

PHOENIX

E-Magazine ► Department of English
VICTORIA INSTITUTION (COLLEGE)

Teacher-in-Charge's Message



**Dr. Uma Ray Srinivasan
M.A., Ph.D.**

Department of English, Victoria Institution (College) began its journey in 1932 as one of the first few departments with which the College was founded. This Institution, a dream project of Brahmananda Keshub Chandra Sen, under the able leadership of his daughters, Maharani Suniti Devi, Maharani Sucharu Devi, Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy and others came to be affiliated to the University of Calcutta in that year. This means that in 2022 we have attained 90 years of our glorious march.

We proudly remember the rich tradition set by the first teachers of the Department, such illustrious personalities as Mr. H. B. Mondle, Mr. K. C. Addy, Mrs. Banerjee, Mrs. S. Ray, Mr. R. Moulik, Mr. Kamalkrishna Mukherjee, Principal Mrs. Suprobha Choudhury and others.

We inculcate the same noble spirit in you, our beloved students. You are the Phoenix – from amongst you will rise the future generation of students and thus the noble tradition is perpetrated.



Message from the Department of English

The scourge of COVID-19 destabilised the world around us. The lockdown began and the students and teachers of Victoria Institution (College) braced themselves up for the online mode of learning. The English Honours students added wonder to these classes with their interactive comments and active participation. It was their enthusiasm that made online learning a resounding success. 'PHOENIX', an annual e-magazine by the Department of English; Victoria Institution (College), is an instance of their creativity. They have proven their ability of deft-handling of the digital media and have meticulously designed each page with careful deliberation, using their thought and imagination. Their contributions have been par excellence considering their age and experience.

Phoenix, the archetypal bird rising from its own ashes, symbolises strength, resilience and transformation. This magazine attempts to encourage representations related to topics on gender and its intersections with race, class and sexuality. Through centuries, women have struggled against various forms of oppressions and discriminations. Despite such impediments, women have ignited the fire inside them and risen like the Phoenix. This magazine would provide a space to young students to celebrate the essence of womanhood through essays, short stories, travelogues, posters and sketches. Indeed this e-magazine shows great promise and enthusiasm.

Our best wishes to all our students!



Dr. Uma Ray Srinivasan Prof. Anuradha Basu Dr. Debasmita Chakrabarti



Dr. Madhumita Basu

Prof. Sananda Laha

Prof. Saroj Das

Editorial Team



From Left to Right — **SEMESTER VI**

- 1. Pratiksha Chakraborty**
- 2. Sneha Singh**
- 3. Aditi Biswas**
- 4. Debapriya Dutta**
- 5. Sreeja Biswas**
- 6. Anuska Kundu**
- 7. Rashi Vohra**
- 8. Homsikha Ghosh**
- 9. Riturupa Mandal**

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END OF THE WAR! REVOLUTIONISTS; EGGS FOR ORDER; ES TO HOLLAND

WILL END AT 6 O'CLOCK THIS MORNING

The State Department in Washington
Made the Announcement at
2:43 o'Clock.

ARMED AND DARED TO FIGHT & MARCH

Some, which withdrew from Allied Lines
Starting an Insurrection of Army and
Naval and Disruption of Strategic
Base and Military Posts.

By the Associated
Press Staff in Washington, Nov. 11, 1918
The State Department in Washington
announced today that the armistice
with Germany had been signed.

The State Department announced at 2:43
o'clock this morning that Germany had
accepted the armistice terms.

The armistice was signed at 11 o'clock
this morning at Compiègne, France.

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in large numbers every morning party...
celebratory with family...
happy friendly play for...
the best friends dinner night together

POEMS

some
around
here
you are
happy
remember
my heart
is given
in a
moment
can be
in
m.

of long walks,

of the lingering smell of coffee,

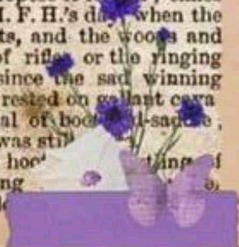
and the calm of a rainy day.

...nize, of yellow and red
hiding acorns and chestnuts; the dogs roared
them, and scampered after them as they
through the heavy air, and barked at
robins; then suddenly, through a break in
land cloisters, she saw a broad avenue, the
meeting over it in red and gold, and beyond
house, its windows flaming in the sun,
fiery spikes of blossom lingering before it.

Still and quiet, filled with repose it looked; times
had changed since the old M. F. H.'s day, when the
house overflowed with guests, and the woods and
lanes echoed to the crack of rifles or the ringing
horn; times had changed since the sad winning
smile of the first Charles had rested on gallant corn
Hers, marshalling to the signal of blood and sand,
but the halo of old romance was still

Now came the sound of hoofs, the clatter of
crisp dead leaves, and riding
canopies of crimson and gold

Sandara





PHOENIX

Awake, O awake, Awake, O Fire, The fire that will burn
And to ashes they will turn.

To ashes they will turn, Those who crouch, -- crouch
Beneath the shining black boot,
And equally black moustaches
And an equally black heart.

To ashes they will turn,
Those who lie,
With torn clothes and gaping wounds,
Under the shivering night.
For whom, the stars only sigh.

To ashes they will turn,
With muffled voices,
And silence on their lips.

And when everything has turned grey
From the ever-burning hell,
Then will the wings spread,
And then will we rise,
Like the magnificent Paragon
The burnt Phoenix.

DO YOU?

I have drawn the blinds
And closed the gates.
I have covered my scars
So they do not see.
I have muffled myself
To stop them from hearing,
All my cries and my screams.

But, do you not see too?
The scars on my skin?
Even when I have uncovered myself,
Trying to flaunt them to you.
Do you not see too?
The strains of tears
Which I have cried in lonely nights.

Do you not hear too?
My screams of frustration
Hidden in the laughs
Which are fake?
Do you not hear too?
My endless sighs of pain
Among those mindless banter.

I call you by your name,
Wanting to say so much.
But when you turn around
Ready to hear them all
Asking me "what is it?"
I say "nothing" and smile.
Do you not feel,
Those unspoken feelings too?



EPISODES

How is it that it's long gone
Yet unforgettable
Door of the underworld
Drags you to hometown
It greets me to my cradle
Serene chaos follows henceforth
I am oblivion, I am sane
I am stark as well as mundane
But the itsy-bitsy spider
Weaves around me
If she can try, so can I
Talking freaks thereby talked pretty
That made no sense to me
That's growth, that's fame
Slaps on the cheek and says 'it's humane'
But what does follow
The owl stares to swallow
The room spins and spins
Like a merry-go-round
Nothing sustains for long
The music plays but never sustains
And the world is round
It repeats like a merry-go-round
The euphemism performed is gone
Like magic in books
And sparkles in tales
Change is me, I am bound
Bold body beautiful
A euphoria found
Like a Ferris wheel touching the sky
A merciless mind comes to life
I want my life to be known
My existence to be made aware of
With hopes renewed, I set out
Whitened, washed, and purified
I am lucky to be alive
Unlucky to be alive as a human
Doomed as a woman
Nature doesn't comply with me
But I am among the many
I am fortunate until the air tastes salty
'But you are alive' cried plenty
Alive and breathing
Alive and waking
I too consider myself Lucky.

— Ipsita Paul (Semester IV)



THE ABANDONED QUEEN

She begged, she screamed, she cried,
In the darkness of their room every night,
But no one ever saw her plight.
She was beaten, battered, and crushed,
Under his dark soul, body, and feet in disgust.
He? The one she trusted.
The one she loved,
Her King in the day and destroyer at night.
Didn't she deserve to be the Queen for once?
Or was she born for the end of his blunt?
No, she was a woman of her own,
And to her, her worth was known.
She didn't remain the "Ghar ki Lakshmi",
But Kali to near the doomsday of her destroyer,
She chose to be the master of death and time of the monster of her life.

That night, that night was the end of it all.
The world was celebrating the festival of lights,
While she fought back the darkness of her life.
With a black eye, bleeding nose, bruised hand, and damaged self,
She fought back the monster of her life.
He was hitting her relentlessly,
Like a rag doll found by a cat near the garbage heap,
Broken, damaged, dirty, and whipped.
But that night, she thrived.
She thrived to walk away with her head held high,
From the devil and the blinds,
Who unseen her sufferings and plight,
And refused her salvage every time.
But not anymore.
She was her own Savior and the Queen of her own kingdom.
She loved to be that way for herself and the light of her life,
Her princess, who had his flesh and blood but not his soul,
She never let that darkness near her daughter's soul.
And today, on the same gala,
She will celebrate her victory and her freedom with the twin lights,
Which denied her happiness that night.

— Pratiksha Chakraborty (Semester VI)



MY FAVOURITE APARAJITA

You engrossed me in your bold Blue.
Without giving any clue!
The Blue spread through my veins,
As like as Algae in rains.
It's a Day of February,
Mother Nature with her melody.
Me? Was in my eighteen,
Along the glimmering way, in the morning.
At once, Hell's liquid Fire dared to announce curfew,
Left me in a dark view.
My scream had gone higher...higher than Vulture's,
Skin was falling off like weathered sculpture's.
A large crowd pitied me and two admitted me in Hospital.
Since, I have gone through many abscissions, both mental and physical.
Have lost my ear, one of eyes, strength, confident
And I thought about doing my very end.
But the Blue veins remembered me – You.
You eased me, given me strength with Blush of Blue.
Now, I'm united with you,
To be 'Aparajita' like are you.

— Dipti Debnath (Semester IV)



TO YOU MOTHER

As a young girl, my mother told
You can't wear short skirts
These are so bold.

I saw my mother was crying beside the door
Because she was not attractive as she was before.

I woke up and
Saw blue scars around her face
"Go! Go! to school, this is all my mistake."

My mother was in pain
Which she can't explain,
My tears ran down
I thought
I will leave this paper town.

Mother; you are not weak
Not ugly. Not sick.
You are the Blue moon
As precious as previous.
Please don't leave me so soon.

We will break all our norms
We will never lose our voice
We will make noise
and let that noise to be heard.

It is just a fragile world
with lots of hatred
and lots of torture.
We will find escape
from all of our pain
And make our own home
Forever again.

— Sanjima Saha (Semester IV)

4th November 2026

Heal the World



HELPS THE

There is too much in my head,
I can't keep up with any of it,
I want some form of perfection
but perfection doesn't exist so I am
basically striving for something I can't
have. So I'll continue to pull out pages
delete images and follow it, this
constant perfection. Maybe eventually
I will burn out and I'll change
path again. I love people who
are so imperfect why can't I fall
in love with myself and all its
imperfections. I will probably
end up reading all these pages and
gain. I think I just need to
start writing all these things
instead of thinking all the
time and trying to remember
it all. Maybe this is
the beginning of something new.



ARTICLES



An Odyssey of Phoenixes

Right, an odyssey, while a group of Phoenixes is called an odyssey, so is a long, eventful, adventurous journey. Commendable, as there is a long, long voyage that this odyssey of women phoenixes (few of which mentioned here) have throughout history and literature, not only just set examples, but also given us a glimpse of their gruesome deaths, that surprisingly (not so surprisingly) was brought about by their peers, the infamous patriarchy and also their fiery rise from the ashes, as Plath says,

“Out of the ash
I rise with my red hair
And I eat men like air.”

Once upon a time, in the magnificent Garden of Eden, Adam ate the tempting ‘Forbidden Fruit’ being ‘implored’ by Eve, because what is God’s command before the passions of a woman... right?

But what if the first sin was not really disobedience. God created Eden and then Adam and forbade him to eat the fruit and then he created Eve, but... God never really forbade Eve and yet while she was tempted by the snake, some believe Adam was right next to her (using her as a guinea pig...) Eve bit into the fruit and nothing changed, but it was when Adam ate it, their eyes were opened, and thus maybe the first sin was the passive nature of man to use women as ‘test bunnies’ or ‘blame bags’, hence Hosseini rightly said,

“Learn this now and learn it well, my daughter:
Like a compass needle that points north,
A man’s accusing finger always finds a woman. Always.”

And with this women became the irreplaceable ‘cannery in coalmine’, bearers of all the misery and pain and sufferings for centuries to come.

But while Adam and Eve were being chased from Paradise by an angel wielding a flaming sword, a spark of Fire fell from his sword into a bird’s nest, which was lost in flames; but no sooner a new bird flew into the sky from the flames. Thus, was the birth of the Phoenix concurrent to the ruin and the downfall of the mother of humanity.

Since then for every fallen Eve rose a new dynamic Phoenix. However, be it a heroine or an anti-heroine, all met a fall like Eve did and with it started the story of another inevitable rising Phoenix.

For every violated Aurora, rose a revenge seeking Maleficent.

For each damsel in distress Cinderella, a monster saving Bella.

For every wronged Bertha, rose an implacable Catherine Earnshaw.

While for each selfless humiliated Hester Prynne rose a badass unstoppable Irena Adler.

While the formers had the healing tears, to the latter’s share fell incineration. Some had the power, some had brains, some had speed, some had beauty and yet all fell. No more ovens and stones and drugs to blame, coz somewhere a new Plath or Woolf or Monroe rose again.

Why? oh why was marrying well was the only option for Austen's women and prostitution for Behn's, why then Medea said, "we[women] bid the highest price in dowries just to buy some man to be dictator of our bodies [...]" How that compounds the wrong!" How come Becky feels, "I have brains and almost all the rest of the world are fools", while Daisy vouches for, "I hope she'll be a fool—that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool." Oh, how the ever changing husbands of the Wife of Bath was scandalous and yet Aphrodite was worshipped. Cleopatra ruled in gold, while Mary I preferred to bathe in blood. Beth dies and so does Bertha, Jo finds bliss in her independence while Jane in love. Kamala Suraiyya declared herself as an 'I'. Bellinda did too. Circe turned men into pigs, While Hermione saved a whole lot more. Agnes Nutter predicted the future While Bonnie Bennett changed it. Be it the commendable all women world of Alcott or the screaming lack of powerful women characters in Mary Shelley's, a woman is always the central moving force of the plot. Yet their fall is inevitable and so is their rise and no two phoenixes could be more starkly contrasting. And these Phoenixes have their wings dipped in the Inferno to either bless or blast the entire mankind. Langdon might still have a new arm-candy in every book and Sherlock might not be "a whole-soul admirer of womankind", but they will always be a Phoenix, be it in the maiden of spring or the queen of the dead, if Persephone could be both half sunshine and half grave, so could we. As the beautiful enchantress or the scary punisher. As the dutiful wife, or the scandalous adultress. As a witch or a priestess. As a lover as a killer. But always a Phoenix!

Which brings us back to the question:

"Which came first the Phoenix or the Flame?"

Well then, I think the answer is that a circle has no beginning." –Rowling.

— Midhat Afreen (Semester IV)

Have you ever thought outta the box? Giddy upon 'Boho Fashion'?

The term 'Boho' truly exhibits an epitome of Fashion Escapism. It is an abbreviation for 'Bohemian', who were 15th century Romani travelers or refugees, commonly believed by the French to have originated in Bohemia (the western part of modern Czech Republic) and is often used as a part of the Millennials' vocabulary. But, do we really know what it actually means; Bohemian dress, Bohemian earrings, Boho attitude and, of course, the recent movie 'Bohemian Rhapsody'? It's everywhere. The historical underpinnings to the emergence of the 'Bohemian' social type found among the frequenters of the socially signified sites of the European coffeehouses in the period stretching from the latter years of the XIXth century up to World War II. Boho-Chic fashion is exclusively for women and draws inspiration from the Bohemian and Hippie culture originated back in the 1700s but its influence in fashion can be dated back to the 19th century. This is more than a trendy lifestyle that reflects an eclectic aesthetic: one that takes inspiration from travel and different cultures. You may call it an effect of the shift in global consciousness or a gypsy revival, the fashion world is witnessing a Bohemian Bonanza. The Boho-Chic movement – defined by a marriage of colourful folk-inspired elements with simple modern pieces – is storming the ramps and the high street with fresh zeal and modern updates. Our globe is going through the ecological shift, fabrics and shapes are getting sturdier and more organic in contrast to the volumes of viscose and polyester of the past. The new-age trend is all about slimmer silhouettes, co-ordinate prints and contemporary accessories that either pair well with current vogue or create their own..

Contrary to past tendencies towards esoteric frills, the emphasis now is on accessibility and travel-friendliness. Although experimentation is the key, modern Boho-Chic is about practicality; comfort gets more importance than adornment. In India, a new company called 'Global Desi' started by entrepreneur Ms. Anita Dongre, has come up with distinctive block prints, Indian motifs and embellishments on contemporary tops and kurtas that can be matched with churidars, patialas, leggings and even shorts. Ever since she made her Bollywood debut in 2012, eminent actress Aditi Rao Hydari's style has been exceedingly relatable and free-spirited in this regard. Indian sartorial pieces' bright, peppy, positive look gets twisted in accessories like headbands, luxe belts, chunky and coloured wooden bangles, handcuff bracelets, hand-chain jewellery, gemstones, beads and gunmetal pieces, anklets, mix-and-match necklaces, dangling earrings or chandbalis. In the case of footwear, it completes the desi vibe with Kolhapuri chappals, mojris and sandals that have traditional motifs. We may want to go for vibrant colours and prints but we can easily try and blend them well with a Boho palette which is earthy – Black, Brown, Grey, Golden or Khaki. Also silk, cotton or Ikat fabrics in earthy tones of Blue, Beige, Maroon and Black are perfect choices for Bohemian looks. Alternatively, one may try long jackets or capes to complete the look. Some of the famous people who were dressed in Boho style were Janis Joplin, Steven Tyler, Johnny Depp, Kate Moss, Mischa Barton, Hailey Bieber, Vanessa Hudgens, Blake Lively, Kate Middleton, Mary-Kate Olsen, Sienna Miller, Dylan Thomas and so on. Sienna Miller personified the trend with her signature-tousled waves, studded belts and fringes. Dylan Thomas donned the chunky roll necks and woolen jumpers for a casual look.

During the 1860s, it was associated in particular with the Pre-Raphaelite Movement, the group of artists and aesthetes of which Dante Gabriel Rossetti was the most prominent one. George Bernard Shaw unmistakably based the part of Mrs. Higgins on the then elderly Jane Morris in *Pygmalion* (1912). Describing Mrs. Higgins' drawing room, he referred to a portrait of her "when she defied the fashion of her youth in one of the beautiful Rossettian costumes which, when caricatured by people who did not understand, led to the absurdities of popular estheticism [sic] in the eighteen-seventies". Edward Burne-Jones' 'Heart of the Rose'(1889) has been cited as foreshadowing the 'Flower Power' of the mid-to-late 1960s.

Later, the locution 'Hippie Chic' (1990s) was applied to Tom Ford's collections for the Italian house of Gucci. These drew on, among other influences, the style, popular in retrospect, of Talitha Dina Getty (died in 1971), Dutch actress and wife of John Paul Getty and step-granddaughter of Dorelia McNeill, who was represented most famously in a photograph of her and her husband taken by Patrick Lichfield in Marrakesh, Morocco in 1969. Recalling the influx of Hippies into Marrakesh in 1968, Richard Neville, then editor of *Oz*, wrote that "the dapper drifters in embroidered skirts and cowboy boots were so delighted by the bright satin '50s underwear favoured by the matrons of Marrakesh that they wore them outside their denims à la Madonna [the singer] twenty-five years later".

Luxe Grunge (also known as 'Luxe Bohemian'), a chicer, updated Grunge-Boho collection with an unkempt approach to wardrobe, was first motivated by Seattle's groundbreaking rock scene in the 1990s – the modern update contains all the mainstays of yesterday's Grunge (flannel, plaid, layers and leg-warmers) alongside today's sophisticated pieces, including capes, shawls and jackets. Grunge elements featured strongly in fashion collections in Autumn, 2006 as well as styles referred to as 'Cocktail Grunge' and 'Modern Goth'. Lisa Armstrong, fashion editor of *The Times* (London), referred to Patrick Lichfield's iconic 1969 shot of Talitha Getty on a Marrakesh roof-top as "typif[ying] the luxe bohemian look". Last but not the least, American-British fashion designer Savannah Miller, elder sister of actress Sienna Miller, outlined a 'real Bohemian' as "someone who has the ability to appreciate beauty on a deep level, is a profound romantic, doesn't know any limits, whose world is their own creation, rather than living in a box".

— **Debapriya Dutta (Semester VI)**

GANGUBAI KATHIAWADI—A Human Phoenix

Just as the mythical Phoenix rises from its own ashes after incinerating itself, and embarks on a new journey ahead, likewise in this article I would like to relate the story of a human Phoenix – Gangubai Kathiawadi, who rises not only from the ashes of her past, but also from the mire of human greed and moral corruption to carve out a new identity not only for herself but also for her fellow sisters. Ganga Harjivandas, an innocent sixteen-year-old from a respectable family in Gujarat became Gangubai when she fled to Bombay with her boyfriend Ramnik Lal, aspiring to become an actress. To her horror, Ramnik sells her to a pimp named Sheela Maasi in a brothel. Sheela Maasi locks her up in a windowless room for days and forces her to become a sex worker. The incident kills the innocent soul of Ganga, but not her never say die spirit, she takes the identity of Gangubai: a dazzling streetwalker of Kamathipura. Gangu's confidence soon begins to bother Sheela Maasi. She is especially furious when Gangu takes a stand for the rights of her fellow workers, which affects her profits. One night, a shady-looking man named Shaukat Khan Pathan books a slot with Gangu at an odd hour. Sensing that the client's intentions may be alarming, Sheela Maasi takes the opportunity to teach Gangu a lesson. Pathan's abuse leaves behind gruesome, permanent scars on her. When admitted to a hospital, the nurses mercilessly keep her in a storeroom instead of a ward, for she is a sex worker.

Gangubai confronts Pathan's employer and influential Mafia leader Rahim Bhai and demands justice. Infuriated by Pathan's misdeeds, Rahim avenges her by publicly executing him. Having her scars healed and Rahim Bhai as her assumed brother, Gangubai stands stronger than ever! After Sheela Maasi's death, she takes up the role of the new custodian of the brothel.

Previously, most of the struggling actresses were deceived and trafficked to Bombay as a common practice. In fact, women in the film industry were often correlated to sex workers between the 50s and the 70s. It elaborates how most women do not take up prostitution by choice but are mercilessly forced into it. Such women live through every horrific nightmare, every night, just to make their ends meet.

Empowered with Rahim Bhai's support and the trust of her co-workers, Gangubai establishes dominance in Kamathipura. Most criminals and corrupted officials are afraid to threaten her, which helps her protect her clan. Gangubai rightfully uses her powers in the interests of her people and gains popularity for her philanthropic activities. This encourages her to participate in the local presidential elections.

However, not every brothel-keeper is as compassionate as her. Especially not Raziabai, an influential trans woman who dominates the neighborhood using the barbarism of her henchmen. Gangubai is determined to stop Raziabai from gaining political authority and harassing young girls. She helps the financial prosperity of her brothel by taking ownership of Rahim Bhai's liquor business. She makes history by marrying the daughter of a fellow sex worker to a respectable man. Consequently, she wins the presidential election.

It is common for women who were forced into prostitution to project their dark past on young girls. The trade grows as the victims themselves become the predators. However, Gangubai stands out from this lot. Her undying compassion and hope for a better future empower her to integrate righteousness even into criminal activities.

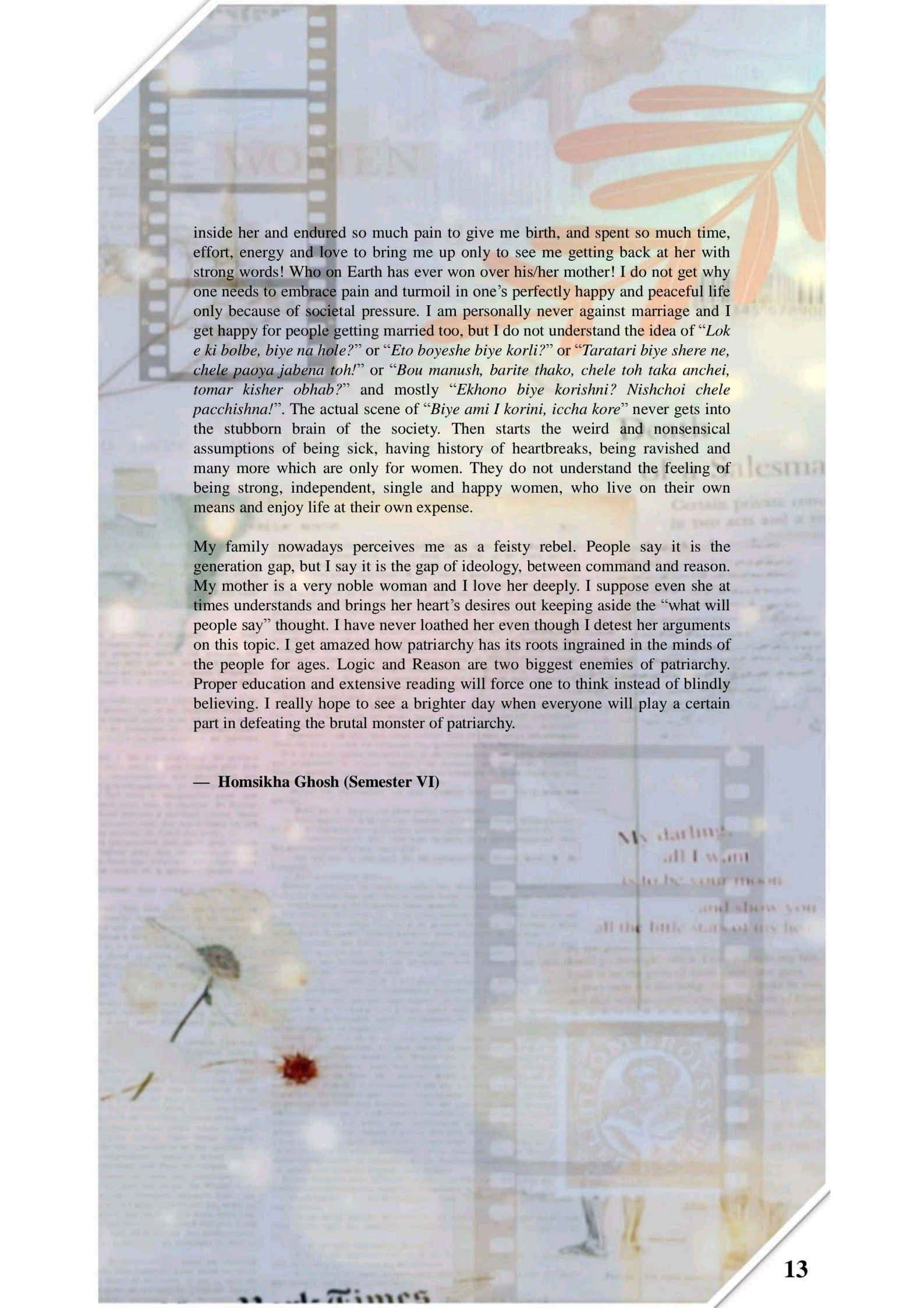
After becoming the local president, Gangubai takes over several responsibilities. Consequently, several challenges follow. The establishment of St. Anthony's School in Kamathipura leads to an order to demolish the brothels of the neighborhood. With the help of Rahim Bhai, Gangubai refuses to conform and saves the homes of her fellow streetwalkers. She takes the initiative to give the brothel-born children their rightful education by fighting several hurdles. Gangubai becomes acquainted with a journalist, Amin Faizi, who helps her to expose the misdoings of the school authorities. She attracts media attention to the plight of the women in Kamathipura. A bold perspective has been put forward that sex workers maintain a societal balance and prevent violence by satisfying the needs of men! While the approach is highly debatable, Gangubai stands out as a proud sex worker who isn't afraid to say the P-word. It challenges several social prejudices by establishing that prostitution is also work! Women, men, and transgender people in this trade work hard to make ends meet and deserve a respectable status in society. Faizi Bhai helps her to gain recognition for her philanthropic successes, following which she gets invited to a political event for a speech. Gangubai publicly addresses the unfair social stigma against sex workers and how they are deprived of their fundamental human rights. Unfortunately, amidst her struggles for the social upliftment of her community, she loses her best friend Kamli at childbirth. One day, Faizi Bhai arranged a meeting with the Prime Minister of India to make Gangubai's voice heard on a national level. Gangubai appeals for prostitution to gain legal status. PM Jawaharlal Nehru acknowledges her concerns and offers her his red rose. He promises her to arrange a national-level discussion on this subject so that thousands of prostitutes in the country attain a dignified life. Offering a red rose to a lady of the night is a common cultural practice in India. However, PM Nehru does so to respectfully honor the lady who dreams of a brighter day for her clan. Despite working in illegal trade, Gangubai creates a righteous world of her own. Despite being titled as a "pimp", she never pushes young girls into prostitution against their will, and prevents other brothel-keepers from doing so. While not being able to herself give birth, she mothers every child born into her brothels and protects them from local predators. Gangubai with all her defined struggles encases the virtues like courage, sacrifice, patience, determination and endurance. She is a figure who demands the pedestal of a Goddess, who deserves to be worshipped. Being such a strong character, she shows the world the power of woman and the superiority that a woman holds in all respect. Every girl in the brothel is as pure as Durga, that is why the first soil to mould the idol of the Goddess is brought from their threshold. If an unmarried girl loses her virginity, it is common for society to label her as impure. But regardless of being a sex worker, Gangubai shines in her white saree, symbolizing the purity in her heart. Kamathipura has historically been a sea of darkness for women, wherein Gangubai becomes the beacon of light.

— Debasmita Saha (Semester II)

I DON'T GET IT !

As I stand on the threshold of adulthood, I realize that I am a misfit in this world. I am 21 but completely confused about my identity and demands of this age. At times I am expected to behave a certain way that will portray that I am matured enough or rather will show that I am an adult ready to take care of my mother. At other times I am expected to stay into my limits and be young, naive and pretty childlike. The equilibrium of age that I am expected to follow makes me quite confused and prone to scoldings that does not make any sense to me mostly. This perplexed heart also does not understand a bunch of other things, however something that has always strike me hard irrespective of my age is the institution of marriage and the hypocrisy associated with it. Me being 21 definitely is the fuel to the fire because all of a sudden the senior members of society have started getting curious about me wooing someone. When you don't have your father or a wise male figure above you they start believing you are frail and unprotected. They feel that you need to hurry up and get hold of someone and marry him. Dreams can be fulfilled even after marriage, you need to make your mother secured, they say. What a ridiculous conception! Even the neighbourhood grocer or the fisherman shouting every morning in my area or maybe a distant grandpa whom I have never bestowed any agency to look for my bridegroom comes up with the question and the knowabouts of boys of marriageable age. Initially I had always laughed off such incidents and felt quite funny about these but frankly speaking, my mother at times speaks on the same tune too which really annoys me. She wants me to have a good job and never asks me to get married soon, but still she thinks that early 20s is the right time to get married, because of medical reasons but most importantly because of the societal pressure clamped upon her for raising me as a widowed woman, a single mother. She doesn't show any amount of surprise when I show her pictures of my childhood friends getting married so young without being independent. She even claims that they have taken the right decision!

I actually understand why she feels so because this is simply how she was brought up. I remember Maa narrating me stories of her childhood where she said how her father never wanted any of his daughters to get a job even though he was willing to let them study as much as they want. The very thought of eating his meal bought from his daughters' money would enrage him and I think that actually hurt his ego being the patriarchal head of the family. This led to my mother regretting why she never studied hard and tried getting a job. She now understands that her own hard-earned money would actually give her the authority over her life that she always craved for. Such thoughts which she shares with me get me puzzled even more because she still believes that starting to work after being married is really easy and certain for all. Every day she watches a lot of T.V. shows which talks about how women are tortured after marriage and how they had to walk out of the institution to fulfill their dreams. I even see her weeping at times while listening to their tales. She even tells me to get inspiration from them. However, she still speaks of things that the society wants us women to speak about. She does not understand how unmarried people can stay happy. I sometimes have a debate with her which then turns into an argument and finally her retorting and winning by throwing her ultimate emotional weapon at me as to how she nurtured me for months

The background of the page is a collage. At the top, there's a film strip graphic with the word 'WOMEN' written across it. To the right, there are stylized orange and red leaves. The main text is in a serif font. Below the main text, there's a smaller section of text. At the bottom, there's a film strip graphic with a circular logo in the center. The overall color palette is soft, with pinks, oranges, and blues.

inside her and endured so much pain to give me birth, and spent so much time, effort, energy and love to bring me up only to see me getting back at her with strong words! Who on Earth has ever won over his/her mother! I do not get why one needs to embrace pain and turmoil in one's perfectly happy and peaceful life only because of societal pressure. I am personally never against marriage and I get happy for people getting married too, but I do not understand the idea of "*Lok e ki bolbe, biye na hole?*" or "*Eto boyeshe biye korli?*" or "*Taratari biye shere ne, chele paoya jabena toh!*" or "*Bou manush, barite thako, chele toh taka anchei, tomar kisher obhab?*" and mostly "*Ekhono biye korishni? Nishchoi chele pacchishna!*". The actual scene of "*Biye ami I korini, iccha kore*" never gets into the stubborn brain of the society. Then starts the weird and nonsensical assumptions of being sick, having history of heartbreaks, being ravished and many more which are only for women. They do not understand the feeling of being strong, independent, single and happy women, who live on their own means and enjoy life at their own expense.

My family nowadays perceives me as a feisty rebel. People say it is the generation gap, but I say it is the gap of ideology, between command and reason. My mother is a very noble woman and I love her deeply. I suppose even she at times understands and brings her heart's desires out keeping aside the "what will people say" thought. I have never loathed her even though I detest her arguments on this topic. I get amazed how patriarchy has its roots ingrained in the minds of the people for ages. Logic and Reason are two biggest enemies of patriarchy. Proper education and extensive reading will force one to think instead of blindly believing. I really hope to see a brighter day when everyone will play a certain part in defeating the brutal monster of patriarchy.

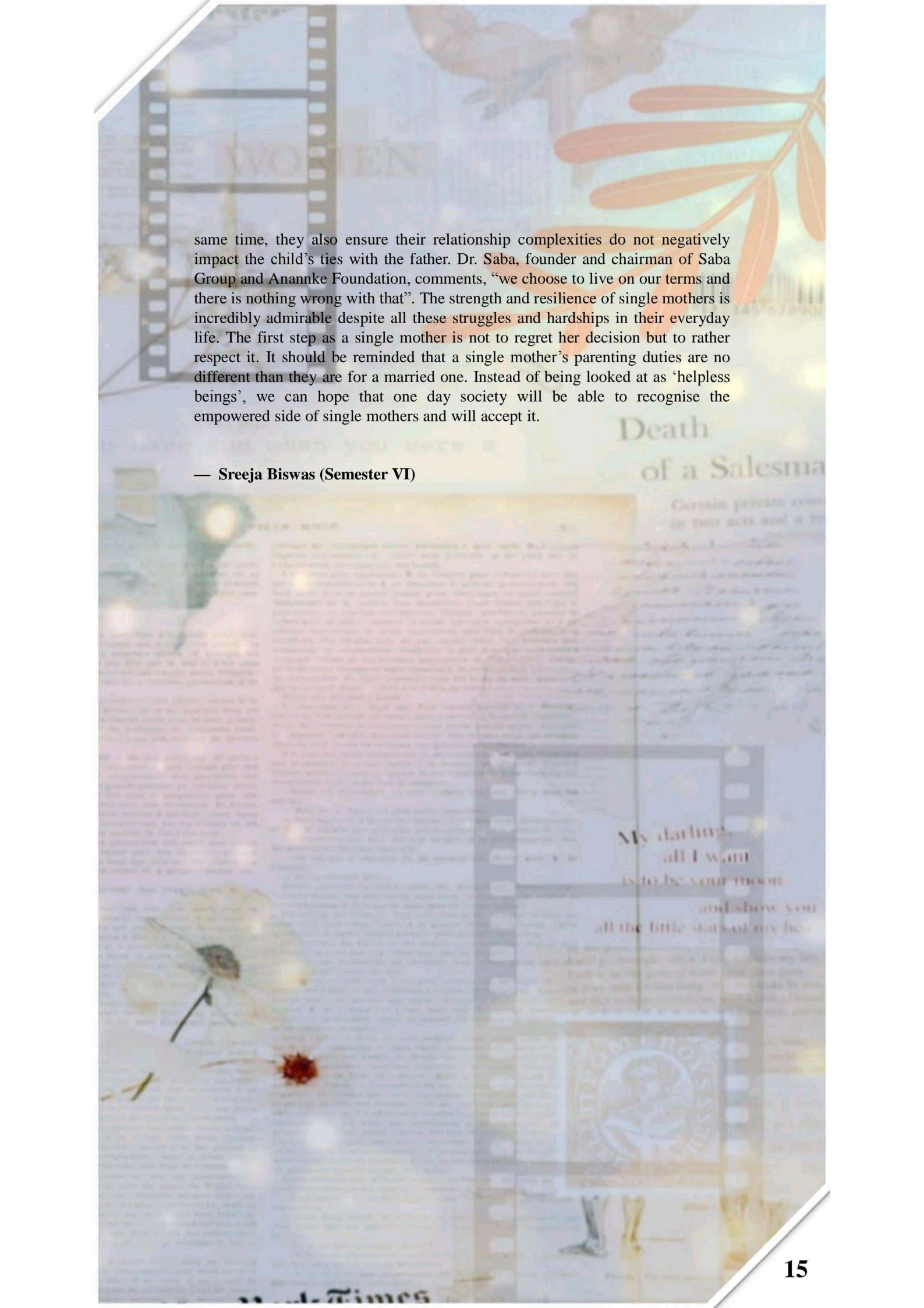
— Homsikha Ghosh (Semester VI)

Struggles and Hardships Faced by Single Mothers

Motherhood is a blessing but it can be challenging for single mothers. Till date single mothers are treated differently putting their legitimacy as a parent under scanner. They find it difficult to accept their status in an open forum because people tend to judge. As marriage and family are so rigidly defined in a society, single mothers tend to fall into a social blindspot. It is hard to fathom the magnitude of obstacles that single mothers – widows, divorcees, or single parents by choice face in their day-to-day life. There are many conflicts and pressures that they go through that other families may not experience. There are a growing number of problems they face in society: financial struggles, maintaining a work-life balance, emotional battles, stigma and judgement, lack of safety net, lack of support and many more. They find it difficult to handle the responsibility of childcare and to establish a routine for their children.

Results have shown that single mothers have lower quality of life (QOL) than married mothers. They often face a financial crisis which is the main stress factor for the majority of single mothers regardless of where they live in the world. Gallup data suggest that the U.S is among the countries where they struggle the most relative to the rest of the country's population. Many single mothers in the U.S live in low-income communities with limited childcare options and less opportunities to find a better job. In the aftermath of divorce or the loss of a partner, single mothers become economically vulnerable. Again, balancing professional responsibilities and parenting is a major problem faced by them. According to a Pew survey, 59% of full-time working mothers say they don't have leisure time. It becomes worse in case of single mothers. When they are not working, they have to take care of their children which ultimately leads to very little time left for themselves. The route women take to be a single mother varies, but parenting alone is physically and mentally demanding. For some, it can even take a toll on their psychological health. As a result, the sense of loneliness and depression starts to creep in when mothers cannot share the good and bad experiences with someone. Thus the stressors can gradually pile up leading to a mental health crisis. They are often likely to feel guilty of not providing enough for their children. They are the only one who earns in the family and are expected to provide for their kids. Even though they know that staying with their children throughout their growing-up years is important, they cannot afford to spend all their time rearing them. Thus all these aspects tend to affect their emotional life.

A 2019 report by the UN says that in India, 4.5% of all the households are run by single mothers. In our society, where patriarchy is quite prevalent, a single mother is often looked down upon. Not just neighbours or relatives, but social media has also become the platform where unrelated self-righteous people have the liberty to criticize them today. The daily assault of negative assumptions about their parenting skills and moral characters is demoralising and unfair. However, contemporary single mothers do not wish to be controlled by any means, least of all by patriarchal shackles. Nor do they want to succumb to the pressures from relatives and friends to "settle down". At the

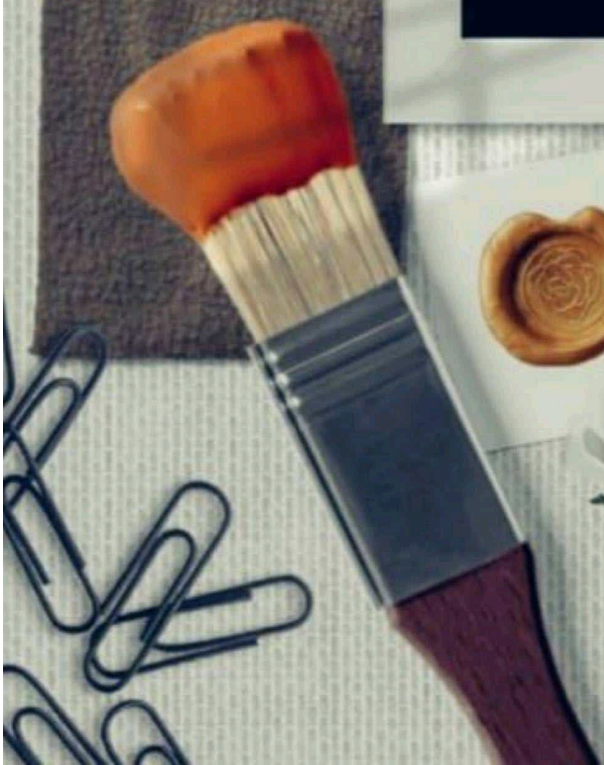
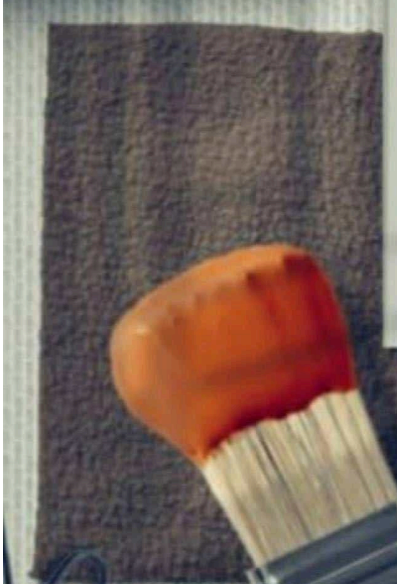
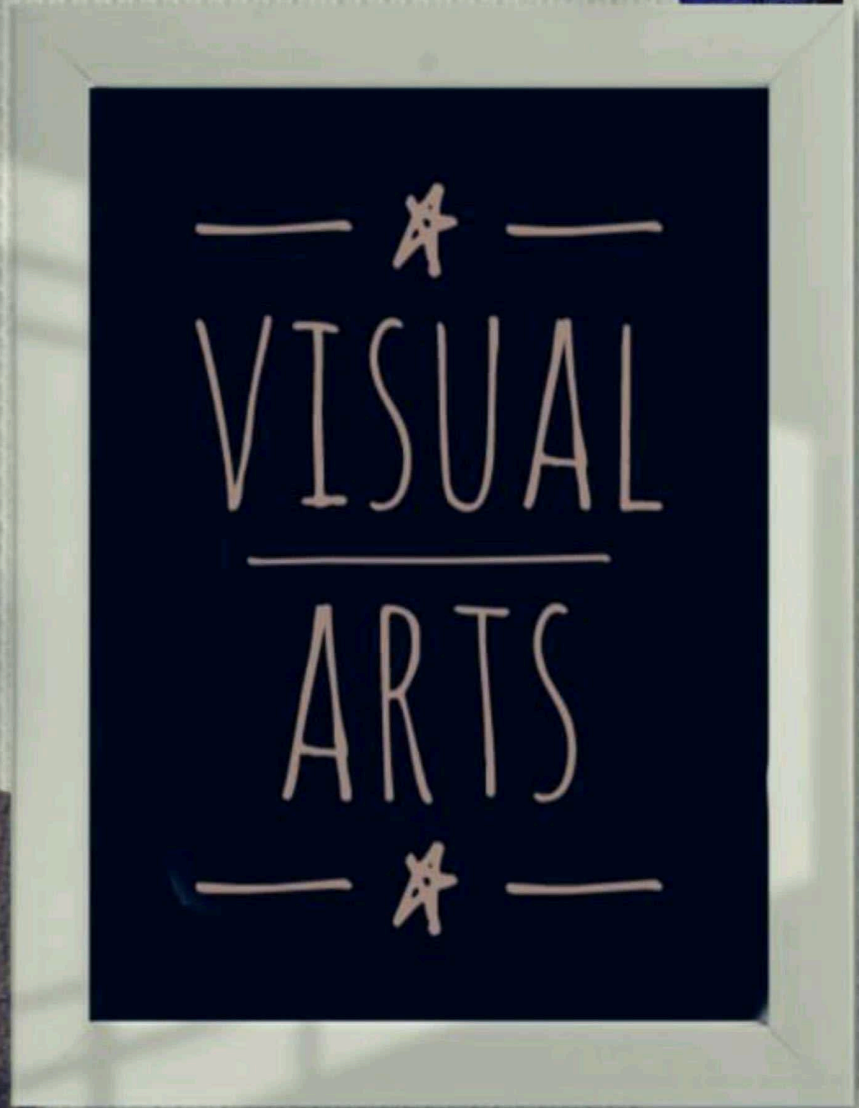


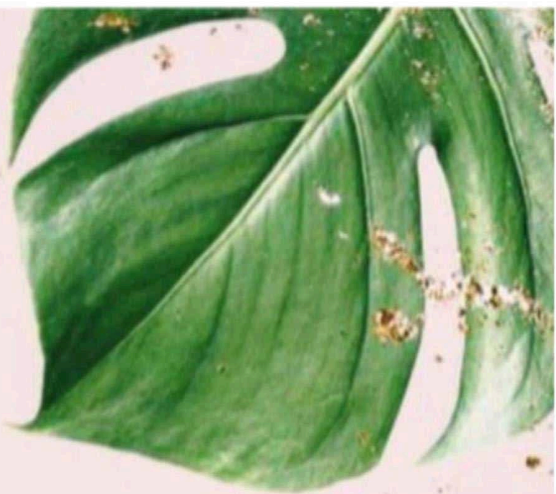
same time, they also ensure their relationship complexities do not negatively impact the child's ties with the father. Dr. Saba, founder and chairman of Saba Group and Anannke Foundation, comments, "we choose to live on our terms and there is nothing wrong with that". The strength and resilience of single mothers is incredibly admirable despite all these struggles and hardships in their everyday life. The first step as a single mother is not to regret her decision but to rather respect it. It should be reminded that a single mother's parenting duties are no different than they are for a married one. Instead of being looked at as 'helpless beings', we can hope that one day society will be able to recognise the empowered side of single mothers and will accept it.

— Sreeja Biswas (Semester VI)

APPRECIATION

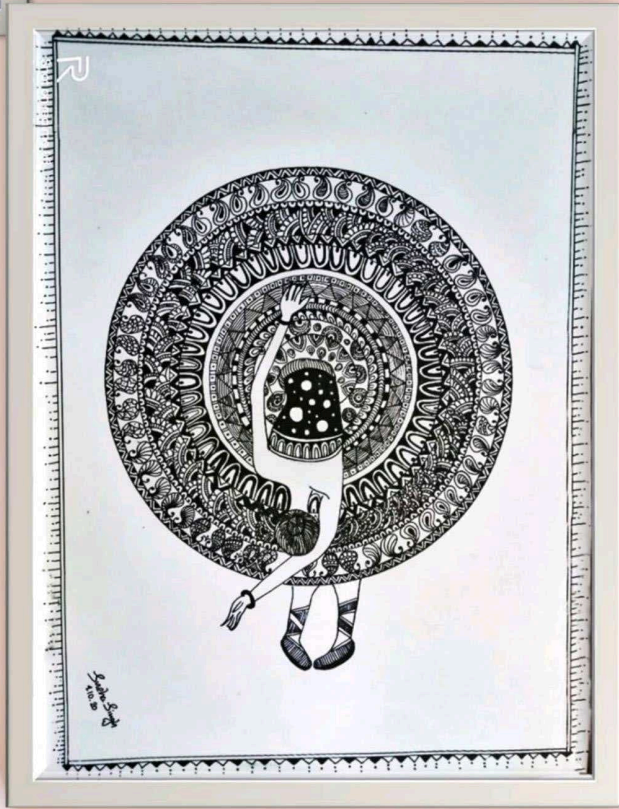
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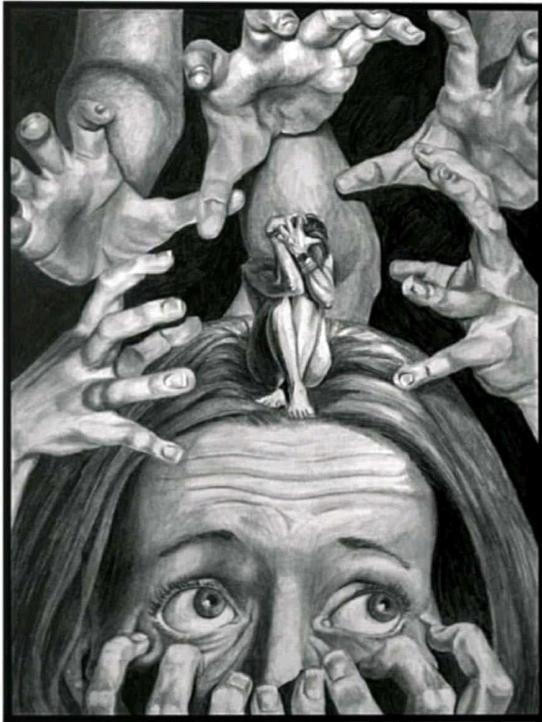
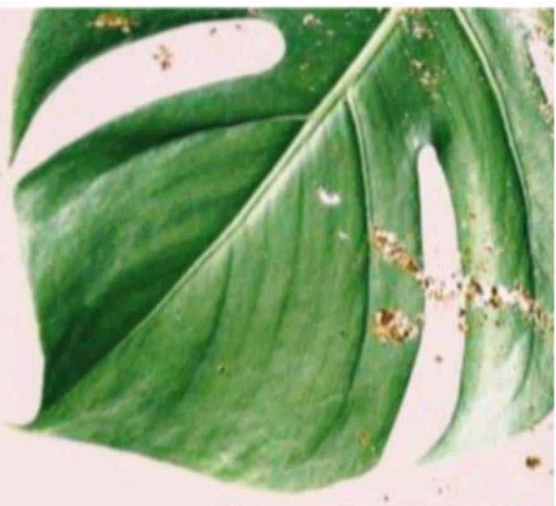




Debopriya Roy (Semester VI)

Sneha Singh (Semester VI)



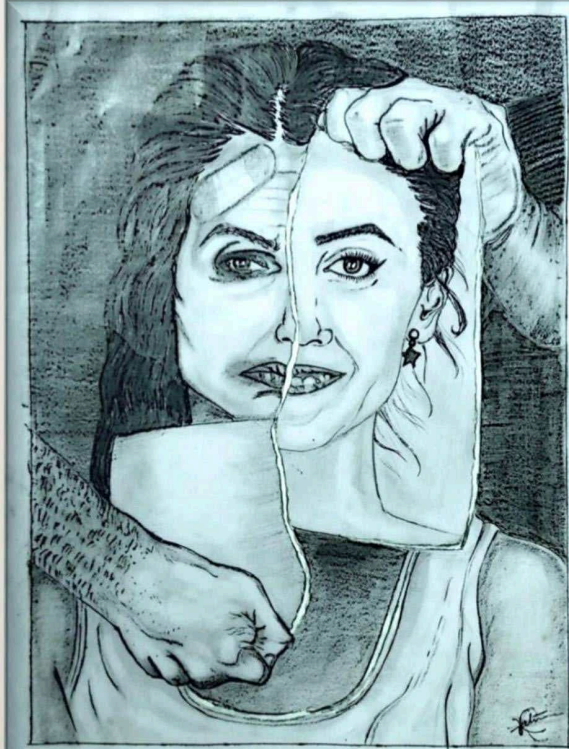


Riturupa Mandal

Riturupa Mandal (Semester VI)

Debapriya Dutta (Semester VI)

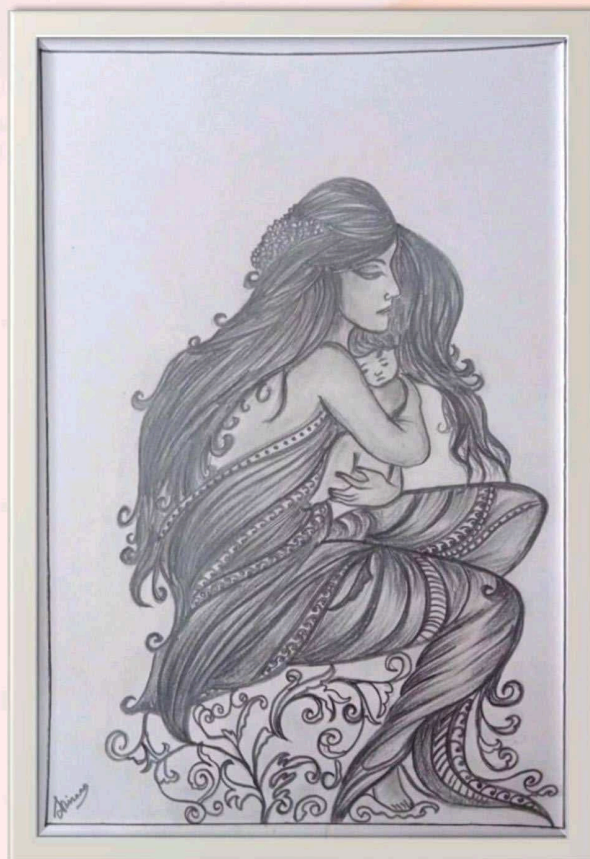




Kanij Fatema (Semester IV)

Amrita Khan (Semester IV)





Sreeja Biswas (Semester VI)

YOU ARE THE SUN

QUOTATIONS

Go after
dreams,
not people.

honey your soul is golden

care for your body.
eat. hydrate.
move. sleep.

—learn to be alone.
'cause not everyone will stay



- “I do not wish women to have power over men; but over themselves.”

— Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

- “Anything may happen when womanhood has ceased to be a protected occupation.”

— Virginia Woolf

- “Above all, be the heroine of your life, not the victim.”

— Nora Ephron

- “A woman is like a tea bag. You never know how strong it is until it’s in hot water.”

— Eleanor Roosevelt

- “There is no limit to what we, as women, can accomplish.”

— Michelle Obama

- “I hate to hear you talking so like a fine gentleman, and as if women were all fine ladies, instead of rational creatures. We none of us expect to be in smooth water all our days.”

— Jane Austen

- “Domination of women has provided a key link, both socially and symbolically, to the domination of earth, hence the tendency in patriarchal cultures to link women with earth, matter, and nature, while identifying males with sky, intellect, and transcendent spirit.”

— Rosemary Radford Ruether