



Let

Ideas

Breathe

A LIBRARY SOCIETY INITIATIVE

(2023)

# NOTE FROM THE OFFICIATING PRINCIPAL'S DESK

The Library Society began its journey in 2009 with the support of Sr. Tina Farias and Sr. Christine Coutinho. The mission was to provide activities and resources that would assist students in fostering a love of reading, developing a pattern of life long learning and becoming effective and discriminating users of information in a knowledge-based society. 'Let Ideas Breathe' – the very first e-Newsletter is an excellent initiative of the Library Society with its theme as 'A Saga of Progress: India@75'. The Newsletter includes poetry, articles, crosswords, book reviews as a tribute to 75 years of India's independence and several events of the Society organized throughout the year. It captures the challenges and triumphs of India as reflected in the writings on Indian caste, freedom of thought and action, survival, COVID, women, politics and much more. The many events of the Society reflect the praiseworthy work of the students in 2022-2023. I congratulate Husnal Kaur Makol (President), and Laiba Hassan (Vice President) and Anubha Roy (Treasurer) who worked relentlessly for the publication of the Newsletter under the guidance of the Staff Advisors of the Library Society Dr. Bonny Ghosh, Dr. Sayantani Chatterjee and Mr. Nilavo Roy.

Dr. Debika Guha,  
Officiating Principal,  
Loreto College

Januay 2024

## NOTE FROM THE EDITORS' DESK

It is with immense pleasure that the Library Society announces its very first e-Newsletter, 'Let Ideas Breathe'. Our theme is 'A Saga of Progress: India @ 75', with development in postcolonial India at its focal point. At the time of its compilation, the country was celebrating its 75th year of Independence, also heralded as 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav' by the Central Government. This edition is but a potpourri of poetry, articles, crosswords and book reviews paying homage to India's glorious history, and stands at the intersection between its rich past and flourishing present. The Editors' Team would like to extend its heartfelt gratitude to Sr. Dr. Christine Coutinho for her support and guidance in anthologising this issue and making its publication possible. Dr. Neeta Dang's edits were greatly appreciated for aptly altering the content wherever required to maintain the theme and produce the best possible outcome. The Staff Advisors of the Society (Dr. Bonny Ghosh, Dr. Sayantani Chatterjee and Mr. Nilavo Roy) were instrumental in carefully curating the content, and being the driving force behind the publication of this issue. We offer them our deepest gratitude. We would like to thank Navyaa Agarwal and Basudha Singha, the members of our designing team, for working closely with us and ensuring quality work. We would also like to thank our contributors for bringing our vision to life with their research-oriented responses and creativity. Finally, we thank you, our reader, for giving our issue a read. We aim to bolster the spirit of learning among our students and inculcate a reading habit with our well-equipped Library, easily accessible to each pupil to aid them in their education. We hope you enjoy scanning this issue as much as we loved putting it together.

**President: Husnal Kaur Makol**

**Vice President: Laiba Hassan**

**Treasurer: Anubha Roy**

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## Carcasses

Today, she wandered into the thoughts of another person.

Thoughts that were strung together into words so beautiful, that they subtly hid a universe. With every thought she discovered, she compared it to hers.

Today, she magnified every flaw of her page. Every letter, every word, every sentence. Pages that gave meaning to what she was. Those very pages that embraced her insecurities, her tears, herself.

Until those pages, which once anchored all her storms, blurred into tornadoes of scribbles.

The mesh of lines weren't dark enough to hide her shadows.

Shadows that were meant to be locked away, never to be seen again.

Somehow, they made an appearance from behind her armour of ignorance.

Today, she mercilessly ripped out the pages in her journal.

Crushed them like her hopes of becoming good enough and locked them away, never to be seen again.

She destroyed her safe haven.

Demolished it, brick by brick. Until the only thing left,

Were the carcasses of her vulnerability.

**Annweshaa Chatterjee,  
Psychology Department, 3rd Year**

## One Step Forward, Two Steps Back

75 years of this, how many more to go?  
The thought came to mind, late at night.

What still brings ripples of joy, when that flag sways?  
Numb throats and wet eyes as the familiar melody plays.

A fevered frenzy it brings, the day when the flags are raised,  
high praise uttered from sleuth mouths to lull the crowds in a haze.  
The days witness overflowing love for a nation from those who have not learned to give.

The years of hardship, under the tricolour,  
Has come and gone (stayed),  
yet, its tribute seems to stay.

We salute a land that has nothing more to give, to those who have taken it all,  
A land that's gasping for its final breadth.

Still, the morning of its 75th year sees the hoisting, the marching, the slogans, and the parades.

Children in worn uniforms hold up paper tricolours and claim to live in a free land.  
Hypnotized by the incessant ideas of "progress" by men from ivory towers,  
Mindlessly we spend our toiling hours.

75 years of this, how many more to go?

**Debolina Debnath  
Psychology Department, 3rd Year**

# Changing Aspects of the Indian Caste System: Caste and Violence

There has been a 6% increase in caste-based violence, especially against Dalit women, between 2009 and 2018 (The Hindu, 2020). This marked increment provides testimonial to the fact that caste and violence are losing their individual identities, and can no longer be viewed independently of the other.

Caste had originated as a system of social stratification, whereby people were segregated into different groups according to their respective occupations. Caste would be inherited and would, in most cases, be fixed for life. The rigidity and inflexibility of the system was eventually used to justify all forms of discrimination and oppression inflicted on people belonging to 'lower' castes. Therefore, caste became the sole determinant of not only one's status in society, but also of the kind of life one would lead.

Muthukkaruppan (2017) argues that caste can only be understood in relational terms, the relation being determined by violence.

## What is Violence?

Galtung (1969: 168) defines violence as "that which increases the distance between the potential and the actual, and that which impedes the decrease of this distance." He illustrates with an example: dying from an earthquake is not violent for it is inevitable; however, if earthquakes become avoidable and people still die, it would be defined as violence. Mills (1956) suggests that violence is the ultimate kind of power, which Arendt (1969) contests, suggesting that power and violence are opposites and that violence appears only when power is threatened (Richards, 2015). A society becomes structurally violent when it legitimizes violence. Though visible forms of violence are outlawed, subtler forms like "discrimination, exclusion, unwanted inclusion, degradation and humiliation are... written into the very structure of the condition" (Muthukkaruppan, 2017, p. 49).

## Relationship between Caste, Violence and Crime:

Ambedkar (1933: 3) states, "there will be outcaste as long as there are castes." This highlights that unequal relationships are constitutive of caste. Further, Ambedkar viewed caste's exclusionary violence as inherent in the processes resulting in caste formation (Rege, 2018). Interestingly, Gandhi criticized Ambedkar's view, explaining that unlike untouchability, caste is not sinful. He elaborated that destroying caste for the outcaste, is as wrong as destroying a body for an ugly growth (Kothari, 2018).

Ahammed (2019: 95) suggests that lower castes, owing to centuries of Brahmin dominance, were "systematically indoctrinated... to believe that their servility and compliance to exploitation and deprivation was their bounded duty."

## Discussion:

Ambedkar (1933) presents a pragmatic perspective to caste – only the removal of caste would remove the outcaste. Though the Gandhian view is idealistic, it fails to acknowledge caste as a hierarchical relationship, which makes equality among groups unachievable. Ambedkar recognizes this dichotomy, arguing that the problem is not within the system, the problem is the system.

The observation made by Ahammed (2019) accentuates how decades of violence and overplay had conditioned lower castes into accepting discrimination, as a part of their life. This point is a radical eye-opener; it reveals the extent to which violence had, and still has, its roots entrenched in our society.

At the outset, it is imperative to note that gender, sex, class, religion, socioeconomic status and caste – all simultaneously determine the perpetrators and victims of violence. Violence is a perverse manifestation of a misplaced and false sense of power, derived from being born in a higher caste. It is clear that the Indian caste system is not only extremely violent, both physically and psychologically, but violence is also essential for the very existence of the caste system. Caste sustains inequality, and inequality sustains violence. Knowing this, perhaps we should attempt to transform the Indian caste system into one where inequality begets compassion, not violence.

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**Annweshaa Chatterjee,  
Psychology Department, 3rd Year**

## I survived

The winter had just resided for a new year to begin,  
The spring triumphing over the gentle breeze making the flowers dance,  
I sat by the veranda silently and stared at the sun  
For what I heard was coming some kind of discern from some far land.  
But little did I care about what others might be facing in the world?  
I was wiggling in excitement for my final year of school to commence.  
Until the time came when an announcement came in,  
“Schools are closed for now, a new disease is residing within”.  
My silly mind thought nothing to be problematic still,  
Instead, it rejoiced for I got to enjoy my days in leisure.  
After days passed, my brain thought the leisure a bit too boring  
So I started to look for matters that I could attend to.  
It was one night in March or April when I decided to check the news  
For everything was so monotonous, spending my whole time in vain.  
As the news flashed on the screens, my eyes rested still,  
There were innumerable pictures of people perishing away.  
I got nervous and began to think, my eyes stopped to blink  
Is this even real? The world is amid a pandemic?  
People dying, losing their jobs, livelihoods, and families  
Seemed too common to hear as a part of some daily basicities  
My life came to a halt with no ambition coming in my mind to achieve  
I started to find myself in the corners of my room.  
But little did I know that a part of me was gone, nowhere I was aware  
I decided to sit still until everything everywhere gets over  
Authorities served, people struggled,  
All one could hear was the deaths and sorrows  
Still, the sun rose every day and time began to run on its own course  
Humans trying to keep up with their stretch physically.  
After a year passed in jeopardy, then came the news.  
“The pandemic is over” stated everyone still jittering with tears  
So came out everyone in the open air and rejoiced in the beauty of nature,  
Despite several losses, I held my head high,  
I am lucky, “I survived”

Sarbani Karmakar,  
English Department, 2nd Year



# Freedom

Rubbing the filth-stained palms  
She stokes up the gnarly embers again,  
"Bhaiya, I'll quickly make some rotis.  
Don't leave for work with an empty stomach like last time!"  
"Sita, save it for Chotu. I'll manage."  
"But bhaiya-"  
Before the next word could roll off those lips, the door slams shut  
Right when the tava had gotten hot  
And the hands had started to roll the musty dough circular.  
It wasn't a perfect circle but good enough to impress the soon to be in-laws.

She knew she was a fast learner,  
Had seen Amma doing it every day like clockwork.  
She also knew that she was smarter than Chotu.  
Before he had even learnt what the circumference of a circle meant,  
She had finished solving his sums.  
She didn't quite understand how ganit was Chotu's sworn nemesis.  
As a little girl she had heard her parents calculate -  
If we can save up enough, say about a lakh or so, surely our damadji would be satisfied."  
"No, no, we need more – to gift a TV set or a motorcycle."  
She knew how many zeros one lakh had,  
(Overheard from masterji's lesson at Chotu's school)  
Also, the number of days before she became 'paraya dhan'.

She had heard that the neighbour's daughter had returned-  
Supple skin striped bluish-black  
Barely a month of marital bliss  
The bride had fled.  
She had a choice- be the bride or be the rebel  
Be the first female student in the government high school  
Learn what her mother couldn't.  
To sign her own name.  
Using real letters, like learned memsahibs  
(The kind she aspired to dress like but never let her mother work for)  
Not to be cornered with a petty twiddle of a thumb.  
To learn to write her own story.  
To not be hidden away behind heavy pallus  
perfecting the shape of rotis  
to impress a never-before-seen suitor.  
She had to break free-  
To taste the gripping pull of the life affirming elixir  
the forefathers had given up their lives and loves for.  
She wanted to  
She needed to  
For that bride's sake  
For her mother's sake.

Anangsha Halder  
Psychology Department, 3rd Year

# Triumph of India over the Covid Challenge

Comparing our life in the pre-pandemic phase with the life in post-pandemic, the surge in digitalisation in India is commendable.

India hit the world's great pandemic in March 2020, and we had a lockdown, shutting down all academic institutions, job sectors, markets and the like. Everyone focused on what havoc it has brought to our economy, contributing to the recession that we had for a very long time. Besides we had unemployment spiralling causing a great problem all over India. But Covid period did not only brought adversities in India, but also some triumph to our country which wouldn't have been possible if Covid pandemic hadn't been there. In everything there are some good and bad aspects. Focusing on the good aspect, the first thing that came into our observation is rapid digitalisation of our Country. The thing, that was quite impossible several years back was possible during the pandemic era. People were confined in their household, could not visit markets, banks, ATM, stationary shop, due to strict imposition of Lockdown. The digital surge that took place, where apps like Big Basket, Grofers, Blink it, came into surface at that time evidently, and people bought their daily requirements of grocery items from those apps. Even if we are now we are progressing towards the end of the pandemic, these convenient apps, would be used now as well. Even dresses, makeup kits, books, were also purchased from online site at that time, and still they are very much in use. Besides, people had internet banking apps of several banks, so that it was easier for transaction from one account to another. Even apps like Gpay, Paytm are so convenient to use, that in an instant, we can have transactions. Besides, daily we can see ticket vending machine kept at every metro station, they are used to recharge smart cards, see balance of card, issuing new card, buying temporary tokens faster.

Coronavirus propelled the use of contactless digital technology across India. The digital first reset has set the foundations for improving governance. Moreover Indian States increased the use of robots and drones. Data from the apex Reserve Bank of India (RBI) show that India is now clocking around 100 million digital transactions a day with a volume of 5 trillion rupees, about a five times jump from 2016.

The digital reset of the Indian economy has seeped into almost every aspect of life. Almost every Indian now has the digitally authenticated Aadhar identification number. The connection of Aadhar with bank accounts is also a step towards authentication. Besides Governmental efforts over more than a decade have delivered in spades. Most of India's population now has access to both a unique biometric id and a bank account. A decade ago, most lacked access to either formal identification or the banking system. A unified payments interface now allows for easy transfers and payments. And all this digitalisation is not only driving a boom in innovation and start-ups, but also enabling a promising and modernisation of India.

It literally transformed from a street economy to a screen economy. Banking and payments being the critical pillars of the economy are among the core areas that have seen a serious uptick in digital offerings and adoption. In addition, Indian Fin Techs and digital payment companies have made significant progress towards offering a good range of integrated and user-friendly solutions that harness advanced technologies and deploy innovative business models.

Not only we noticed a digital surge but also saw how academic lessons was not confined to the classroom, but also beyond classroom, on online platforms, without hampering the education, and it showed that even though the goal seems to be unreachable, it does not mean it is not possible. Our education system proved that despite not getting classrooms to impart education, we have online platforms like Zoom, which has all the facility to listen to the daily lessons at home.

Therefore, it was a great thing to learn, and the triumph of India in digitalisation, boosted the speed of several things, be it transactions or imparting education to the children. It's a new India we are living in, a new wave of desired modernisation across the country.

## We are The Women of Today

She was the girl child,  
The jewel of that majestic cage,  
Adorned like a mannequin,  
She was a puppet that had no voice,  
Caged in that dark fortress lest she escaped,  
She observed with the unbridled curiosity of a child,  
Her brothers playing and reading,  
Living a childhood she never knew,  
And as she yearned for the knowledge and freedom  
she never had,  
They clipped her wings and chained her hopes,  
For she was a sinner who dared to dream,  
And dragged away forcefully to the hall,  
There sat a man thrice her age,  
Waiting to drown her dreams in that murky endless  
pit,  
But she could only muffle her anguish,  
For she was a silenced bird that had no wings.

Then left the Captors,  
Bringing a dawn of new changes,  
She went to school and passionately read,  
Got a job and earned a living,  
She got the freedom to choose the partner of her  
dreams,  
And the freedom to sing the song of her whims,  
She is no longer just a puppet,  
Her voice will never be shackled again,  
Meticulously balancing work and household,  
She is both a caregiver and a breadwinner,  
She no longer allowed the society to slash her wings,  
Or cage her silenced self in bars of chain,  
She took the reins of her life,  
In hands which gripped them firmly,  
She progressed, she changed,  
And gave wings to her hopes and dreams.

Anoushka Dutta,  
Psychology Department, 1st Year

## Scholar

It's been a while now,  
Started climbing the mountains to the North.  
My Grandma said she couldn't,  
Although she wanted to.  
"It's not safe. Not for you" – that's all she was told.  
She argued for the top most view,  
"Admire from the bottom" – she did.  
She couldn't climb up the rocks.  
Health, wealth – all she had,  
Even time too.  
"It was not safe", she says to me;  
How did she even know?  
"That's what I've been told my life,  
Ordered, dictated, told!"  
My mother tried to climb it too



With faltered, trembly steps –  
Halfway through she stopped,  
They start to pull her back.  
I still see her name on the milestone scribbles –  
Written capital, bold.  
I'm close to the top, admiring the view,  
Holding my flag head high.  
Grandma asks how it is like –  
Going at the top?  
It opens your eyes, heart and mind,  
Empowered is what you feel.  
"But power was not for us", she frowned;  
It is now – I said!  
"If you want power, they'd call you bad!"  
"Now they call me a 'Scholar'!"

Subhangi Chatterjee  
Psychology Department, 3rd Year

# Word Search

E	T	A	Y	A	J	V	E	M	A	Y	T	A	S	R	A	W	X	D	D
C	N	M	A	D	R	A	S	Y	Z	R	T	H	L	S	Q	P	J	E	W
N	E	U	X	R	I	E	M	Y	E	L	N	I	I	T	B	N	C	M	J
A	M	L	J	L	O	W	T	A	E	W	D	N	B	F	Z	L	Y	O	H
T	H	T	U	Y	X	R	S	E	O	A	L	D	E	I	A	X	H	C	W
S	S	I	S	E	E	O	Q	R	Z	C	M	U	R	R	Q	G	F	R	Q
I	I	C	T	B	N	N	C	A	O	J	U	S	A	S	W	A	R	A	J
S	L	U	I	O	M	O	U	N	T	B	A	T	T	E	N	N	E	C	A
E	B	L	C	S	R	W	F	Y	E	E	I	A	I	I	M	D	E	Y	W
R	A	T	E	I	Z	L	Y	N	C	O	N	N	O	N	W	H	D	E	A
E	T	U	V	D	I	E	D	N	N	O	C	O	N	E	D	I	O	T	H
P	S	R	E	C	S	U	E	H	E	E	M	O	I	A	Z	I	M	P	A
U	E	A	T	S	R	L	K	S	D	L	U	M	L	T	T	B	A	J	R
B	F	L	A	A	O	H	W	I	N	G	D	V	I	O	I	I	R	N	L
L	T	L	N	I	E	F	I	T	E	G	L	C	N	T	N	T	O	Q	A
I	P	C	V	D	P	R	N	I	P	U	E	U	D	V	M	I	R	N	L
C	E	N	A	X	O	U	S	R	E	R	I	R	I	Y	F	E	A	A	M
V	O	U	Y	C	W	V	T	B	D	T	F	Z	A	G	D	H	N	L	P
N	E	H	R	U	J	V	O	U	N	S	N	O	Q	K	A	L	I	T	G
J	Z	S	U	B	C	O	N	T	I	N	E	N	T	Q	X	A	R	P	S

Swaraj, Satyamev Jayate, Declaration, Gandhi, Wars, Establishment, India, Disobey, Subcontinent, Treason, Resistance, Nehru, Madras, Independence, Hindustan, Freedom, Tilak, Crown, Liberation, Curzon, Multicultural, Plassey, Democracy, Nation, British, Nonviolence, Mountbatten, Republic, Endurance, Indian, Neo-Colonial, Commitments, Jawaharlal, Kheda, Conflict, Liberty, Atlee, Enfield, Struggle, Rifts, Justice, Winston, Partition, Azadi.

Adetee Shaw,  
Political Science Department, 2nd year

## WHITE NIGHT AND BLACK STARS.

She was Kaya; She was The ripe Sun, the coal tarred body,  
The white pearls, the chalky teeth,  
The cold, dull leaves, the dusky eyes,  
The swishing stream, the glossy hair.  
She was Kaya; She was A billion voices muffled in woe,  
A tribe of fancy in the grime mat,  
A slew of wallpapers yellowed and torn,  
A room of one's own, for almost none.

Time's barouche glided high,  
Peeping through the crisp, blonde hay,  
Bestriding the rainbow gay and balmy,  
And the flock of clouds glum and grey.  
It soared like a bird who'd learnt to dream,  
The betrothal ring and that guarding sceptre,  
The lines that tame the flame within,  
Are dead and molten into the air  
Air thick with thriving chants,  
Air- buoyant and bleeding,

Swatilekha Mishra,  
English Department, 3rd year

The muffled voices bloomed with a spark,  
The tanned, beaten skin glowing with a sheen,  
The autumn fancies swim together,  
Regal hands stretch obscure and vast.  
Light is beckoned through the crannies,  
And filthy attics left ajar,  
For thinning strands re-build aeons,  
The Moon shines bright, without a bar.  
The white daisies rest on skulls  
While a star-strewn night waits afar.

The heathen lamp is scintillating,  
The sooty glass is matte and dark,  
Bleached canvas dipped in tint,  
The flushed face is still as scared.  
Flittering there the dandelions go,  
An ugly creeper locked to the earth,  
Oh Woman! How far did thou march!  
Ah Woman! How long would thou rot?  
There one Kaya bathes in mirth,  
Here another one plunges in dirt!

## आज़ादी का जश्न

आज़ादी के ज़ब्बे का रंग,  
लाया कितनों को ही एक संग।  
सनहरे गीतों की गंज में,  
अनगिनत भारतीयों के मल में,  
बस चुका है, तिरंगा का प्रेम अमर।

मुश्किलों के पहाड़ से लड़ते हुए,  
आज बीत आए हैं, ७५ साल –  
वक्त के साथ, भारत हासिल कर चुका  
है,  
एक ऊंचा मकाम।

Soumili Konar,  
Psychology Department, 3rd year

हो ग्रीन रिवोल्यूशन का आरंभ,  
या हो मंगलयान की उपलब्धि –  
भारत से करना चाहें,  
अब अधिकतर देश, गहरी संधी।

आज कोविड से लड़ने में,  
सक्षम रहे हम-  
एक दूसरे का साथ देकर,  
इस महामारी को साथ गिराए हम।

देश-प्रेम लाया है, इतना दूर हमको,  
अंधेरे को छोड़ आए हैं, कहां हम तो!  
आगे का रास्ता अब है नापना,  
जिससे तिरंगा कर पाए, सब मुश्किलों का सामना।

# नारी

घुटती रही थोड़ी सेहमी रही  
डरी रही धमकी रही  
वह नारी रही  
जलाया था जिसे तूने सती की अग्नि में  
नाश करेगी वो तेरा अपनी क्रोधाग्नि से  
चेहरे पर तूने उसके फेंका तेजाब  
फिर भी बना रही वह अपनी पहचान  
वो नारी जिसके पैदा होने पर  
तूने खडा किया बवाल,  
करेगी तुमसे सवाल  
छोटे कपडे पहनने से होती हैं बदतमीजी  
तो द्रौपदी पर क्यों हुआ अत्याचार?  
इसपर बताए अपने विचार  
क्यों है दुनिया में पितृसत्ता  
जब कोक में ९ महीने पालती माता?

छीनी तूने उसकी पुस्तकें  
ताकि चूला चौंका वो कर सके  
पर वह तो निकली भाग  
सफल हुई बाग बाग

वो नारी रही  
जिसने दिया उसका साथ तूने बुलाया उसको नामर्द  
सच्चाई तो यह है कि तुम उड जाओगे बनके गर्द  
और रहे जाएंगे यही असली मर्द

उसे परखते हो उसकी सुंदरता पर  
बाते क्यों नहीं करते उसकी सफलता पर?  
करा लो बस इनसे बडी बडी बाते  
लगवालो "equality" की हांके  
और इन्हीं के द्वारा जब रात को होता किसी निर्दोष का बलात्कार,  
तो उस खबर को हैं यह दबाते।

**Vanshika Chawlaa**  
**Psychology Department, 1st Year**

## Caste: Past, Present, Future and Politics

The society is, if it were an organism, a living and a thriving being in itself. It grows, sustains, adopts, adapts and lives. In the process, it invents new norms, and also, discards the old ones. The institution of caste, no matter its mammoth age, has been an element of some or the other reasons in the Indian society, over the ages. The institution, however, has changed its form and shape more than often, and just like the society it was in, it was never static in its character.

It'd be unjust to use the word 'caste' in a monochromatic way. The term is derived from the Portuguese word 'casta' meaning, 'race' or 'breed'. To speak historically, every society of the past has had some form of social stratification, right from the ancient Roman society to the Arab world. To speak in India's context, it's not true that India cultured casteism since the beginning of her history. The Rig Veda, the oldest surviving text in the subcontinent, does not preach the 'varna' stratification atleast in its value of social norms. As per the scholars like Benoy Kumar Sarkar, the verses in the Rig Veda, including the Purusha Sukta, do not point towards the existence of casteism in the Vedic society, by any means.

Since the 600 BCE and after, some sort of stratification began to pop up. The legal Smriti texts that began to get composed from the 200 BCE onwards too validated this stratification, albeit not always did they disseminate discriminatory norms. Several scholars have questioned the extent to which these texts were imposed on the prevailing society, but the imposition of the basic ideas of the Dharmashastras or their generic intent, can't be denied. P. V. Kane has pointed out several exceptions to the imposition of the Dharmashastras. Speaking technically, the Dharmashastras were composed over centuries, their content does not reveal the prevailing sociological hierarchy of a particular era.

In many ways, caste hierarchy flourished throughout history, but not always was it a watertight compartment. Scholars refer to the proliferation of numerous occupations in the early medieval times which were not necessarily practised by the member of a particular varna. R.C. Majumdar points out that the Chinese traveller, Xuanzang and his companions had encountered a Brahmana who was tilling a land. This can be seen as a deviation from prescribed norms.

An institutionalised attempt of reform began in the modern period, with the coming up of the organisations like the Arya Samaj and reformers like Shri Narayan Guru. However, in the ancient and medieval times, reformation was practised, too. For example, the Tantric movement neglected gender and caste norms. N. N. Bhattacharya has highlighted how the Tantric movement in the decadent medieval society was like a breeze of liberal-mindedness.

In the modern scenario, personalities like Dr B. R. Ambedkar, Dakshayani Velayudhan etc are referred to highlight the political reforms of caste in modern India. No doubt, the political thinkers like Dr Ambedkar did take certain crucial steps, but some of their policies have led to social disunity as well. While the discrimination against the Dalits can never be neglected, we also cannot ignore the scary statistics of false cases registered under the SC-ST act, as per the National Crime Records Bureau. Also, no matter how much we thrust on the importance of reservation of seats based on caste, it has led to a high rate of brain drain from India and many other undesirable consequences.

The traditional overview of caste has changed in the post-colonial India. However, it still remains entrenched in the contemporary politics as elections continue to be fought on caste identity or promises related to caste-issues. To conclude, there has been an undervalue of caste in the society than before, but the sentiments related to caste still remain rooted.

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**Soumili Das**  
**History Department, 2nd Year**

## **A Candle In The Wind**

I existed, a wonder, indeed.  
Exiled to the fringes and although exhausted, I tried.  
I was only six and learnt that my touch was like that of Midas  
How I wish, what I held turned into treasure, alas.

Dreaming of respite every day, a source of relief:  
What If, what If?  
We are free, no more chains rooted in servitude and fear  
Why then, do we lie here, paying a cost so dear!

Words to comfort, seeming favours for untended lesions.  
Mountains rise on walking grounds, battering needs,  
burning our pride and our visions.

Future ushers in new hope and light.  
Might seem harsh, but that's a joke, alright!  
Try living once in constant blight.

**Rupanjana Ghosh,**  
**English Department, 2nd Year**



## A Book Review on 'The Mistress of Spices'

“A warning to readers: the spices described in this book should be taken only under the supervision of a qualified mistress.”

'The Mistress of Spices' (1997) by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni tells the story of Tilottama (Tilo for short), the titular Mistress of Spices, and her interactions with the NRI community in America.

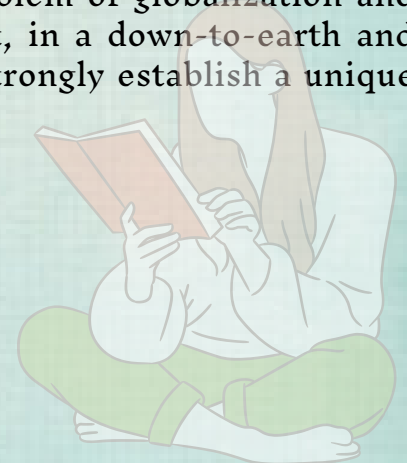
Tilo runs an Indian grocery store in a street corner in Oakland, California. She appears to be an old woman, and even though she sells everything from basmati rice to rajma, her main purpose for running the store is to help her customers with the magic she can work from her spices. While all the spices have their uses, one must be careful in the use. Aspiring Mistresses of Spices are taught not to get too attached to those they help, and to submit themselves to the powers of the spices. However, Tilo gets involved in the life of every person she helps, to the point of using the spices on herself, which is expressly forbidden.

Divakaruni draws from Indian mythology and folklore to flesh out the powers that each spice possesses. For instance, fenugreek increases sexual attraction, and chillies stoke the flame of anger. Despite being set in a foreign country and environment, this depiction grounds the reader in very Indian sensibilities. The spices are often shown to speak to Tilo as if they were alive. Misusing them brings grave misfortune.


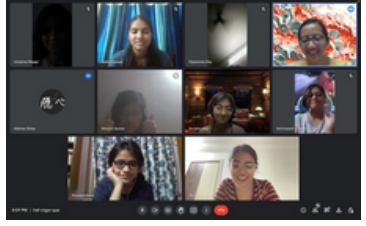
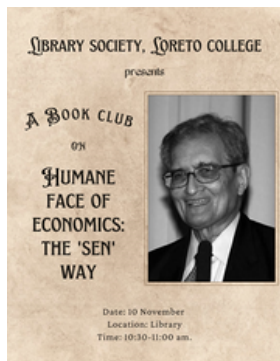



An important theme is the life of NRIs, and the problems they face in their new country. Many Indians, despite leaving their homeland behind for a more 'advanced' country, still cling to its practices, such as Geeta's grandfather, who cannot accept his granddaughter marrying a Latino man. With Tilo's help, he comes to understand her. However not all of them have the capacity for such change. One character is referred to only as 'Ahuja's wife,' as she is so beaten down, she does not have her own identity. No matter what she tries with her husband, his abuse does not stop, and she only finds her own identity when she leaves him (and is afterwards referred to in the narrative with her own name, Lalita). Racism against Indians is addressed in myriad ways, such as the of bullying Indian students (Jagjit), assault (Vinod) and a struggle for employment due to poverty (Haroun). The narrative is empathetic towards all their struggles.


The writing style follows a stream of consciousness style, where Tilo's thoughts not only form a large part of the narration but sometimes interrupt it altogether. Names of spices are often left untranslated, adding in a layer of meaning for readers who know what they are. Of note is the author's usage of "O," a more Indian way of articulating the interjection "Oh." The Mistress of Spices brings out the problem of globalization and advancement, and the lives of Indians in the face of all of it, in a down-to-earth and empathetic way, while drawing from India's rich folklore to strongly establish a unique identity.

**Shinjini Sarkar**  
Psychology Department, 2nd Year



# Society Events

EVENT	FREQUENCY/ DATE	ORGANISED BY	GLIMPSES
<p><b>I. BOOK CLUBS</b></p> <p>(an apt platform for students to express their views on literary works and figures)</p>	<p>Monthly</p>	<p>Library Society</p>	 
<p><b>2. Humane Face of Economics: The Sen Way</b></p> <p>(a department book club targeted towards encouraging research and discussion among students from the Economics Department)</p>	<p>10.11.2022</p>	<p>Library Society</p>	 
<p><b>3. International Mother Language Day</b></p> <p>(an ode to the native tongue, comprising recitations, songs and a word cloud board for students and faculty alike to pen down a few words in their native language)</p>	<p>21.02.2023</p>	<p>Library Society</p>	 

EVENT	FREQUENCY/ DATE	ORGANISED BY	GLIMPSES
<p>4. Prabha Khaitan Foundation Events</p> <p>(‘An Author’s Afternoon’, a series of discussions with eminent authors)</p>	<p>Monthly</p>	<p>Prabha Khaitan Foundation</p>	 <p>Shashi Tharoor at the launch of his ‘Ambedkar: A Life’</p>  <p>Ram K. Sharma at the launch of his book, ‘Karma and You’, with society members</p>
<p>5. Library Cleaning in association with National Service Scheme</p>	<p>06.03.2023  &amp;  16.03.2023</p>	<p>Library Society</p>	 

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## **Editors**

Dr. Neeta Dang  
Dr. Bonny Ghosh  
Dr. Sayantani Chatterjee  
Mr. Nilavo Roy

Husnal Kaur Makol  
(English Department, 3rd year)  
Laiba Hassan  
(Education Department, 3rd year)  
Anubha Roy  
(Psychology Department, 2nd year)

## **Designing Team**

Basudha Singha  
(Psychology Department, 2nd year)  
Navyaa Agarwal  
(Economics Department, 2nd year)