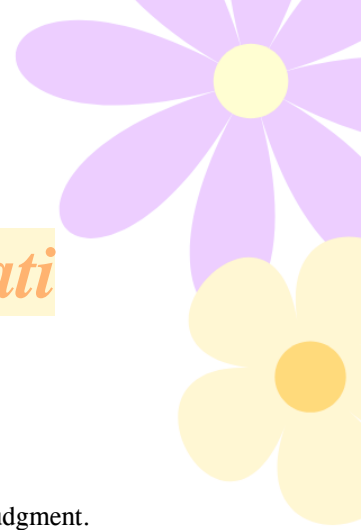
ARTICLES





Non-Fiction 1

The Menaka Guruswamy-Arundhati Katju romance



“First step towards vanquishing enemies of prejudice and injustice has to be taken”, read the judgment.

On September 6, 2018, Section 377, the law that criminalised homosexuality in India, was struck down to widespread celebration from the country’s LGBTQIA+ community. This landmark judgment, overturning a 157-year-old law, was the outcome of a long-term campaign orchestrated by two amazing public-interest litigators, Arundhati Katju and Menaka Guruswamy. Menaka Guruswamy and Arundhati Katju had spearheaded the legal challenge to strike down Section 377 of IPC.



"That's right. The loss in 2013 was a loss as lawyers, a loss as citizens. It was a personal loss," said Guruswamy. "It is not nice to be a 'criminal' who has to go back to court as a lawyer to argue other cases." "We had a court where we practiced as lawyers ... and this court had just told us that gay people were second class citizens", said Katju, who added that it was very difficult. She confides in Zakaria about the moment when she knew the month-long case was lost, relating how a senior judge asked a law officer whether he himself knew any homosexuals. According to Guruswamy, the officer laughed and claimed he was “not that modern”. In hindsight, we know that even as Guruswamy realised the judge had no conception of who gay Indians were, she was standing before the bench.

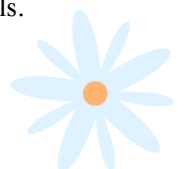
"That was when we decided that we would never let the LGBT Indians be invisible in any courtroom," Ms Guruswamy added. "How strongly must we love knowing we are unconvicted felons under Section 377? How strongly must we love to withstand [these] terrible wrongs? My Lords, this is love that must be constitutionally recognised and not just sexual acts." These words of Menaka Guruswamy during the final arguments in the Navtej Singh Johar & Ors vs Union of India case moved the courtroom to tears and made the Supreme Court bench sit up and listen with intent.



“An apology [is owed] to members of the LGBT community... for the ostracisation and persecution they faced because of society’s ignorance,” – Supreme Court Justice Indu Malhotra.

After the September verdict, Guruswamy and Katju became national heroes and rightly so. They even made it to the 2019 TIME 100 Most Influential People list, and their landmark win has since been cited as precedent in the battle against anti-LGBT laws in Kenya.

In an interview with CNN’s Fareed Zakaria earlier this month, Guruswamy and Katju revealed that their victory was personal as well as professional. For the first time, they came out as a couple, telling him that they are in a relationship with each other while giving us all a new understanding of #couplegoals.





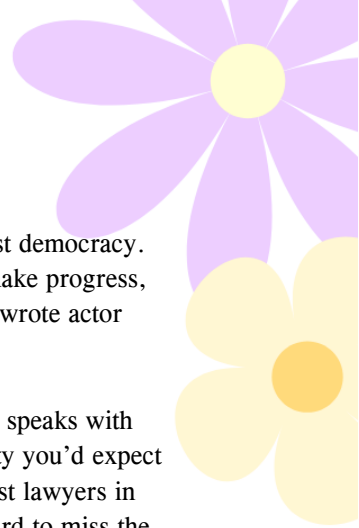
“Arundhati and Menaka have helped take a giant step for LGBTQ+ rights in the world’s largest democracy. In their committed fight for justice, they have shown us that we as a society must continue to make progress, even after laws are changed, and that we must make an effort to understand, accept and love,” wrote actor Priyanka Chopra, hailed the couple as "beacon of hope".



While Guruswamy speaks with the poise and clarity you’d expect from one of the best lawyers in the country, it’s hard to miss the heartbreaking irony of her situation. As she and her partner campaigned for equality, they were themselves invisible to the judges, and to the many supporters of Section 377 who stigmatised homosexuality as a mental illness imported from the West. Looking back, it’s hard to deny that Guruswamy and Katju imbued the Section 377 proceedings with humanity. And,

now that they’ve boldly come out as the lesbian power couple who have carried the LGBTQIA+ rights movement on their shoulders, it’s impossible to ignore that the fight was personal. They’ve extended their love to include the entire country, and all its queer inhabitants. Guruswamy and Katju have shown us that in 2019, a fairytale romance doesn’t require a sulky, angry hero or a knight in shining armour at all. All it takes to win our hearts is a pair of queens.

— Midhat Afreen, Semester VI





Non-Fiction 2

Capturing The Unseen: The Impact of Joan E. Biren's Queer Activism and Photography



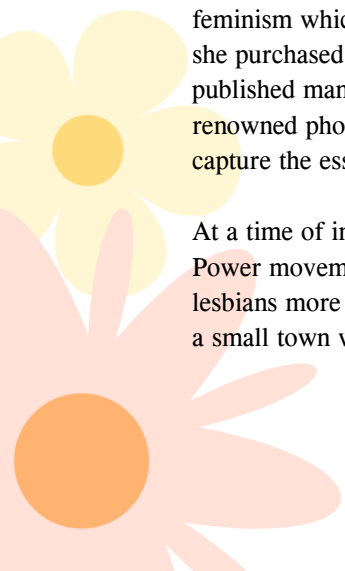
(Mychelle and Lee with Zach, the dog, 1972, New York)

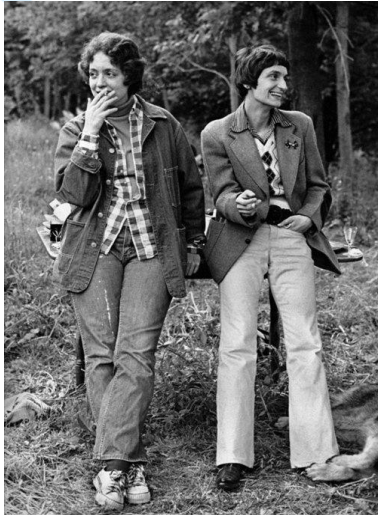
During the 1970s and 1980s, the photographs of Joan Elizabeth Biren, better known as JEB, defined and set the standard for lesbian feminist image-making in the United States. JEB is a prominent figure, who has made significant contributions to both queer activism and photography. Through her lens, she has captured the struggles, triumphs, and stories of LGBTQ+ individuals, challenging societal norms and advocating for equality. With her thought-provoking imagery and an unyielding dedication to social justice, Biren has become a trailblazer in the world of photography and a catalyst for change.

JEB was born in 1944 in Washington, D.C. Growing up as the eldest daughter in a family of civil servants, she developed a keen awareness of social justice issues from a young age. Considering her background, it is not surprising that she considered a career in politics or law. After receiving a B.A. from Mount Holyoke College in 1966, she studied political science and sociology at Oxford University. Upon returning to Washington in 1969, she became active in the women's liberation movement.

Along with Rita Mae Brown and Charlotte Bunch, JEB co-founded 'The Furies Collective', a short-lived but influential lesbian separatist collective that flourished in 1971 and 1972. They were an example of lesbian feminism which emerged in the early 1970s. Her passion for photography also bloomed in this period when she purchased her first camera and began documenting the emerging feminist and LGBTQ movements. Biren published many of her early images in the collective's newspaper 'The Furies'. Inspired by the works of renowned photographers like Imogen Cunningham and Dorothea Lange, Biren embarked on a mission to capture the essence of lesbian life and culture.

At a time of intense activism in the United States, (during the period of anti-Vietnam War protests, The Black Power movement, Feminism, and the LGBTQ liberation movement) JEB chose photography as a way to make lesbians more visible. She took a correspondence course in photography and worked in a camera store and in a small town weekly newspaper in order to develop her talent and technique.





(Catherine and Ginger, 1972.)

JEB's photography has been instrumental in bringing visibility to the lives of lesbian women. She treated her subjects as if they were her 'muse'. In an era when LGBTQ+ representation was virtually nonexistent, her images celebrated and validated the experiences of queer women. Through her lens, Biren captured the diverse realities of lesbian existence, from intimate moments of love and connection to the vibrant spirit of political protests and social gatherings.

Her most notable body of works, 'Eye to Eye: Portraits of Lesbians' (1979) and 'Making A Way: Lesbians Out Front' (1987) broke new ground in the representation of lesbian identity. These books featured a collection of portraits that provided an honest and intimate look into the lives of lesbian women from various backgrounds and walks of life. These portraits showcased the beauty, strength, and resilience of the lesbian community, challenging societal norms and stereotypes.

Since the early 1990s, Biren has also started creating films. One of her most notable film was 'A Simple Matter of Justice'. She was a writer and video producer for this film, which documented the 1993 March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation. This groundbreaking documentary showed the world the struggles, and discrimination faced by the LGBTQ community back in the 1990s.

JEB also directed 'No Secret Anymore: The Times of Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon'. This powerful documentary explored the lives and activism of Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, two influential figures in the LGBTQ rights movement. This film serves as a tribute to the enduring love, dedication, and impact of these remarkable women. Through their pioneering work, Martin and Lyon made significant strides in advancing LGBTQ+ rights and laid the foundation for future activism.

Joan E. Biren's contributions to queer activism and visual arts have had a lasting impact on both fields. Her pioneering use of photography as a tool for social change paved the way for subsequent generations of LGBTQ+ artists and activists. Through her work, Biren challenged mainstream perceptions, fostered empathy and understanding, and fought for the recognition and acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals.



(Biren sorts through boxes of photographs at her desk)

JEB's commitment to social justice, her innovative use of photography, and her unwavering dedication to the LGBTQ+ community make her a trailblazer in the realm of queer activism. Her ability to capture the essence and humanity of her subjects through her lens has left a profound impact on the art world and the fight for LGBTQ+ rights. Biren's legacy serves as a reminder of the power of visual storytelling and the importance of representation in challenging societal norms and advocating for equality.

— Awishi Biswas, Semester IV



Non-Fiction 3

Rising Of Women

Phoenix— the mythical bird which rises from its own ashes, symbolizes immortality, renewal, and regeneration. We find phoenix in various aspect with respect to different mythologies. Now rising is what we associate with women empowerment in modern century, since over time and history we have been witnessing female subjugation ranging from domestic violence, dowry, inhuman sati practice, child marriage and female infanticide. Girls were devoid of education, were only taught how to run household chores and were objectified who only would be gazed at and will be performing the role of a progenyproducing machine. Referring to the Bible, Eve has been punished to bear the labor pain, menstruate every month and endure the whole pregnancy period. Where women should be worshipped for we all are born out of a woman, instead, is treated as the inferior gender. Women has to deal with all kinds of injustice done to them whether it be a decline of grant to do anything freely or have an equal wage. The discrimination against women should be eradicated as Jawaharlal Nehru quotes---



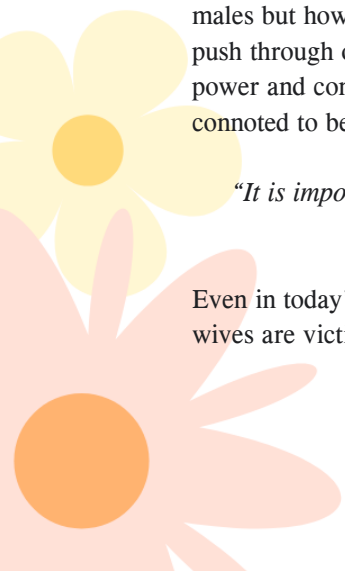
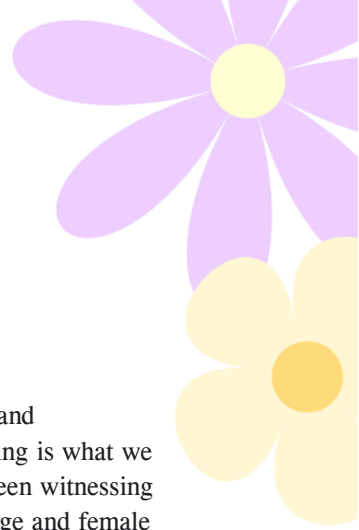
(A depiction of phoenix by Friedrich J. Bertuch)

“You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women.”

This highlights the significant role that women play in the society. The status of women depicts the social, economic, and mental condition in a Nation. Women have been regarded as a symbol of spirituality in our scriptures. The question is, when Purusha and Prakriti makes the perfect balance, from where does the domination of a gender rises? Who is superior? Who is inferior? How can be that so? Both sexes are equal and are great in their own perspective and fields. Women can be biologically or structurally smaller than the males but how does that denote women to be the weaker section? One who holds the strength and resilience to push through out her a life, how can she be fragile? Nature which is phenomenal and beyond human being's power and control is also considered to be a mother. The universe which is endless and measureless is connoted to be a mother. Swami Vivekananda says---

“It is impossible to think about the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is impossible for a bird to fly on only one wing.”

Even in today's rapidly progressing Indian society, women always live in trepidation of being ravished. Even wives are victims of martial rape. By the convention, women have been taught to be coy and somehow the





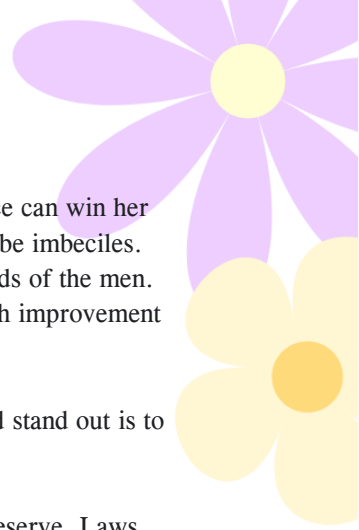
coyness is taken for granted. When a girl says “NO” it means “NO” and no degree of insistence can win her over. Women have more of the emotional quotient than men, but that doesn’t manifest them to be imbeciles. Women have always been treated as objects, as devices which will be played upon the commands of the men. We cannot dress, eat, drink, roam, talk, sit, walk, or behave the way we want. Even after much improvement women are still being questioned on every action that she posits.

To be an angel of the house, you need to run by the convention but to really make a change and stand out is to break the cycle, even if that makes you the fallen woman!

Likewise, voices have been raised, women are fighting for their equal rights that they rightly deserve. Laws have also been passed for women in terms of safety, security, material rape, and abuse. Women who were always tried to be caged has finally broken the bars and is seen rising.

Women are seen to be in every ground now, be it an actress, a player, a pilot, a chef, a politician, a cop, a doctor, a manager or a CEO of a company. We see, women entrepreneurs coming up, influencers coming up and female representatives showing up in the United Nations. Government too has taken steps to assist women via laws, scholarships, loans, etc. Initiatives like ‘Beti Bachao Beti Padhaao’, passing of the triple talaq bill of Muslim women and anti-trafficking bill are praiseworthy. Women who were in dependence are now independent. Thus, women who were burned down to ashes, now is seen rising from it with her wings wide spread— A Phoenix.

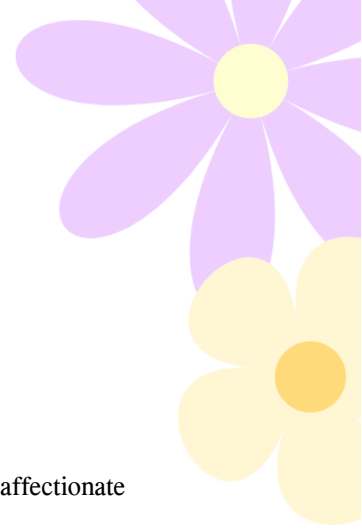
— Debasmita Saha, Semester IV





Fiction 1

Him



At the end, you became mine...

It was the first day of our new semester, when Dr. Shauvik Chauhan entered our class with an affectionate smile on his face.

Often love comes to you in an unprecedented way. For me, it was Professor Shauvik. When I first saw him, everything around me slowed down and all I could see was his smile... his smile melted my fragile heart. His lectures became the most important lectures in my life, I never missed his classes... But with time, my college life came to an end, with flying colours, I graduated from my college.

After five long years I met him again and all the lost memories of him came gushing over... I was in my second semester when he first joined our college and by the next semester I became one of his favourite student... I was looking at him and just him when I realised he was smiling at me. He came towards me and extended his right hand:

“Welcome back.”

“Thank you sir!”, I said.

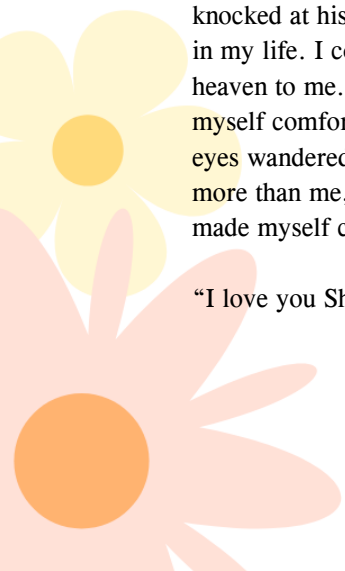
Our hands touched and my whole body shivered by his touch. He did not age a bit in these five long years and his smile never changed. The butterflies inside my stomach gave way to their excitement, as from being a student of him, I have now become a colleague of Shauvik Sir.

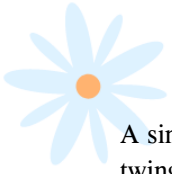
My days in college as a professor were beautiful. I loved working in my Alma Mater and more importantly with him... Until that evening when I saw him with a person. His wife. I was never unaware of the fact that he was married but seeing him with her made me burn and only tears rolled down my cheeks scaring me for life. It seemed to hurt me more than it was supposed to stop me from falling for him.

Within a month I took a transfer to another college and secluded myself from the entire world. I could not forget that evening, how he held her hand and how he smiled at her, the way he used to smile at me. Within a minute all the promises he made with his eyes flashed in my head. I could not speak. My tears choked me and my heart drowned in my own blood.

It has been several months since that day but it still haunted me. My soul burnt with the desire of making him mine. I yearned for his love everyday... As days passed my love turned into an obsession... an obsession of making him mine so I decided to meet and confront him one day. It was an exhausting evening when I knocked at his door. He opened his door with same smile in his face... yes it was this smile that I was missing in my life. I could not stop the flowers from blooming. I ran and hugged him. Falling into his arms felt like heaven to me. Shauvik was dumbfounded, he could not understand anything. I got up from his arms and made myself comfortable in his couch, he too sat down beside me. He flooded me with bunch of questions but my eyes wandered through his face as a smile formed on my lips. I realised he loves me but he loves his wife more than me, more than he can love anyone but I have already made my mind... That he will only be mine. I made myself calm and looked at him to see he was looking at me. I put my lips before his ear:

“I love you Shauvik. You will only be mine.”





A single tear dropped on my left cheek as I pierced the knife inside his heart, he fell on my arms. I felt a twinge as if my heart was bleeding. Yes, it was bleeding. We both fell down on the floor, him hugging me. He looked down at me and smiled:

“I too love you...

At the end, you became mine.”

... and a long awaited sleep engulfed us forever.

At 10:30, Lina got a mail. It was from Chauvik.

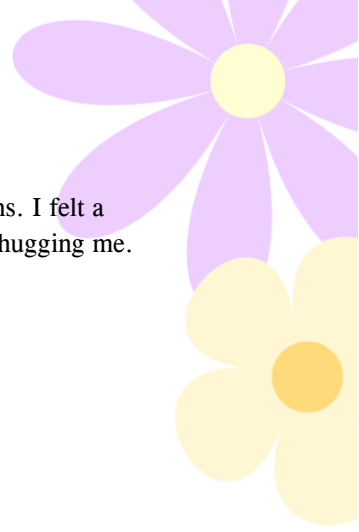
It read:

“My beloved Lina,

It is the first and yet the last time that I am writing to you. Remember I told you about a student whom I loved dearly? Yes, his name is Niladri... Niladri Sen. The first time when our eyes met, I fell in love with him yet I could not ever bring myself to confess to him. When he graduated, my hopes died, I thought I would never get to see him again but after five long years I met him again. Yes, again Lina... tonight he is meeting me. I love you Lina but I love him more than you, than anyone I can ever love... Through our love, we will become one. Goodbye Lina.

Yours Chauvik.”

— Bidisha Chakraborty, Semester IV





LGBTQ+ : Moving Towards Equality



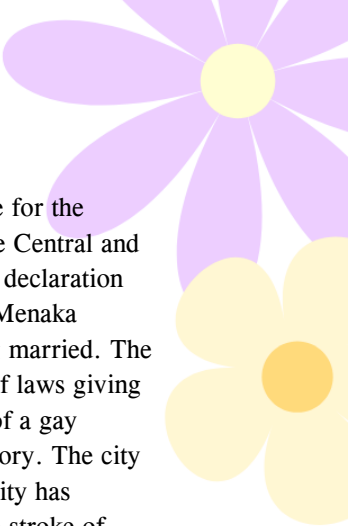
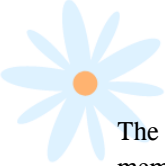
(A participant walks under a rainbow flag during a gay pride parade in Chandigarh, India)

It seems magical how India is making an incredible journey of maintaining the cultures and traditions in its roadmap of development. The diversity here has always been an international attraction. But when it comes to accepting the different sexualities, there's still a huge taboo around it's subject, considered by our society as the unnatural beings.

It's been 74 years since our country became independent. Since then, the LGBTQ+ community is fighting for their societal independence and basic rights. Indian Supreme Court, on 6th September 2018, discriminated Section 377, which titled homosexual relations as "unnatural offences". But, there's still much work to be done when we look up at the current scenario. Several laws for equality were implemented but the bigger battle for equal rights is still ongoing.

"Education is the manifestation of perfection already in man"-Vivekananda. Hence, this perfection should be rightly demonstrated in all and none can be discriminated on the basis of their sexual preferences. In India, several educational policies have been implemented and those who were given opportunities made immense progress in the field of education. Also, many institutions are including topic of LGBTQ+ besides sex education. Clearly, workplace equality is not only limited to women and people from diverse racial, religious and ethnic backgrounds, but also hiring LGBTQ employees and creating a supportive atmosphere for them to thrive at the workplace. Unfortunately, even after being recognized as the 3rd gender by law, it seems that many organizations still don't prefer from the community for the job roles. For instance, employers hire candidates for primarily the non-technical fields and also, the number of LGBTQ+ people who are working in the IT Industry are also very less. On the flip side, the fact that things are changing slowly can't be denied as the big corporations have now globally started friendly policies like organizing Pride Fairs, Blind Application etc. Recently, Karnataka became the first state in India to reserve jobs in the public sectors. A surge in the LGBTQ+ hiring is expected from the different sectors of customer service, sales, hospitality, supply chains and many others.





The Supreme Court recently received its verdict on a batch of petitions seeking right to marriage for the members of the community under the special marriage Act (1954) faced stiff opposition from the Central and the State Governments, while dropping broad hints that it could consider issuing a constitutional declaration for the same-sex couples that may fall short of giving marriage rights to them. Senior advocate Menaka Guruswamy argued for upholding the community's basic fundamental right to equality in getting married. The constitutional declaration by the SC on the transgender's right had a salutary effect on framing of laws giving them specific rights equal to others. Kolkata recently painted rainbow colors with the marriage of a gay couple in a traditional way at a temple, adding another feather to the LGBTQ+ rights success story. The city has always been a pioneer in queer right movement and this is yet another progressive step the city has witnessed. Though initially, Moushumi Dutta and Moumita Majumder got married quietly at the stroke of midnight and they themselves broke the news on social media, an IANS Report said. They were the third pair after Chaitanya Ray and Abhisekh Sharma to take a step towards an inclusive society. They say "love is love. Gender can't be any barrier", and even claimed that if the court does not allow the certificate of same-sex marriage, no regulation would stop them from living together. Kudos to their spirit!

Apart from this, LGBTQ+ 's are becoming increasingly aware of the several fertility options available to them. Some may assume that they are unable to plan a family and are surprised to learn that opportunities exist. Modern Science and fertility techniques offer these people with finding a gestational carrier or using fertility preservation so that they can have a child at a later date. For gay males who have sperm, the main option is IVF(In-Vitro Fertilization) with a donated egg and a gestational carrier. Lesbian women with a uterus and ovaries can have intrauterine insemination. Many such options are there now. For instance, in Kerala, a pregnancy photo shoot by an Indian transgender couple went viral who paused their hormone therapy to have a baby, serving as a beacon of hope for the LGBTQ+ community. Ziya Paval, 21 and her partner Zahhad, 23, were in the process of gender transition when they decided to have a baby. "When we decided to become parents, we were fully aware of what the future might hold. We were conscious of the responsibilities that comes with a baby. Thanks to Almighty that we are getting a chance to raise a new life", shares Paval, who is a classical dancer and instructor. Hence, there are many such references of transgender development throughout the globe. It's indeed a matter of celebration. So it's high time people take note of the fact that homosexuals are not sick, they aren't aliens, their sexual orientation is perfectly in tune with the dictate of nature.

— Ahana Chakraborty, Semester II



Non-Fiction 5

Let's Not Be Wrought

Women are empowering themselves, gaining the authority and power to do a lot of things out of different spheres. In this essay, we will be revising the importance of mental well-being and being rebellious against vice through a pair of women of absolute disparate ambience however fighting a battle with the same inference that women should not let themselves be wrought, be beaten neither physically nor mentally to look like a beautifully designed piece.

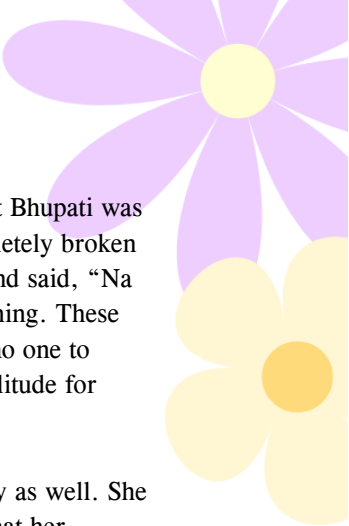

The two women are Charulata from *Nosto Nir* and Matangini from *Rajmohan's Wife*. Charulata or the lonely wife is a woman of late nineteenth century, from the *Nosto Nir* by Rabindranath Tagore and Matangini is a woman of nineteenth century from the novel *Rajmohan's Wife* by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. Both of them were the sufferers of not so wholesome marriage and their husbands were also not compatible with them. Matangini was the victim of both physical violence and mental violence, however, Charulata was the victim of an ignorant, workaholic husband. Consequently, they decked up their own swords and survived their individuality. Women empowerment is inclusive in nature, so guarding individuality is essential.



(A scene from Satyajit Ray's 1964 film 'Charulata')

Charulata, the naveena (the new woman), is a Victorian heroine whose wings are clipped, and confined within the walls of the Victorian mansion – like house of Bhupati, her husband, the editor of a newspaper and who is always immersed in work. Though he is very delicate with Charulata, he fails to have an insight of Charulata's loneliness in the absence of him. To help out Charulata with her loneliness he calls his brother-in-law and his wife as a company to Charulata. Charulata is an admirer of literature and life. But, Bhupati is matte, Charulata finds colours, Bhupati doesn't find value in literature and hence also makes fun of Charulata's intense love for Bankim's works. Even today people face the same issue but what like Bhupati they never do, is respect each other's choice. However when Amal came, Charulata found someone who respected and took care of her interests. Certainly, Charulata fell for his openness and a string of literary, understanding and caring bond built up between them. Charulata rose with her pen and got her writing piece

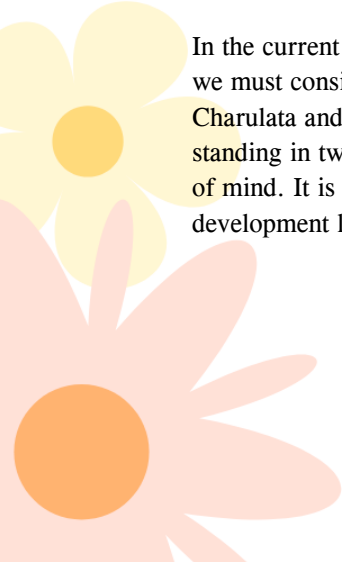




published. Later, Amal also left her and their secret relationship also got revealed to Bhupati but Bhupati was kind enough to accept his mistake at last . Nevertheless, Charulata after being devastated, completely broken from core, in the absence of Amal and the pain of deceiving her husband, rose from the ashes and said, “Na thak” (No, let it be) to Bhupati when Bhupati tried to be a companion of Charulata after everything. These phrase “Na thak” well explained the very fact that Charulata is herself complete and she needs no one to sympathize her loneliness. She chose her individuality, her own choice, her ambition and her solitude for herself.

Matangini, one of the rebellious female characters designed by Chatterjee chose her individuality as well. She decided to be a passionate lover when she failed to become an ethical wife. She came to know that her husband Rajmohan was allied with the dacoits and they are planning to plunder Madhav's house. She was determined to protect Madhav and in that run she became the rebel. Matangini was timid, enduring and silent but she rose from the ashes and risked herself to make her husband unsuccessful in his plan to plunder Madhav's house. Finally, we came across the real villain, Mathur Ghosh . She was kidnapped by Mathur Ghosh. Mathur tried to assault her physically but again she proved herself and compelled Mathur to realize that how aggressive feminine energy could be at times. To quote, she said “...concentrating the energy of twenty men in her look. Never yours. Look here.” Matangini literally starved for days, risked her life for Madhav and rescued him and herself unlike the stereotypical women of the nineteenth century. Matangini did not surrender to Rajmohan or Mathur and stood like the iron pillar protecting her womanhood. She also inspired woman like Tara to fight back against an oppressive Mathur and bring him to right path when he was wrong.

Now, critically observing, these two characters belong to complete dissimilar time period and society. Charulata was in the cosmopolitan lifestyle while Matangini was much earlier by time and was a village girl. By the time, Charulata was created by Rabindranath Tagore, Bengal was well polished. Bhupati was quite compassionate, loving and caring husband. He appreciated Charulata's writing skills but being the workaholic person, he failed to take care of Charulata's required longing, he himself. They were child-less which widened the gap between them. But Charulata, being fearless held Amol as everything in her life and gradually she came out in the light from the darkness. Love drove her to that extent, where she wanted to rise and fly, but when, even Amol left her unattended except a letter. She made her love her strength and turned her loneliness to solitude. “Na thak” is an iconic phrase to be uttered by any such liberal woman who prioritize her own individuality before anything else. But for Matangini, the society was more difficult. Hence, the reason why I am linking Matangini and Charulata, is that, to show how with passing time the society changes. It grows but women needs to claim their basic desires constantly irrespective of society and culture. For Matangini, the battle was not with the dacoits but also her husband. During that society, raising voice against husband was no less than a crime, since Matangini would not be accepted neither by her in- laws or her maternal house after the way she chose to rescue Madhav. By the times of Charulata, Bhupati was not torturous as Rajmohan, however Bhupati also failed to recognise his wife's pain . Women inclusively are treated with ignorance. But women, when they love, they can conquer anything alone. Similarly, here Charulata conquered her loneliness, Matangini conquered her fear of Rajmohan, her husband. To conclude, irrespective of time and society, women have to fight for themselves, whatsoever may be the cause, whether it's mental balance as in case of Charulata or domestic violence which is still prevalent.



In the current society and time period, along with women, people are suffering of gender identity crisis. But, we must consider love as the dominant theme, the catalyst to any such discrimination as we found in Charulata and Matangini, how love pushed them latently towards empowerment. Similarly, at this era, standing in twenty first century, like Matangini and Charulata we must seek our physical care as well as peace of mind. It is not about raising voice against negligence but strengthening women to be brave to choose self – development like Charulata and to prioritize ethics before being perfect wives like Matangini.

— Aryama Bhattacharya, Semester II



POETRY



My Declarations in the Sunlit Corridors

*"It was all very beautiful
Friendships, if you must know
Peaceful;"*

Ladies and gentlemen
Whoever you are
However you may read the following as
Know — that it pains me.

A thousand jewels enter the grand hall
A thousand bags; a thousand copies
A thousand friends
And one thousand gossips.
Running through the steps where the sun lit the
corridors
Drenched in sweat
Barely breathing
Barely making it in time
Little do I know
Little did I dare fear
Little did I dread the next step
I step into the classroom
And,
Through their eccentric glares
Under those deep dark eyelashes
I must look like the Yeti on the Tibetan mountain.
A beast if you must
These are my insecurities
It is true
I know you know
I told you myself
So why pretend
Why hide anymore.
For I know you know that it's true

Sunlit corridors or haunted ones
Your glares pricking my neck
I am the overachiever in your story
Stories — if you must
For you guys have so many.
I know
Because remember — so as you must
I was in fact one of yours
One of you
I walked in on you guys while
You were decorating

And thought I was invisible
(I wasn't)
'B' was fooling around
'B' asked 'A'
—What to do with this extra sellotape
We shall stick it on her face
We shall
We shall!—
'C' shushed for she saw what her friends
shouldn't have
(You lot cannot read this line
In one go)
That's the power I hold over you.
'C' shushed for 'C' has surely seen me standing
there.
I know as I did then, I would
Write something like this
To make you re-read it {I can what you can't
Re-read it — so you must
I will yet you can't}
For I am just halfway done

I went home that day
I repeated the following words over and over —
'One day I'll wake up and this day will be far
away'
(Over and over) — if you must
Talked into it until I cried
Until I could but barely breathe
Until I drifted off to merciful slumber.

Dear tragic reader
Read them this — if you must
You can make fun of my breasts
Laugh at my back as I turn from you
I am awkward
I know
But who are you to tell me that
NO one — you must know
These are mere snippets of cruelty I dare share
So know this if you must
I am not the only one.

— Ipsita Paul, Semester VI

No Noble Birth

No noble birth, no royal shrine
And hence knowledge was a crime;
Neither magical hands, nor divine hair
Born to a human, red and bare.
Dwarfs, frogs, birds she knew none,
Her books were her escape, where her world
began.
T'was her wisdom and curiosity thus
Jealousy and Rage hissed, "she belongs not to us".
She didn't sleep, she didn't weep, nor was she
rescued off a tower
No magic carpets, no crystal shoes, no gorgeous
lantern shower.
This little princess was not from Disney's line,
She belonged to our world, yours and mine.

The princess was scared of nights,
They talked of demons that lurked and fight
Days haunted her too now,
Coz real ones walk in broad daylight.
One such night the hood slipped off the prince's
face
She knew he was the beast in that gaze.
No more frogs and beasts turning into prince,
Her own prince feasted on her, as she winced.
The prince and the princess, perfect couple in the
daylight.
The story of the bruised bare back, was only
known to the the night.
Shhhhhh....
The world need not know this tale
Coz happily ever afters never fail.
Tell them! Tell them! Tell them!!!
Her heart screamed with every beat.
So she did!

"You're an abomination, a disgrace,
You bring shame to us, on our face.
I wish you weren't, I wished you died
You say they broke you, oh you lied.

Oh my conscience, Oh my heart!
Just some pressure, pulled apart.
We don't believe you, you're pathetic
Just a little girl being dramatic."

You saw those bruises on my skin,
But told me I had to smile
Today you stand there, wailing and weeping at my
corpse
For I cannot be silenced no more.
Like the wolf you howled with agony as the sheep
drowned.
The monsters from under my bed came to caress
my head,
Tucked my limp body under the sheets and sang a
lullaby,
"Sleep princess sleep, no more demons to fight.
You're finally free."
The chalky fingers bled on paper before she
sighed her last,
"The agony from my veins flow into my skin
As I cut myself with broken fingers
Fatigued I venture into the spiral of misery
Drowning as I splash boiling water into my eyes
In the state of oblivion I am,
Tussing and cussing at the child I see in the mirror
"Go away!" I scream at her,
She frowns with bleeding eyes, "I'm you."
I rip out my soul fragile, I could barely walk,
The golden nib of my fountain pen pokes my wrist
Slit it open, rupture my organs, stop that scared
heart"
The little princess hung herself in the break of the
dawn
Alas no one came to mourn, no one came to
mourn!

— Midhat Afreen, Semester VI

A Pheonix, say I.

You say, I am beautiful,
But do you know how many scars
I am hiding under my skin?
Do you know how many tears
I have shed before falling asleep?
Do you know how many times
I have succumbed to pain?

At the age of twelve,
I started to bleed,
Bleed in body, bleed in soul,
Bleed in heart, bleed in mind.
I was told it was natural.

At the age of sixteen,
My hands and legs were tied,
My mouth taped.
I saw a pair of eyes
Looking at me with lust.
I was touched on my breasts.
I was told to keep quiet
And that it was natural.

At the age of twenty,
He took me in his arms
And locked the door.
Now the burns are all visible
On my body.
I was looked upon with scorn,
Laughed at with humility.

“You are strong”, you tell me,
“A Pheonix”, say I.
I devour the society with my eyes.
I rise from the ashes
Of humility
And strike on the human race.
And a long awaited future...
Future of women will arrive.

— Bidisha Chakraborty, Semester IV

I Am My Own

Just what love is mine with you?
Or a woman with another woman,
Or love between two men.
Everyone is close to everyone.
But have a confined mind.
At the corner of the groove of the brain.
People say you are in me
And I am all over you.
But throughout the body that I always have,
And who stays with me omni on the journey
The one that stuck with me.
At that time, bound by illusion
Knows how much affection I want.
How loving I want to become.
With everyone out of the way,
Being selfish, I think about that infatuation.
I am not writing about immaculate
Also that very screams, convulsions, agony, gasping cries,
And the thought of the shadow standing on decaying death hill.
Still afraid,
If lost in a crowd of people,
But I still promise to stand up
I shall love me again, I shall keep me to myself.

— Subhasree Sardar, Semester IV

Her Lover

The tenderness of a smile
The beauty walking down the aisle.
But do you see the shackles
Ringing round her ankles?
Her soft hands holding the flower
The warm tears from her eyes shower
She then tends her bleeding heart
Her soul collects every fiery part.
She blooms with the desire to be free,
From the vows she was taught as a degree
To be a women soft and tender
To take care of others while her soul wander,
To be United and find her true love,
As the caressing sound of mother earth
Comes forward to cleanse all the wrath.
She flies to her lover's ivory gown
Who's standing near the river at dawn.
She awaits her lover as the river for sea
As the other awaits for the plea
To flee from the touch of strength.
She is tired, short of breath
Her little body and massacred heart
Sinks into the mother's warmth
Now she waits smiling and beautiful
For her lover to meet in the ashes
To be reborn and soulful
While their star again crashes.

— Pradipta Mallick, Semester IV

The Girl Who Stayed Fifteen

"Fifteen minutes away from home
There's murder on my mind
How to kill the thing inside me
That makes me want to die?"

"Fifteen fading scars on my hand
That once bled through my sweatshirt
Why can't I do things right?
What's the purpose of my birth?"

The girl who was once fifteen
Cried herself to sleep many nights
Yet her parents never saw one tear
Not a single sign of weakness in sight

The girl who was once fifteen
Couldn't love her body as it grew
She could never keep friends
If only one or a few

She fell in love too young
She fell in love too true
She was only fifteen years old
Yet her heart had already been painted blue

"With the blush of my blood and these skin toned
ashes, am I pretty enough for you?"

The girl who was once fifteen
Is now almost twenty years old
Looking back at the battles she has fought
She's writing the stories that are to be told

Albeit she made it out the other end,
The feeling clear as daylight
She couldn't help but remember today
Another soldier who had lost the same fight

She recalled her lively spirit,
She lamented her decease,
To The Girl who stayed fifteen forever,
She only wished her peace

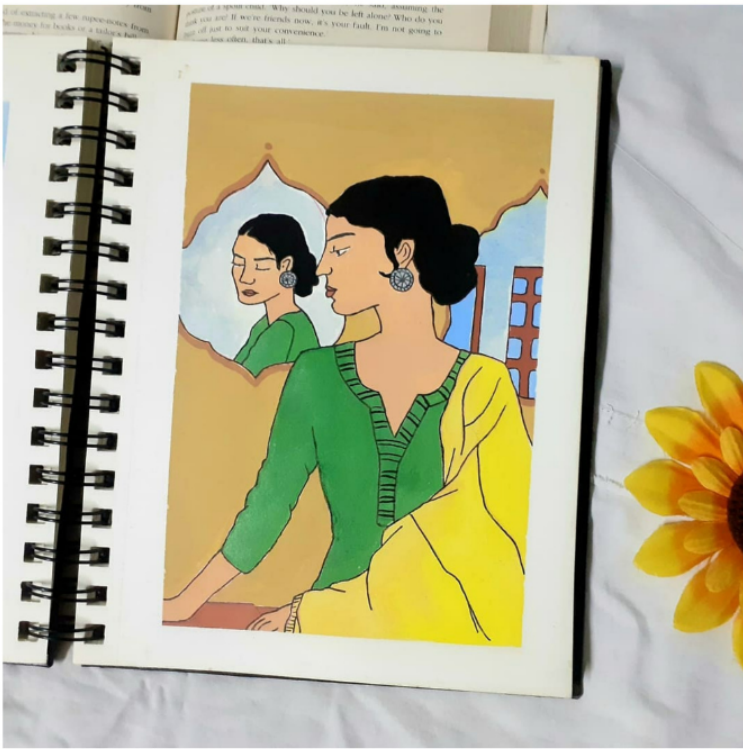
"Jolly are you there?
Did you hear me calling?
To lend me some of your strength
To end my life that was falling?
Jolly when did you get so brave?
I'm sorry I couldn't save
You from succumbing to the wounds
That we unknowingly shared."

— Abhilasha Parui, Semester II

VISUAL



ARTS



Anisha Ghosh, Sem 4



Ananya Naskar, Sem 2



Riti Biswas, Sem 4



Shruti Dutta, Sem 2





Anisha Ghosh, Sem 4

"Many faces, many moods - same story"



Sreya Das, Sem 2



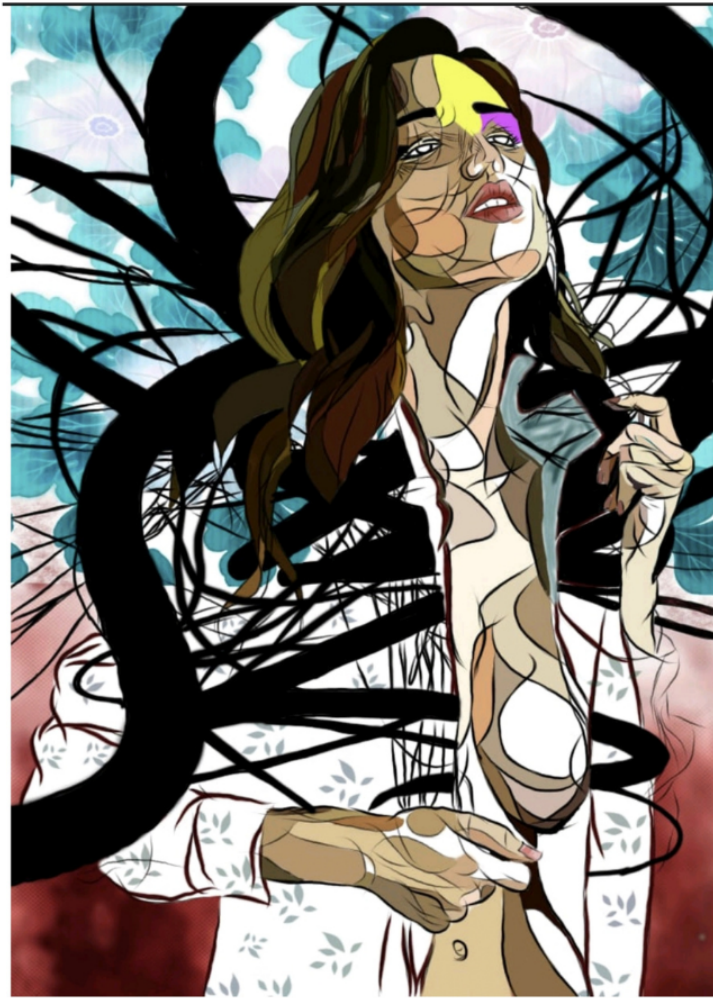


Mubassira Yeasmine, Sem 4



Sucharita Chowdhury, Sem 2





Priyanka Das, Sem 4

"I have been woman
for a long time
beware my smile"



PHOTO GRAPHS



PHOTOGRAPH BY SHUTTER_HUMOR



CHANDRIKA

Chandrika Paul, Sem 6



Bidisha Chakraborty, Sem 4



Pritha Ghosh, Sem 4

**“Try to be a rainbow in someone else’s cloud”
-Maya Angelou**



Debasmita Saha, Sem 4



Pradipta Mallick and Sisters, Sem 4



Pritha Ghosh, Sem 4



Pradipta Mallick, Sem 4



Chandrika Paul, Sem 6



