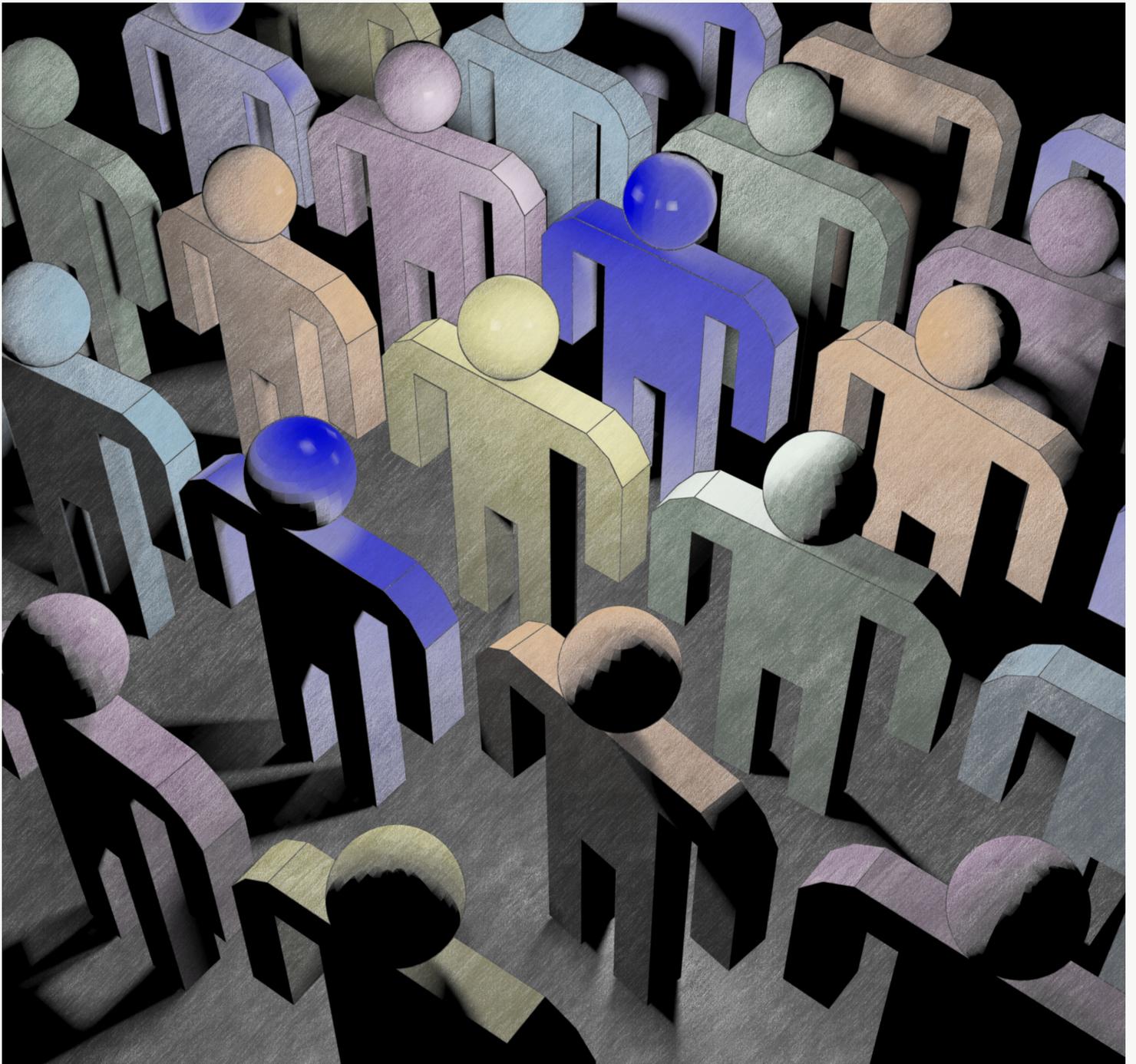


GLOBAL ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE

THE BLISSFUL PURSUIT

UNDERREPRESENTATION & DIVERSITY



THE BLISSFUL PURSUIT

SPRING 2021

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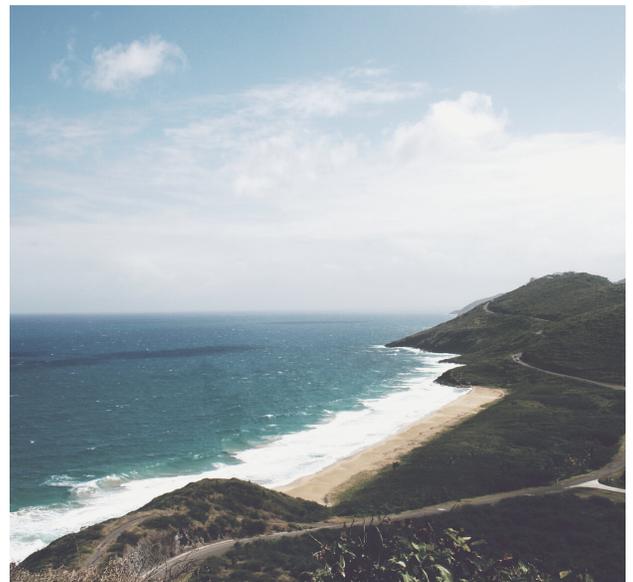
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FICTION

HEXE

by Shreya Borthakur

Assam, 1914

I watched my mother grinding the fresh herbs she had picked up in the morning. As she pressed and rotated the pestle to make a paste out of them, two strands of wild hair came undone from her bun and settled on her face. She was a picture of hard work and sincerity, I sighed in appreciation. My mother was born Martha Wagner, in a wealthy town on the outskirts of Berlin, Germany. When she was training to become a nurse, she met my father, who is the son of an Assam tea plantation owner. He made her his bride and brought her home to Assam. Although her love had brought her to a strange new land, she did not let her passion for plants and healing fade. The new land offered her heaps of new opportunities- she would roam the gardens to find new herbs, spent time testing out their properties in her little apothecary and treated the plantation workers whenever they fell sick.

“Mother, don’t you feel tired?” my six-year-old self was concerned for the perspiring woman.

“No, der Schatz. Today I found a rare Assamese herb, the locals call it Mukuta-manjari and I’m confident this will help me treat Digharam’s headache. The poor man hasn’t been able to get on his feet for so long” mother said gently, her love for the plantation’s workers and passion for healing glittering in her eyes. It seemed as if the shadows of weariness and fatigue left her the moment she entered her little apothecary. She always made sure it smelt of happiness with her special mixture of jasmine, mint and lime scents.

Mother had just returned from a trip to the nearby Bazaar, the smile and rush of excitement evident on her face meant that she found something new in there. I sat down by her side as she sorted out the had got well with the help of her herbal concoction and how his delighted family gave her some of their farm’s best produce as fee.

by her side as she sorted out the herbs, seeds, produce and meat she had brought. She told me how Digharam had got well with the help of her herbal concoction and how his delighted family gave her some of their farm's best produce as fee.

"I will cook your father's favorite dish today! Bienenstich infused with Assam tea- the perfect combination of German and Assamese cuisine."

"Mother, the chef bai always pulls faces when you are in the kitchen but still you talk to her so nicely! Why do you want to go there again?"

"Oh, my child, chef is merely looking out for herself. Her tribe has some strong superstitions about bad luck befalling them if they come near new and foreign objects or people. She even thought my arrival as a bride would result in everyone's eventual death."

"What is a superstition?"

"It is a false notion or a delusional belief. Sadly, when there's no education there are many of them."

I was playing with Manu, the chef's son, I did not like his mother but he was good company. We used to play the game of kings and queens discreetly in the factory shed. I would bring paper crowns for us to wear and he would choose sturdy sticks he found in the garden to substitute for scepters. We would be lost in this fairytale for hours and hours until mother would come and fetch me. If we were fussy about our playtime coming to an end, mother would make us sit under the biggest Banyan tree of the garden and tell us old German folklores while we marveled at the setting sun. As the sun bestowed its final rays for the day, the orange light accentuated my mother's sharp features and gave her cheek a rosy glow. The number of times I sighed in admiration had become countless.

One day while mother was telling us a story, Manu started crying inconsolably. After lots of tears and snot he confided in us that his father was unwell and since his mother considered Martha to be bad luck, she refused to seek treatment or advice from her.

Without wasting a second, mother told Manu, "take me to your quarters." The child was torn between helping his father and doing something his mother would hate. Sweat beaded out on his forehead and he mumbled unintelligibly. Getting no response, mother shook his shoulder. The boy whimpered and agreed to take her. We three rushed to the servant's quarters, on the way mother picked up her little herbal and tool kit. "I will save your father's life, little Manu. Even if it's the last life I save."

Manu's father was lying on the floor on rags. His body was burning up and his feet had a rash with small red dots. Mother quickly recognized the signs of typhoid fever. She started working on him. I comforted Manu and tried to distract him from the gory scene of suffering. Mother worked on him for hours while the two of us fell asleep. We were awakened only when the chef bai returned and started shouting at my mother. She pushed her off and started crying over her husband. I rushed to my mother's side and held her skirt with fear, she whispered "let's go home."

"Is Manu's father alright now, mother?" I asked her. "No child, he's not with us anymore. We reached too late. I couldn't do anything." She whispered.

As we went out of the quarters towards our house, Chef bai's screams of "Daini" followed us till our front door. The screams haunted my dreams for many years to come.

I had troubled sleep that night. It was almost midnight when I heard crackling of fire just outside my window. Our head caretaker rushed into my room, put an overall around me and led me to the front door. My mother was waiting near the front door, "listen der Schatz, the chef's tribe is waiting near our front door and they have asked me to come out otherwise they are threatening to burn the house down. They think I am a Daini who enchanted the chef's husband to a sleep that he cannot wake up from. These are just superstitions and I am going out to explain it to them alright? Your father is away in Chabua Tea Estate for work and that is why it has to be me who needs to explain everything. Stay here. I will be back soon."

"But mother what is a Daini?" I asked confused.

"It translates to witch. Hexe in German. Just another superstition." Saying this she tightened her shawl around her body and stepped out, closing the door behind her.

We waited in silent apprehension. The discussion outside appeared to be going in the correct direction since all the ruckus had come to an end. I trusted my mother's gentle ways and convincing skills; everything was going to be alright.

Suddenly, a shrill scream took my breath away. I had never heard my mother scream before so for a split second I was confused but as realization dawned, my body rushed into fight or flight mode and I ran to the door. I succeeded in opening it and rushing to the porch but my caretaker took hold of me at this point and I could go no further.

I saw a big ball of fire which I realized with dripping shock a while later, was my mother. In between my fight for freedom and screams I saw my mother burning away, her scared and sad eyes bidding farewell, her hands trying to prevent the flames from spreading and her feet trying to run away from the monsters with torches that surrounded her. It was all over in what seemed like ten fleeting seconds. My beautiful mother had disappeared amongst a pile of ash and dust.

Father couldn't get over the shock for days to come. When he did, he packed our bags and we moved away to live in England.

London, 1950

My daughter flicked through the family album, showing her new husband the family's history. The faces held ghostly memories of the past- some smiling, some somber. Her husband enquired about the hand painted picture of a fair lady who was wearing nurse's gear. She smiled and told him that it was of her grandmother, Martha Wagner, a healer.

"She looks so intelligent. Why have you never told me about her?" he enquired.

My daughter smiled and said, "She had a beautiful soul but we don't talk much about her since she was murdered by people who thought she was a witch, a monster."

"You're surely joking? Witches and monsters are myths and superstitions!" he laughed.

"No son, monsters are real. The creatures that killed my mother were monsters driven by ignorance. She was the only human amongst them." I sadly replied.

My mother's portrait smiled at us;
Hiding all the prejudices, injustice and
all the other horrible things she had to
bear through a major part her life
behind that ghostly smile of hers.



About the Author:

Shreya Borthakur is a 19-year-old student of Life Sciences in Tezpur University, Assam. Born and brought up in a town named Jorhat, Assam, India, she has always loved to read and write post-war setting fictions. While going through some of the same she realized how the practice of witch hunting has deep set roots in discrimination and ignorance. Based on this she wrote 'Hexe' as a tribute to all the fallen victims of age old discrimination. Her aunt read it and published it in an E-Zine she is the editor of so submission to Blissful Pursuit is her first true submission.

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POETRY

Mirrors

by Bikramjit Sen

Every migration shows us
mirrors
Migration to a distant land
Where, in welcoming
acceptance, know one awaits us
As no one knows us, no one
thinks of us
Some enjoy our place,
We go to enjoy others'
In hope of peace,
More than gain

But, as the call of destiny
Favours the brave
We return empty-handed,
In utter disdain and pain
Thinking, why are the lines
drawn
Stop it! Would it be too much to
ask for?

About the Author: Bikramjit Sen earned his MA in English at Shri Ramswaroop Memorial University, Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh, India. He has four books to his credit. He is the winner of many accolades.

Freedom

by Aneetta Bijoy

After all these years
of attaining freedom
Are we really free?

Is a boy allowed to cry in public?
(Masculinity)

Is it safe for a woman to
travel freely at night?
(Rape culture sucks)

Can a boy and a girl walk
together in parks?
(Moral policing)

Are we really expressing
our true opinions?
(Afraid of trolls)

When will we be actually free?

About the Author: Aneetta Bijoy is studying in the 12th grade. She is from Kochi, Kerala, India and she loves writing poetry.



by Liamina Broderick

About the Artist

Liamina Broderick is a sixteen year old girl born in Illinois, U.S. Lia grew up to have a love and passion for art. She loves drawing and painting in different mediums whether traditional or digital, and incorporates storytelling into her artwork. Liamina's inspiration for entering The Blissful Pursuit is to be able to create art that represents underrepresentation of women in the STEM community. As she balances school-life with her hobbies, Lia strives to be the best artist and student she can be.

Indian-American Boy Endures Silence

by Ritvik Bordia

We sit together,
Close enough to glance the stale scent
Of chlorine and perfumed hair,
Close enough to brush against one
another
Without apologizing,
Close enough to pass as teenagers
Pursuing a romantic, delusional dream.

She looks at me and catches me
staring,
Raising an eyebrow with humor,
And I think, she knows.
Yet I smile, shake my head, and
Absorb myself in my work once more,
Except I can't pay attention,
Can't take my eyes off her -

The curve of her hip as she sits
Skewed on the chair.
The glimmer of light as it
Flashes against her imperial-gold hair.
The purse of her soft, pink lips,
The light brown freckles that dot her
cheeks,
The heel mindlessly bobbing up and
down.

She glances up once more,
Her heel pausing mid-bob, and
This time I blush.
My tongue extends,
Tasting the air of possibility
Before retracting back into my mouth.
I look down, abashed.

When I look up, she is now staring at
me,
At the plastered hair across my
forehead,
At the curled copper ring around my
finger,
At my brown skin and black hair and
My silence.
And I pause and think to ask her
The question lingering in the air.

No.
And she says no.
No, because I want to focus on work,
On academics and extracurricular
activities.
No, because I cannot reallocate my
time.
No, because, while I flirt, I cannot do.
No.

And I begin to fade
Like a burning flame,
A silent hollow obscure of life.
Haunting melodies wipe at me.
Temperatures dip,
And the grey winter of no
Shadows the firelight.

I snap back to reality, where
She is still looking at me,
Expectant of something.
But I clamp my teeth down, hard.
Perhaps, if brown boys were allowed
To love White girls,
My tongue wouldn't be so bloody.



About the Author:

Ritvik Bordia is a high schooler in New York, New York. He has won a Scholastic Gold Key for his piece "The Unholy Soul" and he has also won a Silver Key for his piece "Visually Impaired". He submitted 'Indian-American Boy Endures Silence' because he wants people to hear his voice. As an Indian-American, he feels he has been silenced for a long time, especially considering much of the racial equality struggle that is accredited to the Asian-American community. He hopes this piece will allow people to see the struggles that Indian-Americans face both on a minor Gen Z level and a more broad, national level.

North-East

by Nayanjyoti Baruah

Don't split as the North-east,
We belong to the same motherland.
We've equivalent nature like the rest,
We consume the same food,
We sing the same national anthem as
you do,
We have same color of flag in hearts as
you have,
We stand for same country as you do,
We're only differentiated by sides not
by land.
We're not gorillas, nor any animals to
be disgusting,
We're not Chinese, Japanese, or
African!
We're brothers from different mothers
of the same land.
We don't speak Chinese
We don't speak Japanese
We say what you say
We're from the same territory.

We've more privileged in total;
In culture, tradition, languages, food,
Environment, natural beauty
Because serenity and tranquility are
over here.
Yet we chase the instructions of
mainstream
Because the breed we have is Ours.

Our appearance may look like them,
Yet we're your brothers, having the
same blood.
Ain't you like the sophisticated
segregated whites
Who bullying their own black people?
You, the examiner of the outer body
Do not know the inner.

Stop asking for identity cards when we
say Indian.
We don't need to carry identity to
identify ourselves.
Foreigners come here and get
honored,
Offering all newcomer needs,
Serving them as the demigods.
But we modest conformists
Don't understand your twisting talk.

Don't spit on us,
Don't mentally hurt us,
Your staring dehumanize us,
Don't treat us as offenders,
We're not land to be marginalized,
We're not jokers to laugh,
We're not ghosts to be scared of,
In the end, we're the same human
being.

We study mainstream's history and
geography.
Did you study on the Northeast?
Or is there no such geographical entity
on your map?
You have your dynasty to read,
We have ours too to be read, but
undiscovered.
Your people save girls from the rapists,
we do too,
Your people rape girls, our people do
too,
Your people speak English, our people
speak too,
Your people mob lynching citizens, we
do too.

If the mainstream's citizens are like
you,
We're blessed with our identity as
Chinese, as an animal.
If a sophisticated behavior coat is like
yours
We won't wear it to save us from the
cold.



About the Author:

Nayanjyoti Baruah is from Assam, India and he is pursuing a M.A. in English Literature from Gauhati University. He has written 110 poems both in English and in my mother tongue (Assamese). His poems have appeared in Tayls, Meghali: Budhidrom, Felicity, Rasa Literary Review, The Fiction Project, A Too Powerful Word, Necro Magazine etc. He is the Co-author of "The Bag of Knowledge" and "Being an Indian Teenager (in progress)." He has written two essays and four short stories.

Where I Live

by Ida Nieves

This world. There is no peace. There are no rights. There is no justice. There is no humanity. Division and adversity run deep. Push, push, push each other away. That is this world. And I weep.

Absolute power absolutely corrupts. Insanity reigns. That's alright though, because it's all a game. You play, "I'm better than you. You are not like me. You don't belong here." And I weep.

This world is where you are not welcomed. Unwanted, shamed, despised, persecuted. Your reasons are your own, your hopes and dreams. It all doesn't matter. You are nothing. And I weep.

This world doesn't offer you the freedom you seek. You are only met with indifference and mistrust. No, no, no to everything. You are denied. You are stepped on. And I weep.

Clashes, sirens, billy clubs and nightsticks. Handcuffs and screams. You fear, and your tears go unnoticed. Hauled away, like the trash you made to feel like. And I weep.

This world tears you apart, scatters you to the winds. You wonder when things will be different. If you will ever see one another again. You die a little inside every day. Locked away, you are forgotten. And I weep.

Caged animals. Women, men,
children. Just because they are not
like you or me. The bars they are
behind can never hold their
helplessness.

And I weep.

This world is our home. Our home?

There is no "American Dream"

And I weep.



About the Author

Ida Nieves is college graduate with a BA in English Literature. She lives in the Bronx, New York, in the United States and has been writing since the 4th Grade. She writes fiction, focusing on poetry of general categories and some short stories. She likes the concept of this magazine and feels that this poem is a great example of how we as a community and humanity are dealing with the issue of Immigration. This is her first entry of this poem, but she has previously been published in The National Poetry Anthology, and she has worked on literary magazines and yearbooks throughout my high school and college years.

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Of Northerners and Black Blood

by Sudakshina Kashyap

On Sundays,
me and Freda would gaze at the dark
blackberry sky
and she tells me
her skin is a condensed thin film of
black mattress
compacted and electroplated over her
face.

She tells me
how the black cushion is stretched
over her skin,
weaving the arrows carrying black
jokes shot by
blood spitting tongues of alabaster
white faces.

She often stares at the black indian
eagle heading towards the West and
keeps gaping until the cotton clouds
hide the bird,
her eyes become bubbles and melts
into drizzle rain.

Maya Angelou knew Why the Caged
Bird Sings
but Freda asks me,
if she'd be hidden inside a pale music
box by the rock concert of white men
plucking out the jet strings
from her raven trampoline
only because she echoed her music.

She'd tell me relentlessly
that if only she was white bullets,
she would have been a silencer to the
frosted gunfire.

Her eyes pour showers
and she wishes to bandaid a white
elastic adhesive bandage cloth on her
black scarred skin (scarred by the ugly
black tags)

I tell her,
food is my middle name
but I didn't want my nation to rename
me 'chinky'
and add me to the menu of Chinese
cuisine because you see,
they say Northerners are 'momos'
and 'chow mein'
erroneously served with Indian dishes.

When did the Northerners wonder
to be synonymous with Coronavirus
and spat on by the tongues of racism?
When did Indian dictionaries redefine
cannibals to be Africans? And history
might never have chapters pertaining
to Nido Taniam, George Floyd, Ahmaud
Arbery, Reingamphi Awungshi;

but when racism attacks the
Northeasterns for their East Asian
features, They'll tell you,
how Ganesha is still worshipped
despite being different from the other
Hindu gods. And when racism
becomes a trishul for the white men
to kill the black lives,
They'll tell you,
how Kali has reincarnated in their
bodies.



About the Author

Sudakshina Kashyap is 11th grader currently pursuing humanities. She lives in Jorhat, Assam, India. She is a voracious reader and a passionate writer. She wants to conquer the universe with her words, because they're her only weapon. Sudakshina's been penning down her thoughts ever since she was a kid. She believes that nothing can take away the power of writing from her. She wants her piece to get featured in the magazine because whatever she jots down, she makes sure to pour her entire soul into the pen and paper. And, she wants people from across the world to know her talent and skill. She's participated in 7 international MUNs as an International Press Journalist this pandemic and lockdown to kick-start her MUN journey, and fortunately bagged awards in all seven of them. And the first international recognition she received was for this poem. She got the best article award. It's an ode to all the victims of racism. Sudakshina believes that words have the power to change the world.

Diversity

by Mudra Uttam Pednekar

Many of us restrict ourselves when it comes to being diverse. Our mind from a very tender age is imbibed with socio cultural values, ethics, ideals, beliefs and judgments which makes us very confined to accept something which is different from us or rather different to who we are. The human mind is devised in such a way that we want everything to fit into our perception of things and when it goes against our ideology, we question everything.

When a child slowly develops a recognition of his surroundings. He interprets his surroundings and accordingly "fits in" with the people he belongs to. This can be against his own will or maybe not but the fact that he "senses" the category which he belongs to hereafter compels him to narrow down his perspective to only his surrounding and background. This can even affect his confidence and self esteem when occupied with a surrounding contrary to his.

Prevailing social problems like racial discrimination, caste discrimination, colour discrimination have been around the corner for a while now.

But I believe all this is taught rather than inherited. If a person with an unpretentious mentality passes on his ideals and virtues to people younger than him then this is likely to affect the growth of the society and the aim which is to terminate such intolerable issues will never come into being.

It is necessary for every person to "recognize" where he belongs in a society. If his views are often slammed by others then he should revive his knowledge and trust. We are all flawed in some or the other way and one of the ways could be in the way we think. We could have the best education in the world and even a modest family background but still we could be shallow and unsupervised in the way we think due to many factors such as life experiences, friends and opportunities. There is not a specific reason why we should always accept others the way they are. You should accept them just because many others "don't" but you "can". Love is unfathomable.

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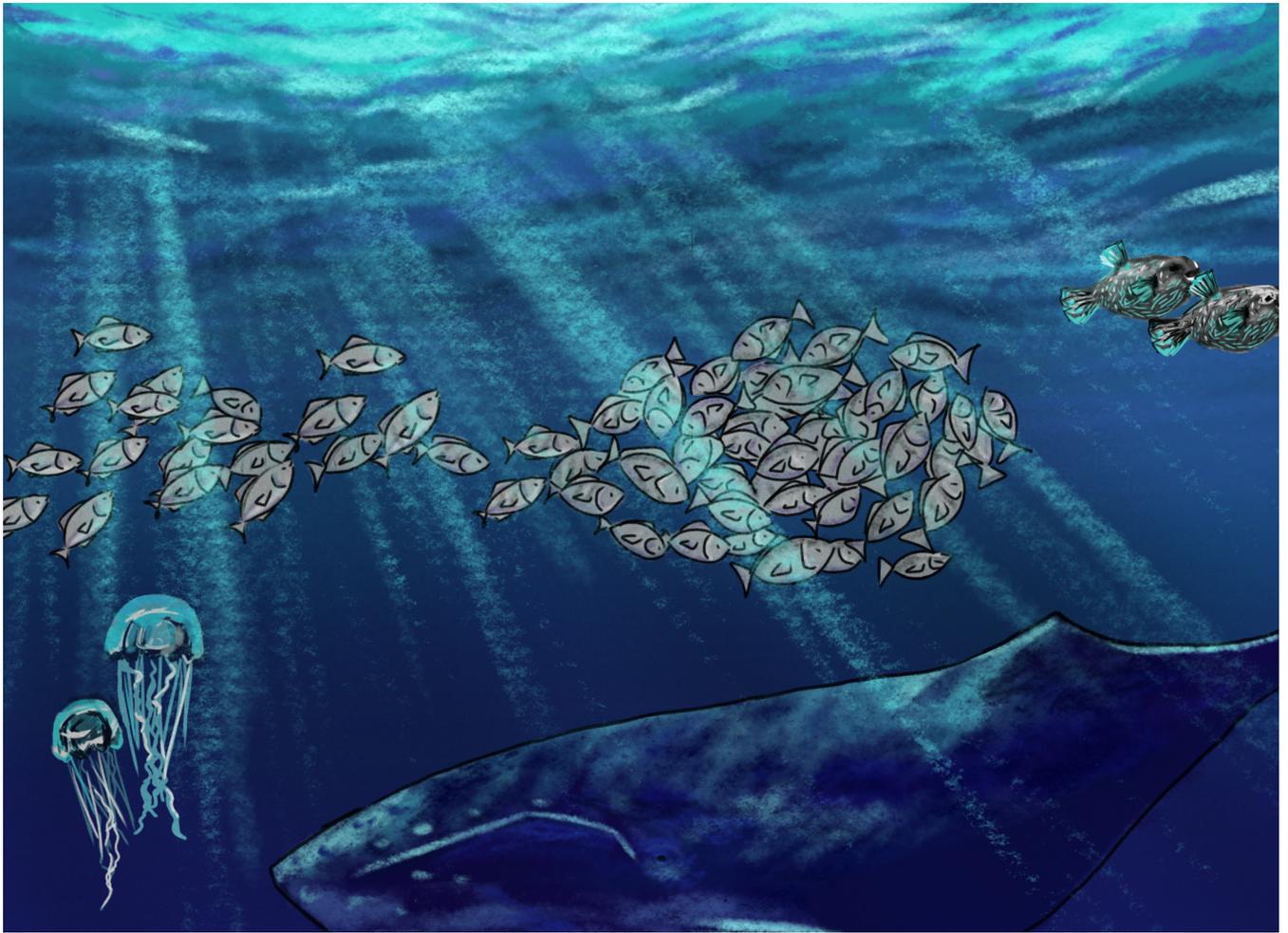
The fashion industry today is boundless. The people have become so accepting in terms of exploring fashion. Boys are twirling in Lehengas while girls are bossing up in suits. The one thing that is very striking of fashion industry today is that even if you try out something new and it doesn't suit you, you are still appreciated for pushing your limits and exploring something new because by doing so you inspire others to break open their shells and discover their authentic selves and this doesn't often happen in other fields of business. Where the mentality in terms of choosing employees is very preoccupied and a woman who seems to be "too manly and highly opinionated" and a man who seems to be "less manly and reserved" is often discarded.

Many times, we build walls around us dwelling into a frame of mind that we won't be accepted the way we are but there are so many people who break the stereotypes everyday regardless if they achieve their agenda or not. A big revolution is not that easy, we have to try and try and try. The way we perceive certain situations in life is very much influenced by the society we live in.

It has very little to do with our own personal beliefs. Most often they are suppressed. Most of the time we discard our own beliefs and adopt the opinions of the rest of the group, maybe that's why so many social issues are unsolved and being diverse is blocked. In order for the culture to modify and develop, We Must Have The Willingness to accept things which are ignored. We must thrive to outgrow our ideology only then we can attain diversity in all aspects.

About the Author

Mudra Uttam Pednekar is in FYBA. They live in Mumbai, India. Writings influence them, and they are very fond of people who have different opinions on any issues. Mudra's motivation for this writing was the topic itself.



by Katherine Li

About the Artist

Katherine Li is a sophomore in high school. She lives in New Jersey and enjoys expressing herself and different themes through her art.

ARTS CORNER

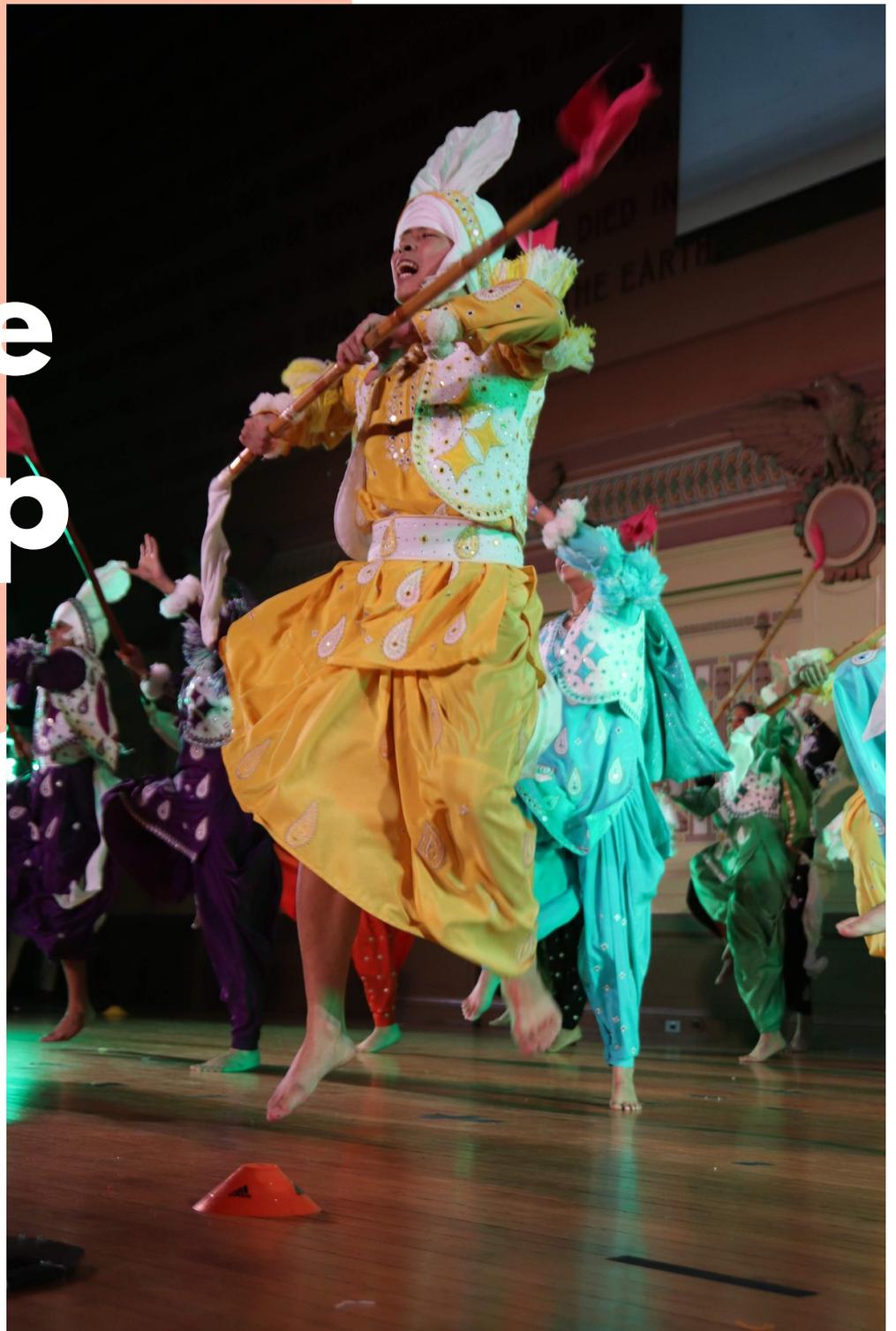
BHANGRA

AN INSIDE LOOK IN THE LIFE OF A BHANGRA ARTIST



CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY'S BHANGRA TEAM

The Inside Scoop



What kind of artist would you classify yourself as?

We are dancers and performers who initially bonded over an interest in Bhangra, but grew closer performing together as a team. We dance not only to enjoy Bhangra ourselves, but to also spread the dance form for others to enjoy as well.

What is Bhangra? Is this classical Indian art form? Is it modern dance? Does your team perform the old Bhangra from India or some kind of fusion?

Bhangra is a traditional North Indian dance form that originated from Punjab. It is primarily danced to celebrate Vaisakhi, a festival marking the start of the Punjabi New Year, and also to celebrate the Spring harvest. Many teams within the Bhangra circuit, including ours, perform a fusion of modern and traditional Bhangra. The moves within our sets are founded in traditional Bhangra, while the mixes we perform to combine elements of modern music.



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Is this dance form open for anyone to participate in?

This dance form is open to anyone who wants to take part in it. There's no exclusivity to the team in that sense; anyone who wants to join can become part of the CMU Bhangra family.



What are the colorful clothes you wear during the dance? What are the sticks in your hands for?

The clothes that we wear while performing as a whole are called vaardi. The base of the vaardi is the kurta, along with different accompanying components between guys and girls vaardi.

The sticks you are referring to are called khunde. They were originally used as canes or walking sticks by Punjabi farmers as they roamed around the fields, and it became incorporated into bhangra from the fields. Another prop we use are saaps, which were traditionally used by farmers in Punjab to scare away birds from their crops. Both of these props are now also used within Bhangra and are the foundation to entire segments in the set.

How did you become a part of the team? How is team selection done? How many hours do you practice?

We became a part of the team through tryouts for CMU Bhangra, which are held during the start of each school year. Team selection is done by learning and performing a tryout routine in front of the current CMU Bhangra executive board, after which the board will select new members for the team. The tryout choreo for this current year can be found at the following link: <https://youtu.be/TPGZp5U2txQ>. On average, we practice three days a week, two hours each day, for a total of 6 hours per week. However, this time can increase up to even 10 hours per week as we prepare for competitions.

Is Bhangra at CMU a competitive artform? Is this like a club sport?

Bhangra at CMU is a competitive artform to an extent, as CMU Bhangra participates in the Bhangra collegiate circuit at various competitions. However, we also perform at school events such as for Diwali or Dancer's showcases, in order to help spread awareness of Bhangra around campus, as well as at various gigs around the Pittsburgh region.

What are the roles of different team members? What do they do?

The captains oversee the entire team and are responsible for making choreography, preparing team members for performances, and overall managing all other executive positions among other responsibilities. The managers of the team are responsible for applying to competitions and inventorying our vaardi. The assistant captains are responsible for teaching all new members the foundations of Bhangra, and preparing them for their own performance at the end of the season. We also have a treasurer and public relations chair, responsible for managing our team's finances and public outreach respectively. In addition to these positions, everyone on the team is an active member and dancer as part of CMU Bhangra.



What has been your best performance so far?

Our team has had many performances to be proud of, but our most well known one would have to be our first place performance at Bhangra Blowout 2016, the Bhangra collegiate championships. The video of our performance at the competition can be found at the following link:
<https://youtu.be/mMiiWLM7bZ4>.



Have you been featured in a concert? A competition? Tell us more!

In a typical year, we travel to and compete in several Bhangra competitions. Some of these competitions are solely for Bhangra, such as Boston Bhangra and Bhangra Blowout, but others also feature fusion teams as well, such as Buckeye Mela and Naach Di Cleveland. Additionally, we regularly perform at our home town of Pittsburgh as an exhibition team at Bhangra in the Burgh.



Do you travel for performances? How did you cope with being away from home/campus for long periods while school is in session?

We do travel for many of our competitive performances. One of our most recent competitions actually took us to Boston, MA, where most of the team drove the 10 hour drive from Pittsburgh to Boston. Typically competitions only last for a single weekend, so we would leave on Friday and be back by Sunday. This allows us to still be able to keep up with our schoolwork while competing in competitions.

Many kids start a hobby and by the time they get to high school, they either can't find time to practice or lose their passion. What kept you going? How do you find the time to practice?

For many of us, practice is actually what keeps us going. Schoolwork is of course at the forefront of our minds as students, and practice has always been a time to meet up with friends, pursue a common interest and goal together, and overall have fun with each other. It's a passion that allows us to refocus our work in school while still enjoying ourselves.

What's the best thing about teaching dancing to young minds?

The best thing would probably be just seeing the growth of our dancers during their time on the team. Many of us come into CMU Bhangra without having ever danced before in our lives, and it's always so incredible seeing how new dancers pick up the form and learn even through their first year on the team. That growth and enjoyment, learning and appreciating Bhangra with each other, is really the best thing about teaching Bhangra.

What's your most favorite and least favorite thing about Bhangra?

Our favorite thing about Bhangra are the people that we dance with. There's such a difference between dancing on our own as opposed to dancing alongside our friends, where we push and support each other while performing, and it's really what makes Bhangra so fun for us. We don't really have a least favorite thing about Bhangra, because any lows just make the highs that much better.

Kushagro Bhattacharjee and Rohan Zeng are the current captains of CMU Bhangra for 2020-2021 season. They are both currently seniors, and have been dancing as part of the team since their freshman year in 2017. Kushagro is an Artificial Intelligence and Computer Science major, while Rohan is a Mechanical Engineering major.

Who or what has been your biggest supporter in pursuing your passion? All artists go through rejection and a period of time when they lose faith in themselves. Share a time when you were in that phase and what did you do?

A lot of this really comes back to our teammates once again. We all support and push each other to new heights on the team as we pursue Bhangra together.

We've never really encountered a rejection phase during our time in CMU Bhangra. The team as a whole is very supportive of one another, such that there was never a time we felt rejected.

What do you think is the value of dancing for youth in a college setting?

The value of dancing for youth in a college setting is that it gives an outlet that is different from the demanding nature of work at CMU. Many team members feel that Bhangra practices are the highlight of their day, because it's a time to let loose with friends. Doing so helps to take stress off of work and gives time to just enjoy dancing with one another.

Can dancing make any impact in the real world? Please give an example that today's youth can relate to.

Dancing can definitely make a real impact in the real world. One of our goals dancing on CMU Bhangra is to spread the art form of Bhangra to others, as well as get people interested through the culture behind the dance form. In the real world today, this can help bring awareness to issues such as the farmers' protests in India, the people from which Bhangra first originated, and overall develop a support network for the cause.



You are a student at CMU. Did you take advantage of their performing arts program? How did you manage to continue with your passion for arts in Pittsburgh?

It would be more accurate to say that our passion for arts blossomed in Pittsburgh. While we did not necessarily take advantage of CMU's performing arts program, it was the presence of being able to learn and dance Bhangra at CMU that ignited our interest in the dance.



What skills have you learned that will help you in your dancing future?

We've primarily learned team management and communication skills that will help me not only in our dancing future, but in our future careers as well. Within Bhangra or any sort of team dance form, it is always important to communicate, discuss, and resolve any issues with one another, because in the end you are all on that same stage together. The performance of every individual plays a major role in the overall impression of the performance of the team.



What else would you like your audience to know? Our audience is mostly high school students who are interested in learning about what colleges have to offer besides education.

Do not be afraid to try new activities in college. Most of our team never even thought about doing bhangra in college, but after trying it out, they cannot imagine what their college experience would have been like otherwise. Whether it's joining the bhangra team or any other activity, there is no harm in trying out a new activity that you might think is interesting, while the reward is potentially joining a club that shapes your college career.

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The Blissful Pursuit

~ AN **INTERNATIONAL** ONLINE ART AND LITERARY MAGAZINE

~ OUR **THIRD** VOLUME: **SUMMER 2021**

~ **THEME: YOUR VOICE**



CALL FOR ENTRIES



Students ages 13-24 are invited to contribute literary (or artistic) work for publication in the third volume of The Blissful Pursuit magazine. This is an online literary magazine with a mission to give voice to today's teens.

There is no particular theme for this issue, simply submit any work that demonstrates something you would love to show the world.

- Students may submit up to 3 pieces, each piece requires a separate student entry form
- Suggested (non)/fiction/prose length is 250-1000 words, poetry should be up to 80 lines.
- Writing should be submitted as either a Microsoft Word or Google Document.
- Artwork must be jpg/jpeg/png format, try for high resolution. If artwork is a sculpture or 3D piece, you may submit pictures of it.
- All submissions will be reviewed and organized by our editors.
- Submissions will be accepted until **JUNE 30, 2021**.
- **Submit your work at**
<https://www.theblissfulpursuit.org/how-to-submit>

[@magazineBlissfulPursuit](https://www.instagram.com/magazineBlissfulPursuit)



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