



CAMEO

The English Department
E-Newsletter, Kalindi College

THE CHOKED CHRONICLES

Volume X
Issue I

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Principal's Note



It is truly delightful that the English Department, Kalindi College, continues to publish its half-yearly online newsletter, Cameo, which allows the students of the department a platform to express their creative talents through short pieces of literary compositions and artworks. I give my best wishes to the students and faculty of the English Department for inspiring diverse and boundless expression of literature and art.

Editorial Note

Dear Readers,

The air is not neutral. It carries residue—of factories, of fury, and of headlines that contradict themselves before the day has even ended. It enters us quietly, settling into our lungs and routines so gradually that we hardly notice its presence. We call it routine. Eventually, we learn to call it living. But somewhere within us, something knows better.

We belong to a generation that has learned to breathe shallow. We measure our words carefully. We edit our outrage before it fully forms. We swallow thoughts that perhaps should have been spoken aloud. The sky does not darken overnight. It dims slowly—decision by decision, distortion by distortion, lie after repeated lie. Gradually, we adapt to the dimness. Facts begin to fracture, memory fades quietly at the edges, and justice appears only through fogged glass. What is harmful is renamed necessary. What is urgent is postponed until it no longer feels urgent. What is true becomes wrapped in many layers of explanation that by the time it reaches us, it is almost unrecognizable.

This issue of *Cameo* was born from that suffocation—not from spectacle or sudden catastrophe, but from accumulation. From the quiet corrosion of trust and the slow normalization of contradiction. Collapse does not always arrive with fire or thunder; sometimes it settles silently like dust upon ordinary days. Stories have long warned us about the quiet ways a society can lose its clarity.

We recognise these patterns. T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* reveals a world thick with fragmentation and exhaustion. George Orwell's *1984* imagines a reality where language itself is manipulated until truth dissolves. Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* shows how comfort and distraction can obscure deeper forms of control. These works remind us that distortion rarely arrives with sudden noise; more often, it settles quietly until the atmosphere itself feels difficult to breathe.

Today that atmosphere feels closer and heavier. Truth competes with speculation, memory fades into grey, and justice appears blurred behind layers of noise. This issue gathers pieces that explore that haze—where words, stories, and images attempt to name the suffocation before it becomes invisible. They do not offer neat resolutions. Instead, they lean into discomfort and question what we absorb every day: through our screens, through our institutions, and through the narratives we inherit without questioning. To write in such times is not ornamental. It is an act of resistance—an attempt to create a space where language can still carry meaning.

Read slowly. Question firmly.

And if the atmosphere feels heavy, remember: it is not weakness to gasp. It is proof that you still recognise the difference between air and smoke.



POETRY





Ashes in the Playground

Under these buzzing sirens, they wait to hear back from me,
Ain't a burial empty, ain't a crow sitting idle on a tree.
They know not if I'll make it back, yet they hang their hope on an ivy—
Whether I'll bring home a bouquet of flowers, or have one hanging
around me.

Death swinging in parks,
Fireflies concealed bombs beneath them.
Toys lay abandoned on the porch, as flames engulfed the sky within
them.
They forgot our miseries, and how our kids gnawed at chalk
when rations failed.
They say it's easy to forgive— until burning blocks
scream a familiar name.
Screams of those who never knew why they were killed.
Now that it's all over, how are we supposed to live?
Knowing help may come— but not the lost lives.

Now, the only smoke is from the cigarette held between their
fingers,
As they watch people return to their native lands,
Cradling the thought of another outburst over dinner.

While I lie under the sky, picturing my people in every cloud drifting by,
Their demise, as if they never existed in the first place.
Death swinging in parks.
I had mine buried with a flower in our yard.

Vanshika Jindal
III Year





GREY AS MEMORY

My collections grow weary as my
young bones grow wearier

"It's not as gloomy as it could be," I
tell myself with false cheer.

The cold is less bearable with the hue
of grey tainting my memory,
But the chills will cease, and the grey
will lift eventually.

My hands and lungs shiver in tandem,
from both the cold and its absence.

"It's not as gloomy as it could be," I
tell myself again as the grey tints
black.

It will be golden summer again;
Persephone will grace the ground,
and the grey will cease eventually.

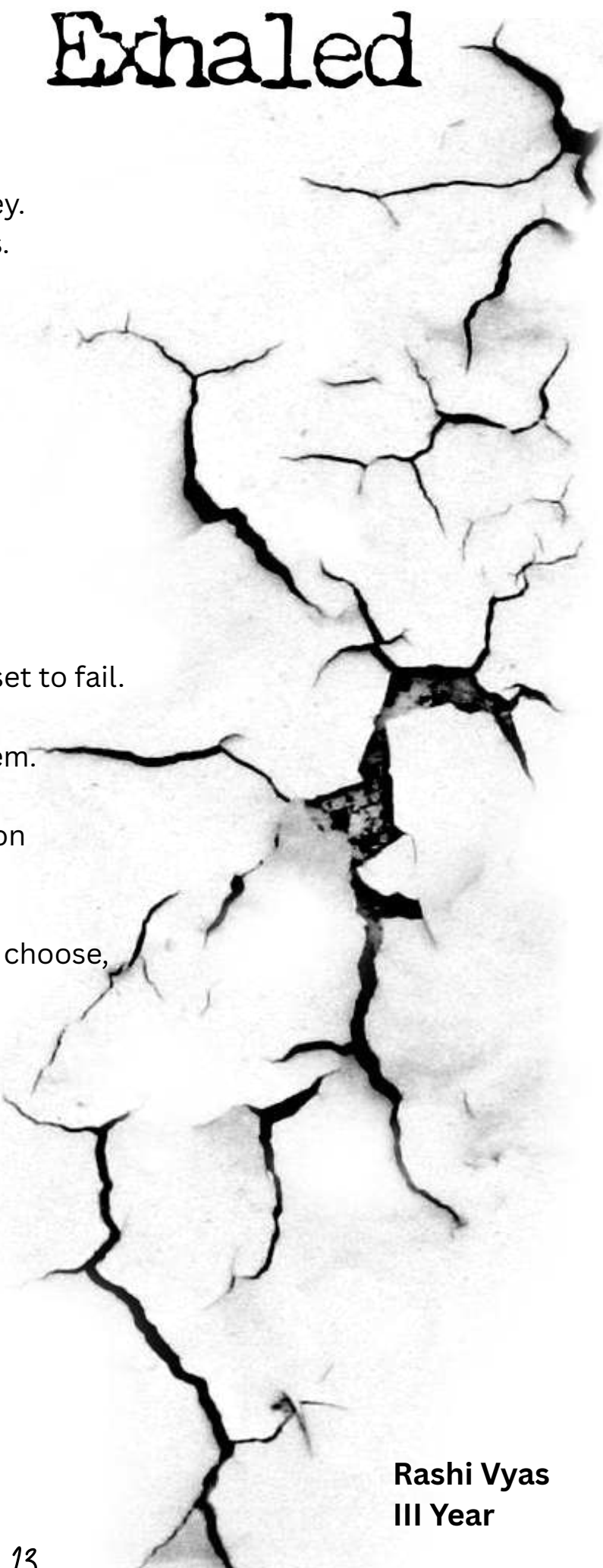
But Persephone comes with the
doors of Hades opening behind her.
Will I still be able to say, "It's not as
gloomy as it could be," when she
returns again and

Bodies of grey taint our memories
forever, as we await the next
eventually?

Aahna Roy
I Year



Profit, Exhaled



The sky has forgotten its color,
Now renting itself in shades of grey.
The sky is leased in small portions.
Blue is a luxury tier.

Factories exhale profit
And name it livelihood.
Even the soil learns discipline:
Give more, receive less.

Rest is unproductive,
Exhaustion, moral failure.
Time is cut into units for sale,
Each second tagged, priced, and set to fail.

They inhale what the city sells them.
Burning time between shifts,
Turning breath into a brief rebellion
That still feeds the system.

Surrounded by smoke they didn't choose,
They add their own—
Proof that even damage
Can be commodified,
Even self-destruction
Can feel like consent.

The air grows heavier,
Yet the paperwork stays light.
Don't protest.
The market's hunger
Learns the language of care,
Promises a cure
Paid for in pure gold.

Rashi Vyas
III Year



WAITING FOR AIR

The air tastes old,
Like lies left too long in drawers.
History drips from walls,
Colorless, refusing to fade.
Sirens lull us to sleep,
While cities learn how to burn politely.
Disaster arrives gently now, with paperwork and smiles.

Power slips into our veins,
Unnoticed, slow and sweet.
We clap for the hands that tighten around our throats.
Faces become costumes,
Obedience learns to blink on cue.
Behind glassy eyes, fear practices looking normal.

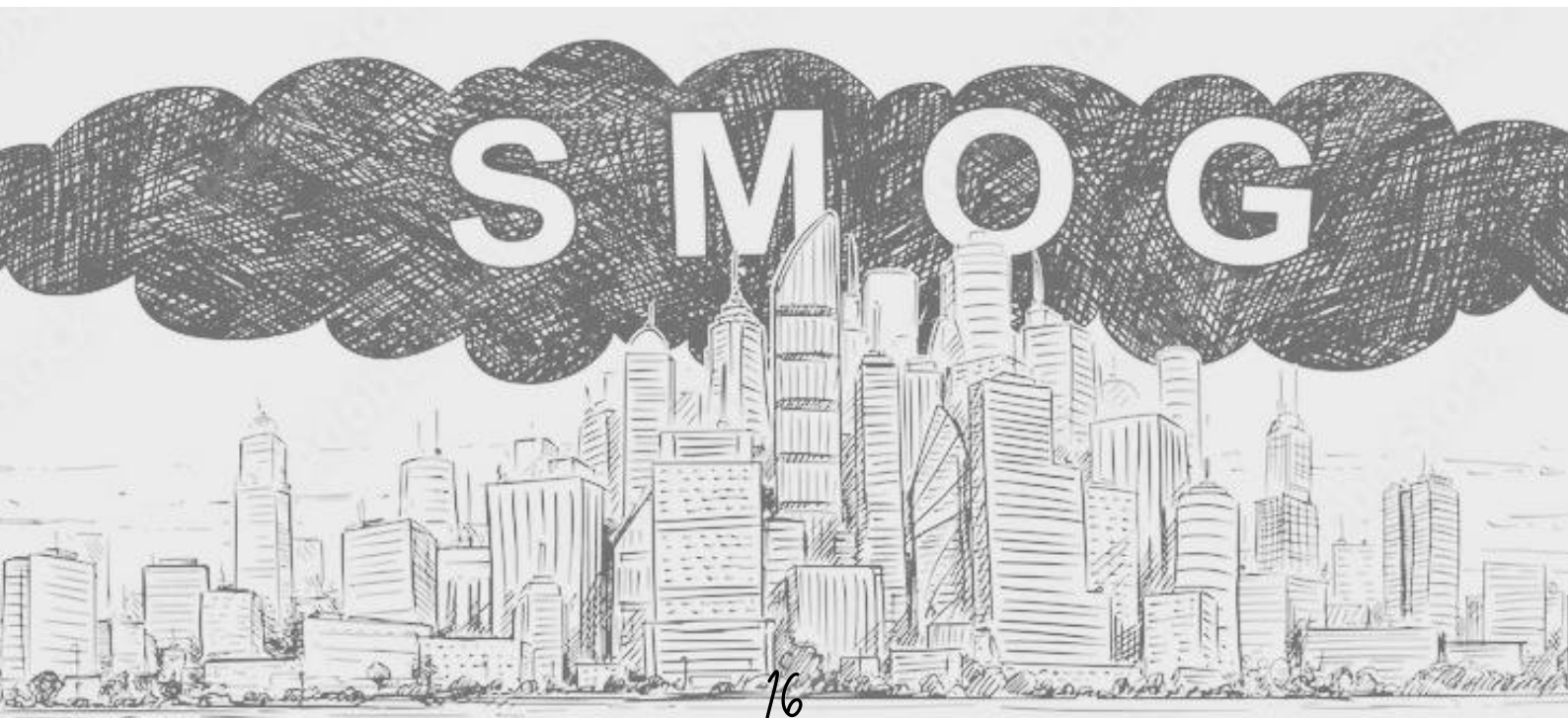
We cough up yesterday,
Blackened, unspoken,
And swallowed again.
Facts stagger,
Beaten thin by headlines and hashtags.
Courts drown in fog while verdicts are sold by weight.
Law kneels—
Where money clears its throat.



We learn to whisper even inside our bones.
Hope is taxed and rationed,
Stamped with permission.
Even grief whispers
Through forms clutched to its chest.
The future signs itself away in ink we're told not to read.

No screams—only pressure, only breath forgetting itself.
The silence
Works harder than any weapon.
This is not peace,
It is restraint perfected.
And rage survives here—
Furious, waiting for air.

Barbie
I Year







'THE QUIET POISON

Every day, every night,
We are breathing in an environment that is
Slowly taking our might,
Slowly, slowly, without any rhythm.

This quiet poison
Is taking our freedom—
Freedom of living without any problem,
Freedom of living outside this prison,
This prison of poison
That is filled with malice.

The air here is mingled with gases that are extremely toxic.
Every day, every night,
Every moment and in every sight,
We are yearning for our old abode
That was no less than a paradise.

Our abode, that was not filled with
That toxic smog, that venomous malice.

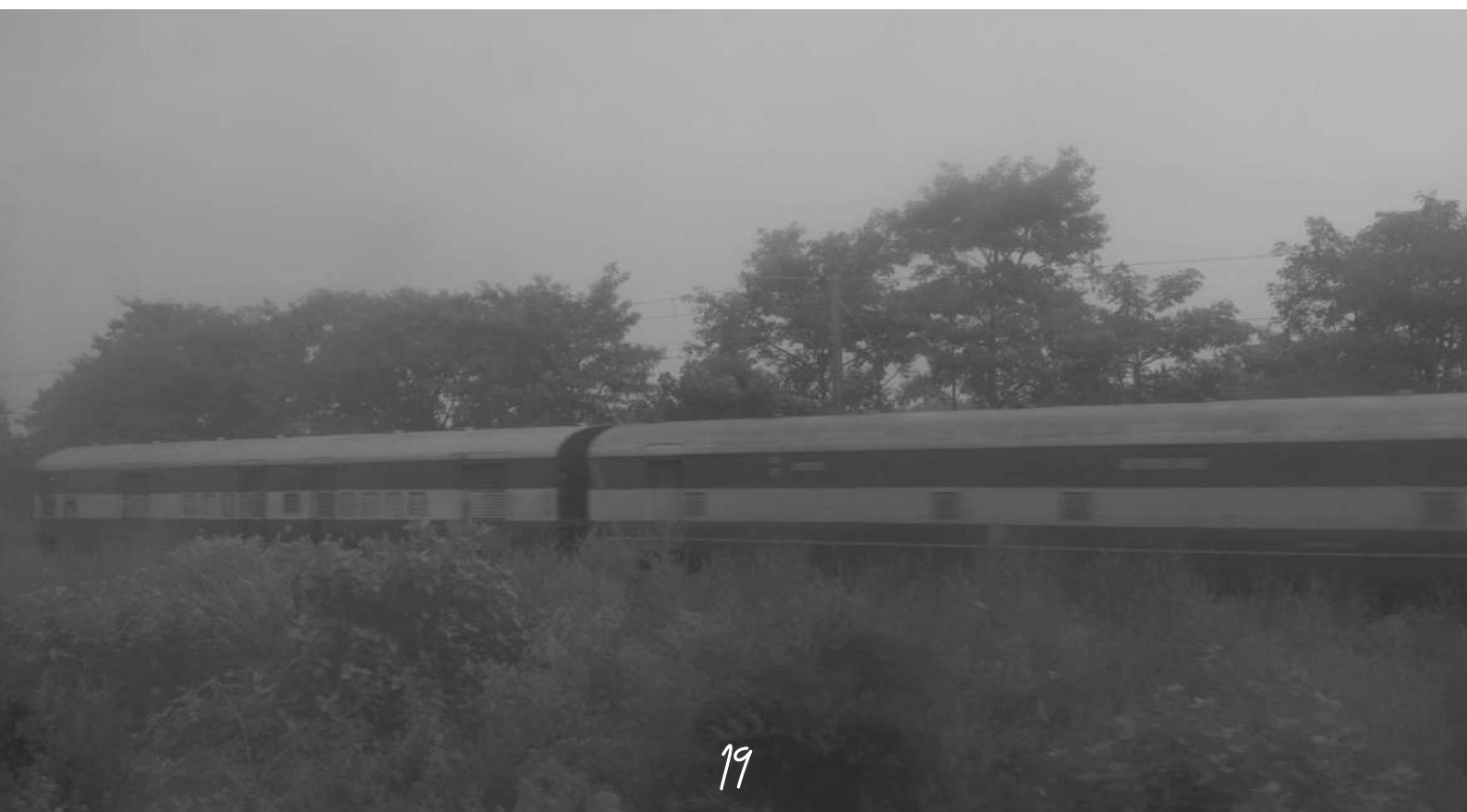
We are longing for that former freedom,
When our abode was not the said prison,
When we could breathe without any fear
And where our hearts would not tear.



This quiet poison is taking our right.
Its hushed attacks are slowly taking our might.
Our power to fight these toxins
Is dying quietly.

And that's why, my fellows,
I am sending this message to you
To make you conscious
About this poison that might be quiet
But it is destroying our nature with its full might.

**Faizeen
I Year**





YOUNG EYES CARE FOR 'THE EYES UNBORN

What will it bring?
Happiness? Colours? Glory?
Or decay's heavy burden we carry.
Darkness, desolation, things disgraced,
Words engraved in History's stones.
Will nature's mystery remain unknown?
How will Earth tell its painful story?
If we usurp its former glory.
'Mother Nature,' we say in lengthy speeches,
For our nations, we make strong pledges.
Have we considered harming our mothers?
No! They provide support like no others.
Where is our humanity within,
When we wield axes, harming forests thin.
Captivating flowers, stealing hearts with ease,
Have we become heartless, devoid of peace.
Plucking twirling dancers in the breeze, emotions frozen, life's vibrant lease!
This is how we've harmed our mother, it's clear,
In pain, she pleads, shedding silent tears.

Sandy beaches, mountains tall,
Love flowing from fountains, enchanting all.
Warmth and excitement in moonlit nights,
Sunsets painting captivating sights!
And the northern lights, a wonder to behold,
Will we find these treasures when we're old?
Or are we too occupied, blind to the signs?
Ignoring the visionary sense that aligns.
Observing the bustling world with young eyes,
No time for nurture, no time to realize,
The beauty of God's creations around,
A plummeting attitude, Earth's joy bound.

Do birds deserve this unjust treatment?
Our inhuman activities, a destructive
sentiment.
What have we left for the next generation?
Polluted air, vanishing green, a sad
narration.
I wish for a time machine to be found,

To return to an era of beauty unbound!
But those times are gone, lost in the past,
When birdsong brought peace, colors so
vast.
Love, humanity, and compassion fade,
Pollution invades, a world betrayed.
Plastic, CFCs, and fuels we release,
Damaging the ozone, Earth's protective
peace.

Will the grass stay green and wise?
Or wither to brown, a world in disguise.
Will the sky lose its vivid hue?
Mountains hidden, a sight so few.
Glaciers, once pristine, stumble and melt,
Did the sea consume them, fate dealt?
Trees that reached for the sky so grand,
Consumed by clouds, a destructive hand.
Will water be scarce in fifty years' time?
Our carelessness or theft, a world's crime.
Do we want to be heartless machines?
Ignoring birds' homes, nature's vibrant
scenes.
Will we still hear the birds' sweet song?
Witness spring blossoms, nature's throng.
We reject a world ruled by machines,
A life of emptiness, devoid of dreams.





Let's create parks, let children play,
Girls swing from trees, their laughter
filling the air.

Our emotions define us, a reason to care,
A cycle of seasons, a life we should
share.

Winter, summer, spring, and fall,
Preserve them all, answer nature's call.
Do we want a gloomy, disheartening
earth?

A world devoid of hope, a soulless
hearth?

Let's count the acts for nature we've
done, planting a tree on each birthday,
victories won!

Embrace habits that sustain and mend,
A brighter future, nature's blessings
extend!

Vaani Sharma
I Year



TONIGHT I CANNOT WRITE

Tonight, I cannot write.
Rather, I would stand in the rain,
Letting the torrents wash away
your touch.

I hope to be swept away by the
gusty winds
And to be marked by the
lightning,
So that the butterflies would fly
away
And the shivers cease to cascade.
I hope to be mesmerized by the
thunder,
So that running into you would
feel less like a calamity.

Tonight, I will not write.
I will lose myself to forget the
loss of losing you.

Tonight, I should not write,
Because whatever words I string
together
Will only lead me to you.

Tonight, I may not write.
I cannot help but think about you
often.

The storm reminds me of the
fallacious affair we had,
And the lightning narrates the
temporary potency to survive.

But dropping my pen is not
enough,
Because tonight, I want to write.
Anything would work —
Perhaps a terrifying poem or a
penned prose.

Alas! The thunder and the rain
grew on me;
I nearly drowned.

So tonight, let me write.
Let me use my pen to strike open
the scars,
Bleeding blue, let words gush
onto the paper,
So that when the wound heals,
I will finally be free from you.

Bhavya Srivastava
Research scholar (English)
School of Humanities, Social Sciences and Management
IIT Bhubaneswar





PROSE



A World That Priced Oxygen

She is feeling sick today. The doctor has said it's because of the oxygen quality these days. The air, they explain, is no longer what it used to be, there is something invisible now, carrying a quiet poison.

"The government is doing nothing for us. Yesterday, Mrs. Goyal said her new oxygen tank had twelve percent CO₂ in it," her father says, his voice tight with anger he has learned to carry quietly.

"I know. I am receiving many such cases these days. Stick to the usual 10- 10- 10 method of breathing," the doctor replies, as if repeating a memorised line.

"Listen carefully to what Doctor Sir is saying, Saumya."

She has been reminded of breathing techniques since childhood. Slow breathing is absolutely essential in this era, otherwise one never knows when one might run out of oxygen.

Breathing has become something to practise, something to get right, as if survival itself were a lesson. That is why the Bhardwaj family always keeps spare tanks at hand for times of crisis, and why Saumya is often scolded for wasting oxygen. Her elder brother never gets scolded for it. He knows how to breathe without forgetting himself.

She feels as if her soul has slipped out of her body, leaving her hollow and cold. Panic rises suddenly, like ashes in her throat. "Mom, come fast, come fast, my fingertips are turning blue," she shrieks.

Mrs. Bhardwaj comes running and pulls her close. "Baby, it's fine. It's the most common symptom of dyspnea."

"I've refilled your tank. You'll feel better soon." Saumya feels comforted by her mother's voice,

even though her lungs feel as if they might burst open from within the cage of her ribs. She tries to breathe the way she has been taught. Slow. Counted. Careful.

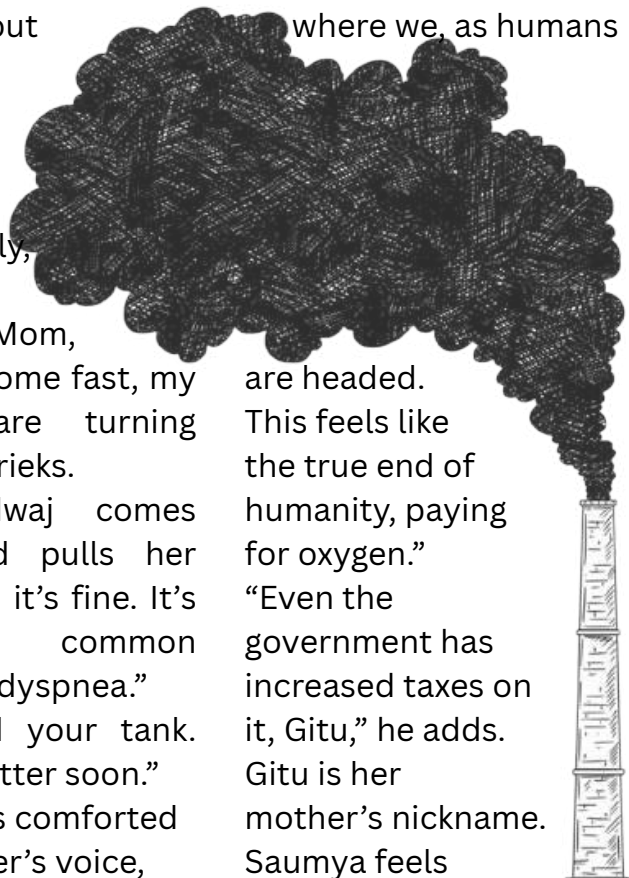
Her father returns after bidding the doctor goodbye and sits beside her. "We care about you a lot, beta. I know your generation is suffering under this quiet apocalypse," he says softly. "I don't know

where we, as humans

are headed.

This feels like the true end of humanity, paying for oxygen."

"Even the government has increased taxes on it, Gitu," he adds. Gitu is her mother's nickname. Saumya feels



dejected, weak, and timid. Her face looks as though she has seen a ghost, as though something has frightened her from the inside. In this world, even care feels tangled, justice clouded by necessity. Seeing her condition, her father decides she needs a distraction.

"Come on," he says.

"We're watching a movie now."

"Which one?" Saumya asks, a small spark of excitement slipping into her voice.

"A really old one. I watched it when I was your age."

Mrs. Bhardwaj returns with food, grandly, like Santa. The family sits together, wrapped in a blanket, neck-deep in tea and pakoras, their knees touching. They begin watching Taare Zameen Par.

Saumya doesn't tell anyone, but she sees herself in Ishaan Awasthi, with an overachieving obedient elder brother and the weight of expectations resting quietly on her shoulders, mostly her own. They watch the movie in one go.

"What a movie, papa! I loved it," Saumya says.

"Look at the clear sky in the film. Who would believe this was India years ago?" her brother says.

"Now nothing is visible except the grey sky," she replies, more to herself than to anyone else, grey settling in her mind like memory.

That night, the film stays with her. A warm feeling settles in her chest, and a faint rosy colour returns to her cheeks. For the first time that day, she feels almost normal. Mom and Dad leave after wishing them good night.

"Bro, listen. How many times have you played outside in your life?"

"Twice. Why?"

"I haven't, not even once. It looked so fun in the movie. Will you play with me outside tomorrow, please?"

"Are you stupid? We don't have enough oxygen left. You were literally choking today. And what if Mom and Dad find out?"

"Shut up. Good night."

"Good night."

She cannot sleep. She lies awake, making stories in her head, of her playing in the verandah, riding a merry-go-round with

friends, laughing without stopping to count her breath. She blames this life. She blames the year she was born in.

"I wish I were born in the 2000s," she thinks. "So nice. So warm."

She keeps lying awake, drifting between thought and curiosity. Her eyes wide open, daydreaming.

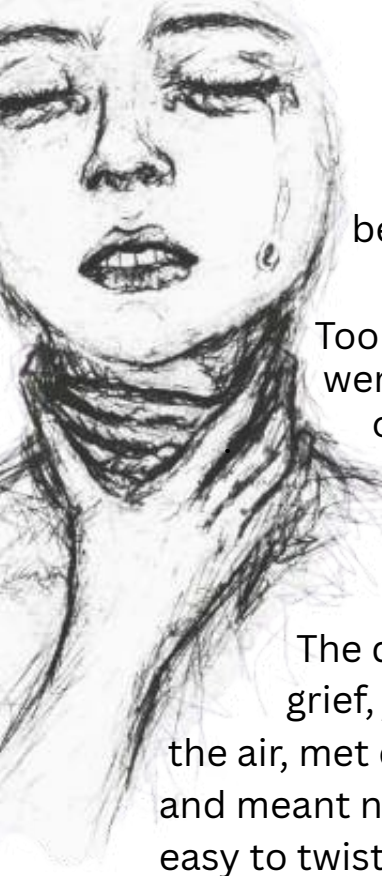
But only in their dreams can men be truly free.

'Twas always thus, and always thus will be.



**Saumya Bhardwaj
I Year**





She learned how to breathe
beyond the sights of others.

Too much air felt suspect, as if it
were waiting for permission to
continue living. So she whispered
it softly, carefully, in fear that
the sky might hear.

The days went grey and flat- not
grief, just obedience. Words filled
the air, met each other with a dull crash
and meant nothing. Facts became fluid,
easy to twist. Lies fit better. They
demanded less of the throat.
Her chest tightened at times, not enough to
hurt, not enough to matter. Nothing looked
wrong. The air just felt crowded. She
blamed the smoke and screen, and the
calm voice assuring passengers that
everything was fine.

At night there was too much silence as well
as too much noise. Questions stayed
swallowed. Her voice learned stillness. So
she breathed just enough, smiled on cue,
and agreed when needed.

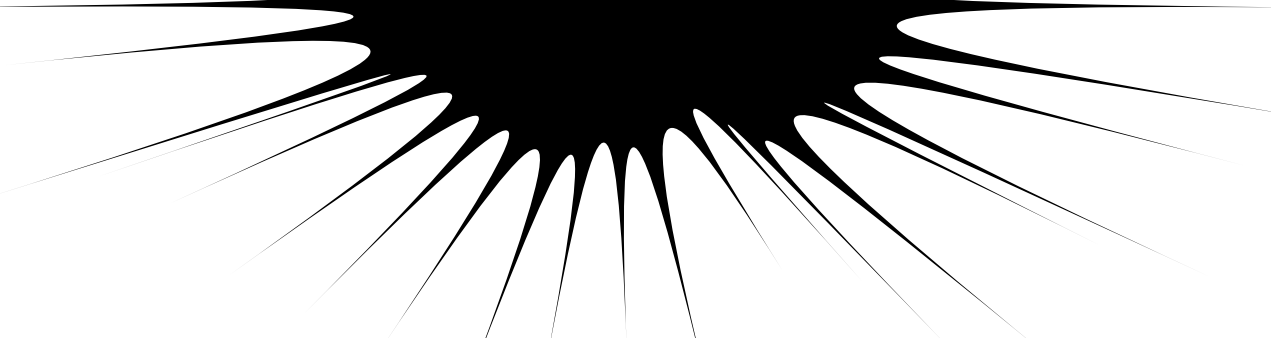
***No one heard the choking because it made no
sound.***

And the world, undisturbed, kept calling
it air.

Anushika Pandey
II Year

CHOKING





The Geometry of Grey

In Delhi, the horizon is no longer a line; it is a suggestion.

As we stand on the grounds of Kalindi, the Aravallis- ancient, sturdy, and vital- often vanish behind a curtain of grey. We are told this is seasonal, a byproduct of geography and timing. But as we tuck our chins into our scarves and squint through the grit, we know the truth is more sinister.

THE HAZE IS NOT JUST IN OUR LUNGS; IT IS IN OUR DISCOURSE.

The theme of Cameo this year asks us to look at “Truth Blurred.” It is a chillingly accurate description of our current moment. We live in an era of the soft apocalypse, where the world doesn’t end with a bang, but with a slow, quiet choking. We see it in the way environmental warnings are buried beneath bureaucratic jargon. We see it when global conflicts are filtered through digital screens, until the human cost blurs like a building across the Yamuna on a November morning.

Kumari Anjali
I Year

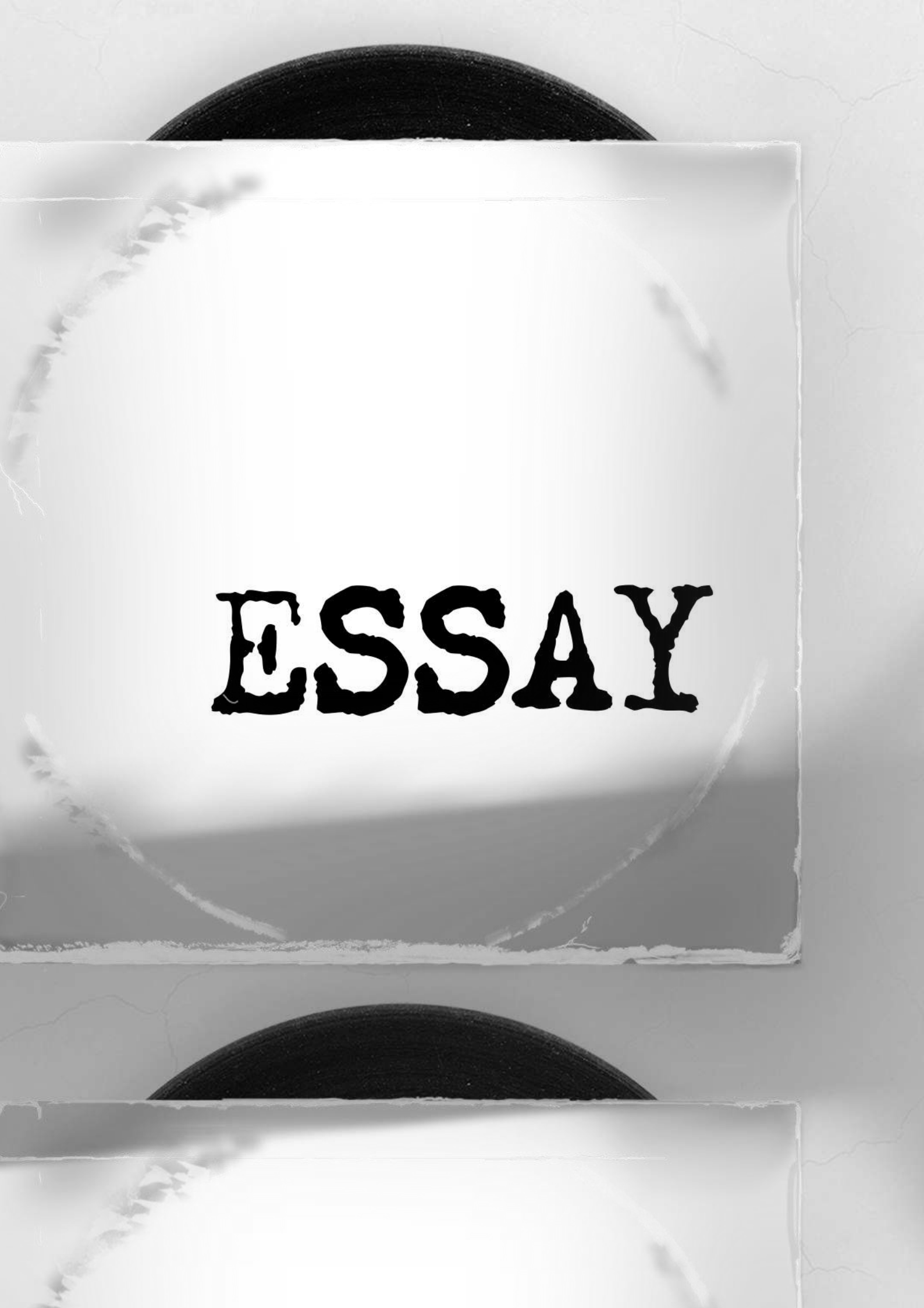
The Literal and the Metaphorical

There is a strange symmetry between particulate matter that settles in our lungs and the metaphorical toxins that settle in our minds. On the physical plane, the Aravallis are steadily being levelled, their green cover replaced by the colourless churn of dust. On the metaphorical plane, our sense of justice is being leveled by apathy. When truth is filtered through layers of alternative facts and algorithmic bias, we lose the ability to see the landscape of our own reality.

Justice Clouded

When the air is thick, the first thing we lose is perspective. We stop looking at the distance and start looking only at our feet. This is the danger of the slow poison. It makes us small. It makes us forget that the smog over Delhi is connected to the silence in halls of power and the erosion of collective action.

To write, to paint, and to speak in this climate is an act of unravelling the haze. By naming the toxins, literal and metaphorical, we refuse to let the truth fade into the fog. We reclaim the sharpness of our vision and the clarity of our voice. We cannot wait for the wind to change. We must be the ones to clear the air.

A black and white photograph featuring a torn, rectangular piece of paper as the central element. The paper has ragged, deckled edges and is positioned horizontally. On the paper, the word "ESSAY" is printed in a large, bold, black, serif typeface, centered both horizontally and vertically. The paper is layered over a background that appears to be a film reel, with the dark, curved edges of the film frames visible at the top and bottom of the frame. The overall composition is minimalist and artistic, with a focus on texture and typography.

ESSAY

How I 'Tried to Perfect Already Perfect Scrambled Eggs

Scrambled eggs were never complicated. They were yellow and soft and ready before the day asked too much of me. I didn't think about them; I just ate. Now, when I make them, I think too much.

I watch the pan closely and stir without stopping. I worry about heat, timing, and texture. The eggs lose their colour as I work them. They turn pale, almost grey, and I tell myself this is how it's supposed to look.

I don't fully remember how they tasted before, only that they felt warmer. Memory fades quietly, like color draining from food left too long on the stove. Nothing dramatic is happening. There's no fire, no smoke alarm. The kitchen remains still, almost deceptively so. The world outside keeps moving. Still something feels off- not broken, only fatigued. Like everything is being managed instead of lived.

This is how things fade now: slowly, almost politely. I do everything right. I measure the butter, control the heat, and follow advice meant to make things better.

But the eggs don't improve; they merely shift in form, like matter under pressure. They grow dull, heavier, and less alive. It isn't an obvious poison. The damage is subtle and quiet. It lives in habits- in trying too hard to fix small things while bigger problems hang in the air. You tell yourself that if you stay careful enough- eat right, behave right, follow rules- you'll be safe.

So you slip into performance. You stand at the stove like everything is fine. You act calm and pretend this control matters. You put on a normal face and eat what you made, even when it disappoints you. Throwing it away feels wasteful; complaining feels futile. The taste sticks in your throat. You swallow it down and keep it to yourself.

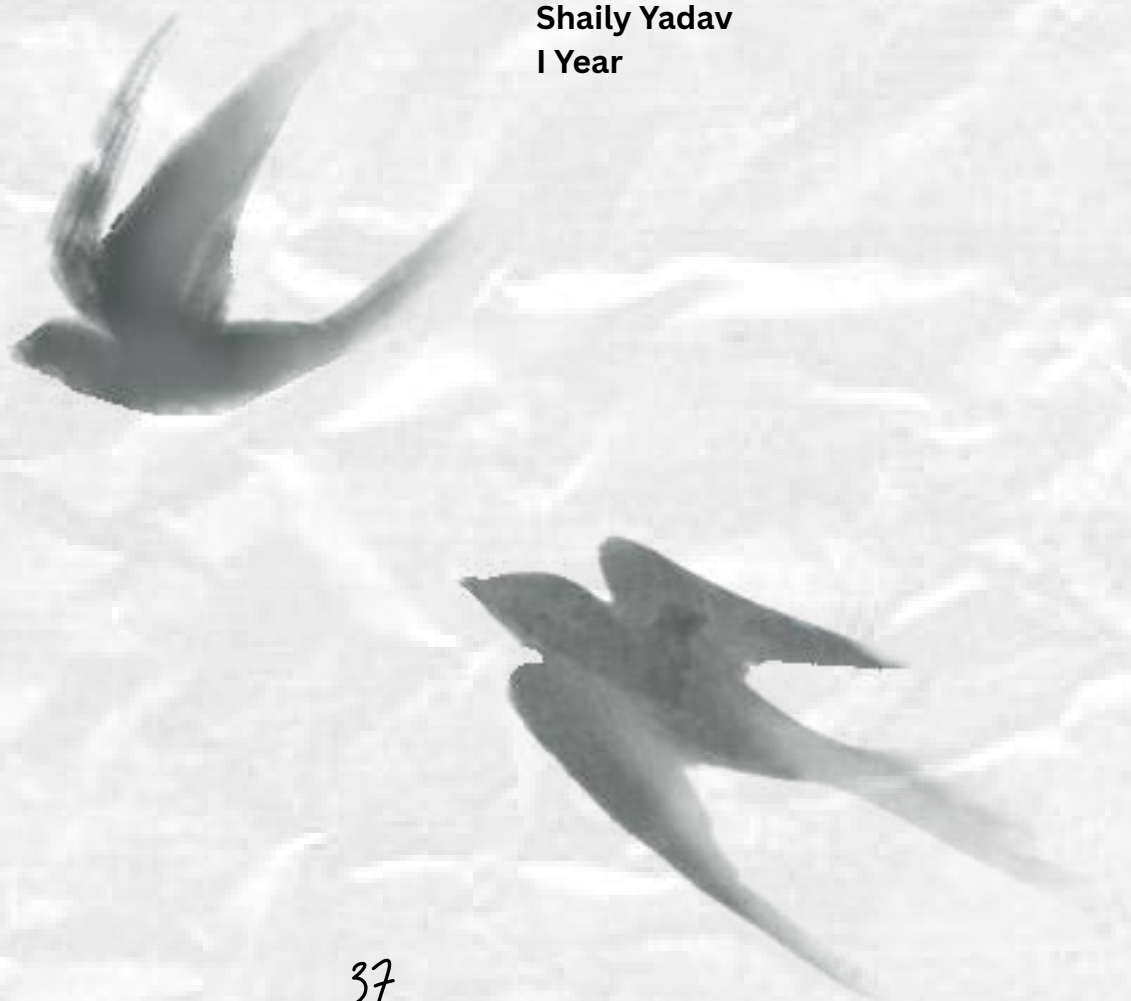


Truth becomes unclear, like steam rising from the pan. Things that once felt obvious now feel distant. Right and wrong begin to blur at the edges. Fairness no longer feels secure.

You're too busy stirring to ask bigger questions.

So you keep stirring. By the time you sit down, the eggs are overdone. They are not ruined, only lifeless. You eat them anyway, and when breakfast is over, the day simply continues. This is quiet choking- not loud enough to notice, not painful enough to stop. Tomorrow, you'll try again. You'll adjust the heat. You'll follow the steps once more. Then stand there and watch the eggs turn grey as they always do.

**Shaily Yadav
I Year**





The background is a complex abstract composition. It features large, expressive black brushstrokes, some of which are thick and vertical, resembling a stylized 'M' or a series of columns. There are also horizontal, wavy brushstrokes at the bottom. A prominent geometric shape, a six-pointed star or snowflake, is rendered in a pixelated, black-and-white style in the upper left. Another similar, but more abstract and less defined, shape is in the lower right. The overall effect is one of dynamic, layered artistic expression.

ARTWORK

CALLING

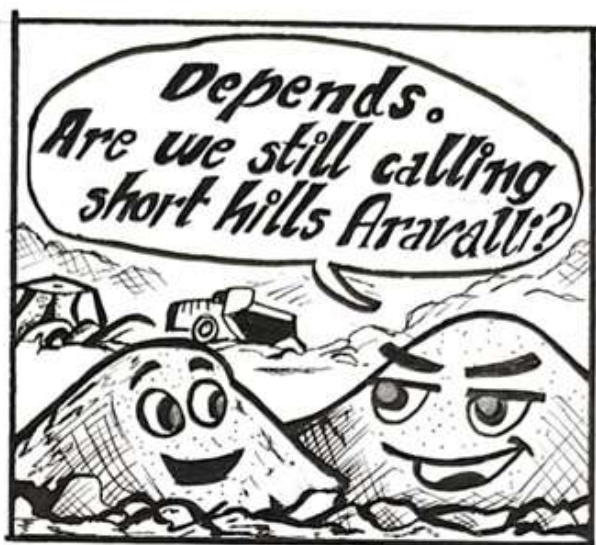


CONSCIENCE

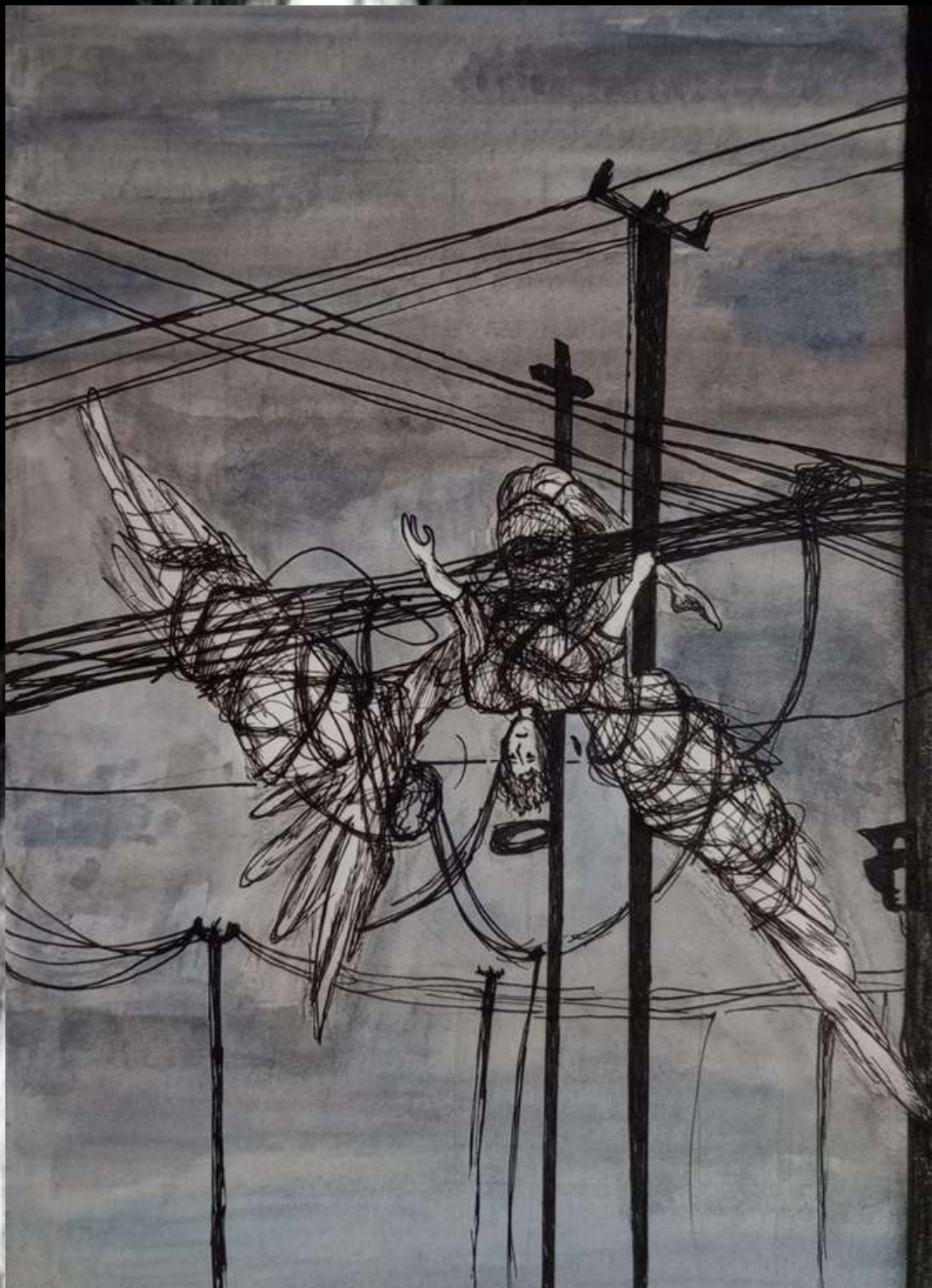
Kanak
III Year



Bhawna Tank
II Year



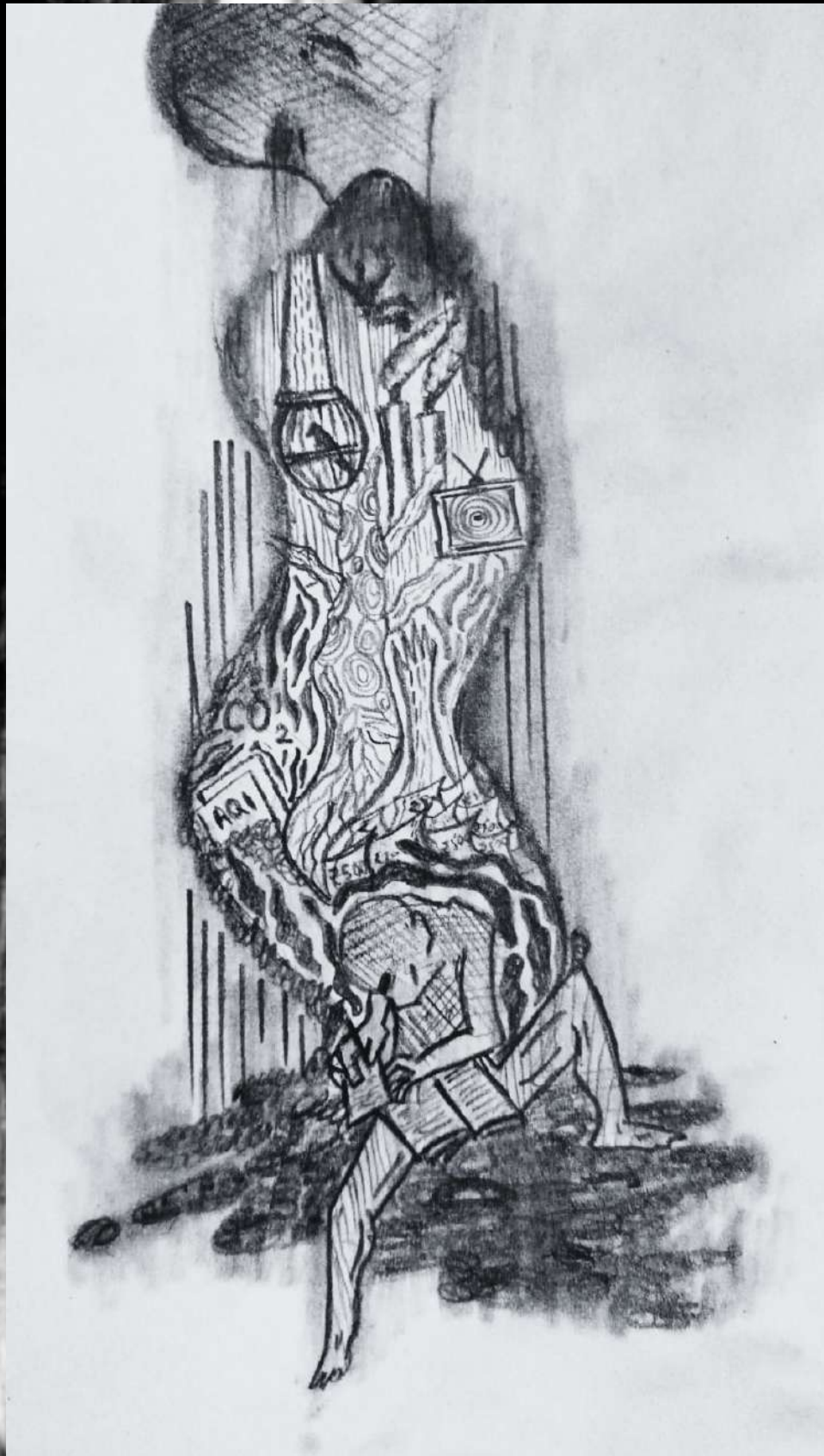
Saumya Bhardwaj
I Year



Vanshika Jindal
III Year



Mishti Agarwal
II Year



Nipsy Jaura
III Year



ABOUT CAMEO

The English Department is one of the oldest in Kalindi College; Known for its excellence in classroom teaching and interaction, the department offers multiple papers to its students across several disciplines that promise an enriching learning experience to the students regardless of the discipline they select. Over the years, it has organized intellectually stimulating programmes for the students through the departmental society, 'Mitrakshar' (the English Literary Society). Inter departmental programmes and fests hosted by the society have brought together students from various colleges for us to engage with, deepening our understanding of the world, strengthening our overall skills, and transforming our lives through literature. Although the college has a number of publications, the English Department has its own online publication of which this is the tenth volume, first issue. This publication is an attempt to go beyond merely academic engagement of the students. The department enthusiastically carries on its online publication in the spirit of nurturing the innate talents of its students.

Cameo Committee

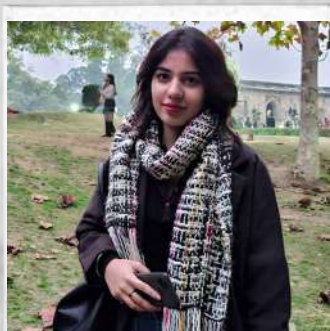


Mr. Sushrut Bhatia



Ms. Keertika Lotni

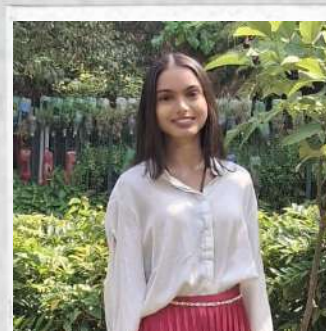
Design & Curation



Nipsy Jaura, III Year



Vanshika Jindal, III Year



Mishti Agarwal, I Year

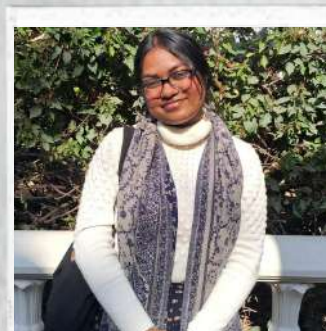
Editing



Harleen, II Year



Saumya Bhardwaj, I Year



Barbie, I Year



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cameomagazine.kalindidu@gmail.com

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