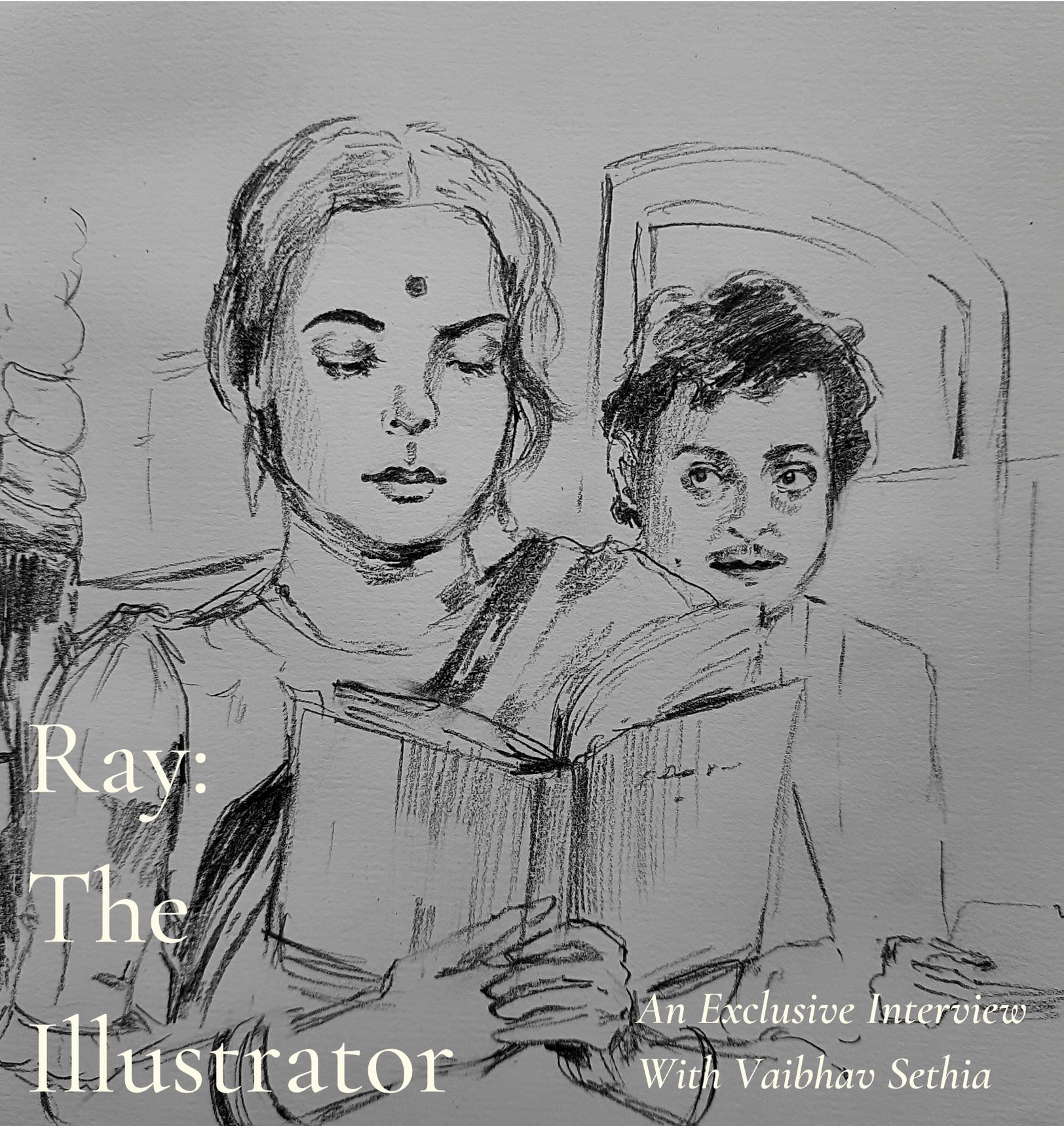


# MONOGRAPH

VOL. 8 | MAY 2021



## Ray: The Illustrator

*An Exclusive Interview  
With Vaibhav Sethia*

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# Editor's Note



**This month has been harsh.**

**Organisations helping COVID patients:**

**Calcutta Anti-Covid Belt**

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**Anumit +91 98314 38430**

**Arth +91 75958 43070**

**Bleed Eco**

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**Siddarth +91 89104 48937**

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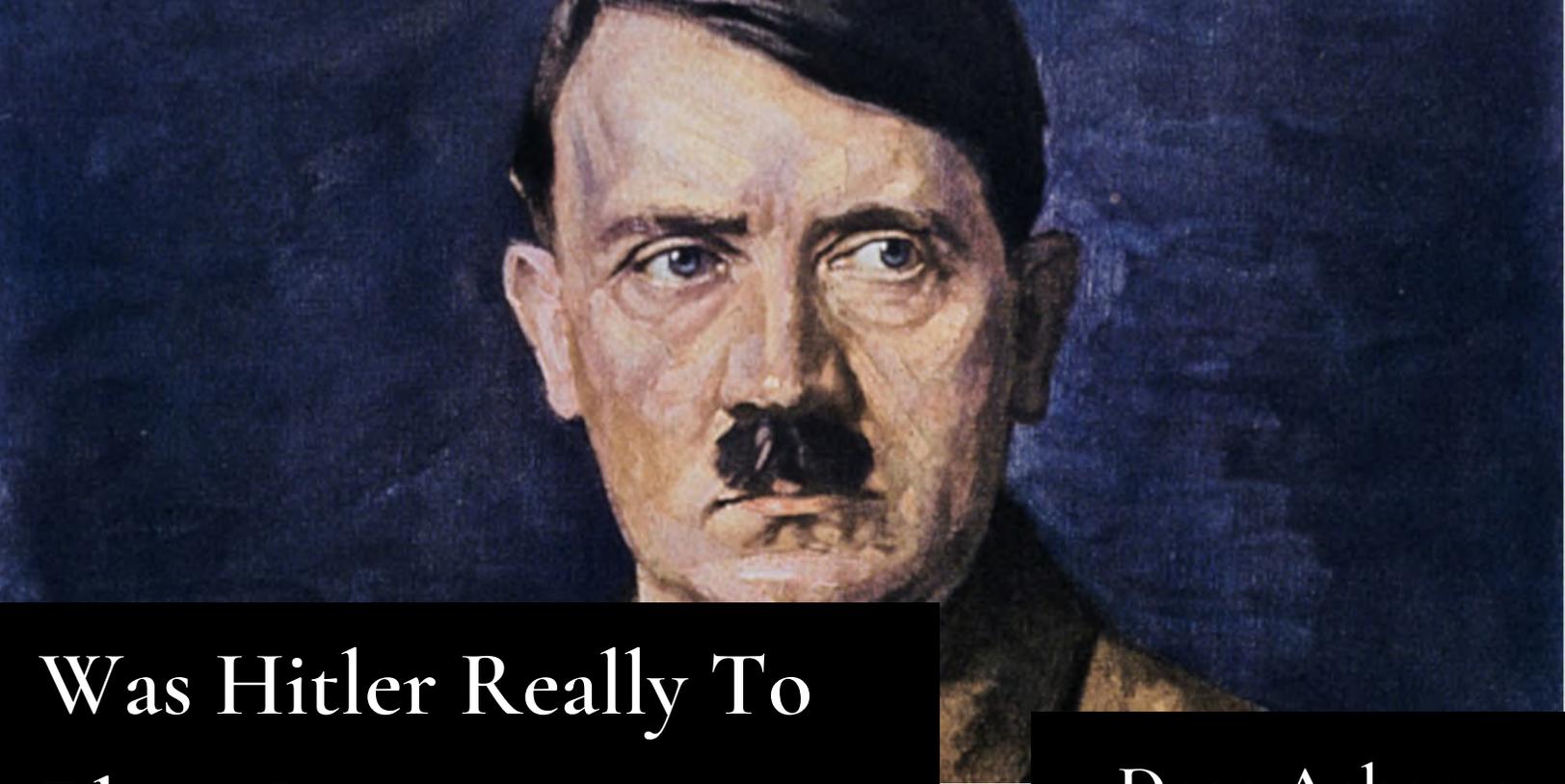
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**You can also DM Mind You Organization (mind.you\_org) or The Edugreen Initiative (the\_edugreen\_initiative) on instagram.**

**Government Website for bed availability status in various districts of West Bengal:**

**[https://excise.wb.gov.in/CHMS/Public/Page/CHMS\\_Public\\_Hospital\\_Bed\\_Availability.aspx](https://excise.wb.gov.in/CHMS/Public/Page/CHMS_Public_Hospital_Bed_Availability.aspx)**





# Was Hitler Really To Blame?

Deep Acharya

*“for the only antidote to defeat in one war is victory in the next”  
-Martin Gilber*

Undoubtedly, Adolf Hitler was one of the chief contributing causes to the second great war that robbed nearly 100,00,000 lives and caused unfathomable damage to varied sectors that kept the indulging nations alive. He, his pledge of founding lebensraum and propaganda to unify the Aryan race singlehandedly, revitalized and manipulated the Germans to stand up against their western perpetrators of abuse, shame and torture; incurred from the much-abhorred Treaty of Versailles. It was nothing short of a spark that blew the most horrific dynamite of military and intellectual history in the contemporary world.

Brutalities of the terms engraved in the Treaty of Versailles after the First World War left the Germans crippled and devastated permanently and symbolized the disfavour of Allies for Germany.



World War I had mainly broken out of tensions and hatred that the Allies had inculcated in them for the rising monolith by the name of the German Empire and the war was solely fought to plunge the Germans back to its scratches with no possible support to rise from its ashes. They had not only been robbed but killed, incarcerated as prisoners of war, tortured and butchered under the shelter of protecting national interest and integrity. The Europeans had ignored the possibility that might have gone against them as a result of such despotic, grotesque behaviour. Consequently, the war indemnity of 33 billion dollars, liberation and transfer of Alsace-Lorraine, newly independent state of Poland not only invigorated the German spirit but also strengthened the foundation of the man, the myth and the notorious legend, Adolf Hitler. His service during WWI left him exposed to the injustice hurled at the Germans by the Western dominatrix which fed to his fervent patriotism and fueled his xenophobia towards the perpetrators. As such a fanatic was born.

Unfortunately, anti-Semitism was a factor behind Hitler's short-lived success. The majority of Hitler's military and administrative forces had consistently been loyal to him because of his zealous hatred towards the Jews. This further incorporated in Hitler's German regime millions of troops from the neighbouring nations who wanted to shed their blood beside the Germans for their ardent support for anti-Semitism. The Jews had largely been a part of the affluent section of the society and merciless killings of over a million Jews by Hitler laid enormous financial support at the German Government's disposal with a continuous influx of funds which fueled war support for Hitler in terms of modern arms, panzer rafts, ammunitions and Luftwaffe.



The Policy of Appeasement by Neville Chamberlain was by far largely responsible for the situation of deteriorating into war. Had Britain and France embarked on a firm line with Hitler before they became practically invincible, the war would've earlier been in the favour of the allies. By paving the way for his demands, the appeasers elevated his prestige and infused a sense of reverence among the countrymen. As Alan Bullock wrote, "success and absence of resistance tempted Hitler to reach out further, to take bigger risks." It is quite comprehensible that Hitler had no definite notions of a second world war but after the surrender of Munich, he became largely convinced that the allied powers would succumb to passivity again, and embarked on a conquest of expansionism towards Poland and thus blew the hornet's nest on September 1939 when World War II began.

According to A.J.P Taylor in his work, 'The Origins of the Second World War' showcased how Hitler did not intend to entangle Germany in a war of such a magnanimous perimeter.





However, he expected to capture Poland, the newly created state out of TOV by the virtue of a short war. Adolf Hitler had only been following the expansionist policies abroad expounded and trailed by his predecessors including Bismarck, Kaiser Wilhelm II and Stresemann. Born an opportunist, Hitler made efforts to his benefit trying to take advantage of the appeasers and consequent events in Czechoslovakia in February 1939. I feel that the German captivation of Czechoslovakia was not an age-long conspired sinister plot; 'it was the unforeseen consequence of the situation in Slovakia.' How could Hitler accept the hypocrisy the Allies emanated by their inconsistent support towards Poland after already handing over Czechoslovakia to him.

Adam Tooze in his book 'The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy' put forth the view that Hitler worried that the longer he took to embark on a full-scale war, the greater the danger that the Allies would overtake the acceleration of German rearmament. Hitler was convinced that sooner or later he has to face the Western force and thus when he attacked Poland in September 1939, he was convinced that till then, the German military power was at the zenith. Hitler might have wished to engage in a bloody battle with his enemies at a moment of his choosing sometime in the 1940s but when the war actually began in 1939, the string of events had rendered such long-term goals improbable. With America, Britain, France divulging closer than ever, Hitler had no time to lay astray. If he had not attacked, the eventual western domination of that global coalition, the enmity of the Jewish population would have shrunk German Empire to its scratches.





40 years since then, the majority of historians refuse to accept the theory that Hitler had no long time plans and a desire for war. Some feel that though some of his successes were clearly born out of his sheer opportunism and he probably didn't have a plan detailed intricately step-by-step; he was a visionary. That vision was A Europe dominated the Holy German Empire, and that could only be achieved by war. Clearly, Hitler intended much more than his self-defense. Eberhard Jackel claims that Hitler was composed of two goals - the extermination of Jews from the face of the Earth and establishment of a greater Germany, 1000-year-old Reich and his desire for lebensraum(living space) which meant an easy way of conquest mainly at the expense of Soviet Russia where the Germans could have faced a weak opposition of only the Jewish Bolsheviks and worthless Slavs

I support Alan Bullock's view that Hitler didn't probably have the idea to have a world war in his mind. He was not interested in engaging his country in a bitter horrific war with Britain. All he asked for was un-interruption with his expansion in Europe and conquest of Poland and the USSR in his expansionist campaigns. He hoped to keep the war over and localized with just Poland and then turn towards his sole campaign of disembowelling and capturing USSR. The only mistake was his miscalculation and his failure to realize that capturing Poland was a step forward.



Hitler always wanted a war to establish a global outreach for his Germany but not a war so great as the World War. In Innumerable occasions, he said that the future of Germany could only be secured through war, the true essence of the Nazi system. He wanted a localized war so that he could secure his interests and move towards Russia without any hindrance. Only time, direction and a few mistakes brewed the entire crisis which amplified across the face of the entire world as the war of nations, the war of prestige and the war of freedom which still resonates in the minds of historians as the Great Second World War.

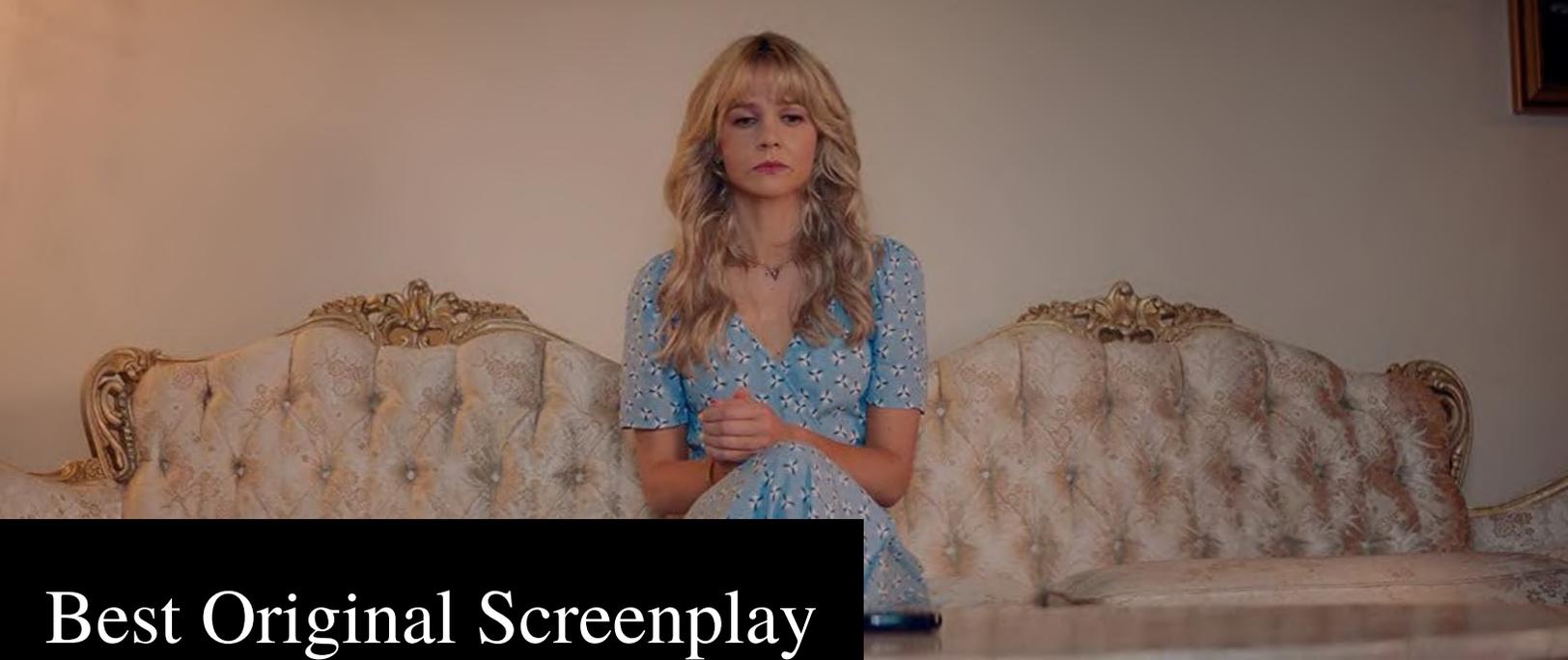


# And The Oscar Goes To...

Anwesh Banerjee

I had been in a superb quandary, regarding the composition of this article. At first I had gone ahead and composed prior to the Academy Awards, an article analysing the nominees and serving my, quite unwarranted, opinion on who will - and who should - win. Despite considering the eyebrows the former option must have raised among most, (I mean why should the matter of an opinionated, unqualified, nineteen year old matter) I decided yet again, to make public my opinions, even after the ceremony had been conducted. In this breakdown of the 93rd Academy Awards we shall be looking at some of the important competitive categories, in the order that they were announced in what will go down as one of the shortest albeit personal events in Oscar history.





## Best Original Screenplay

Promising *Young Woman* had a shot to leave a mark only in this and the Best Actress category. Despite being the first time in Academy history when two female directors were nominated together, Fennel hardly stood a chance before Zhao, on whose brilliance we will talk later. This year by far saw one of the toughest Best Actress categories in a long time, where Carrey Mulligan was once again up against career best performances by all her fellow nominees. Which left the original screenplay category. Fennel was up against screenwriting genius Aaron Sorkin, who had written the screenplay of his crowd favourite *Trial of the Chicago 7*. Sorkin is a writing genius and despite the rousing quality of his film, which strangely reeked of classic masala Hindi cinema tropes, it hardly matched up to his masterpiece *The Social Network*. In front of it, the searing panache and radical thought behind Fennel's debut deserved to be awarded for its sheer originality of a long indulged stereotype and a narrative that assumes special importance in the post-Me too world.





## Best Adapted Screenplay

Most people expected, going by precedents, that the lack of a story thereof will earn *Nomadland* a win in this category too. But what most failed to realise was that *Nomadland* was more a product of a glorious directorial vision that had little, according to me to do with writing. The narrative was heavily reliant on moods, visuals and feelings as opposed to narrative. Which correctly justifies the decision of the Academy to vote Florian Zeller as the winner in this category. The risk with making a film based on a play is that the translation of theatre into celluloid is most often not smooth. Due to the vastly different lexicons that grow behind the construction of the genre one often risks making a film that at best looks stilted and at worst looks, for the lack of a better word - staged. Zeller overcomes both these possibilities and in *The Father*, offers us one of the finest depictions of old age, dementia and the effects of decaying memory that renders an individual incapable of distinguishing between truth and imagination. Not only was the narrative engaging but the dialogues heartbreaking, making Zeller a fitting winner of this award.





## Best Supporting Actor

I know what I am about to say is terribly controversial but despite sharing similar subject matters, Judas and the Black Messiah was a far, far, far better film than Trial Of Chicago 7. There was nothing, new per se about the latter that we hadn't seen before. The climactic stretch was definitely goosebump inducing but what else? Judas imbued layers of complexity to a tale often told and hence this category, despite a surprise nomination for Paul Raci, was a head to head between Cohen and Kaluyaa. I would have been terribly upset had Cohen won this category because let's face it, in a year where the sequel to Borat released, awarding Sacha Baron Cohens' acting chops on the basis of his portrayal of a hippie rebel hardly makes sense. Moreover Kaluyaa, of Get Out fame, had brought to his performance a rare vulnerability imbued with stony surface grit. Many might say this award comes too early in his career, but I say this shall mark the beginning of what I feel is a remarkable career of many more such complex portrayals and performances from one of the most promising young stars of this generation.





## Best Supporting Actress

Glenn Close being nominated for the excruciatingly ordinary Hillbilly Elegy, is all you need to know about the compensatory nature of the Academy Awards. Many, I included, thought the Academy might actually go ahead and finally award the woman for a change. But then she was up against the genre bending performance of Maria Bakalova, the luminescent presence of Amanda Seyfried (an early award favourite), the devastatingly beautiful Olivia Colman who said it all with her eyes and finally Youn Yuh-jung. As the chatty grandmother in the poignant immigrant drama Minari, she won the hearts of one and all with largely identifiable trial of trying to fit into a culture that is shockingly alien. There was humour, warmth and a large dollop of pathos in that performance and no matter what our favourites were in this category, there is not a single person today who begrudges her this win. Be careful to look out for her hilarious yet strikingly scathing acceptance speech, one of the most definitive highlights of the evening.





## Best Director

Guess who deserved the award? Chloe Zhao.

Guess who won the award? Chloe Zhao.

Having already swept every single award for direction this season, this category was a no brainer as Zhao became the second woman and first Asian woman in Oscar history to receive this honour. The history notwithstanding, the significance of the moment was not lost on anyone as it was Bong Joon-ho who presented her with the award. Many critics have argued that Zhao has works that are even more stunning in their brilliance, but that does subtract from the fact that *Nomadland* is a testament to the importance of directorial vision and capacity in telling a story. The film hardly has a story per se. It operates mostly on visuals, a towering performance and the ability of its director to keep you invested in the story of the protagonist by evoking succinct moods and visuals. No matter how good a performance, how good a script or how brilliant the edit, it all finally comes down to the leap of faith that the vision of the director is willing to chase. And by god, in this film it landed!





## Best Film

Ever since the Venice Film Festival, *Nomadland* too has been sweeping all best picture awards this season. But considering the Academy has in the past gone ahead and awarded *Crash* over *Brokeback Mountain* and *Green Book* over *Roma*, one would do good to harbour doubts that this year too maybe the Academy ended up splitting the awards for director and film. I would have howled my lungs out had *Mank* won, but according to most pundits it was a call between the poignancy of *Minari*, the esoteric brilliance of *Nomadland*, the radical originality of *Promising Young Woman* and the rousing crowd favourite *Trial of the Chicago 7*. The latter undoubtedly is a memorable film and the Academy could have very well offered the highest honour of the night to it, but to the satisfaction of everyone the crown landed on the deserving heads of *Nomadland*. *Nomadland* in my opinion is most definitely one of the most astounding pieces of cinema to have come out of America. In its depiction of the eroding American Dream and search of identity and belonging in the face of loss it is parable of our times - so deeply resonating and universal that it makes any and every viewer to reflect on its quiet commentary on modern day loneliness. I also sincerely hope that this win opens the eyes of the average American movie consumer to the beauty of works of auteurs like Zhao who, till now had only been only a name in the festival circuit.





## Best Actress

This was perhaps the most difficult category to select from this year. But also at the same time as far as the actresses go, this has been a truly weirdly amazing award season. I mean just take for example, Vanessa Kirby won the Volpi Cup, Andra Day surprised everyone with her Golden Globe win, Carey Mulligan's big risk paid off with a Critics Choice win, Viola Davis stunned with a SAG win and finally Frances McDormand won the BAFTA for her role as the grieving Fern. All these performances were in their own right career best performances of the actresses in question. Mulligan's success was largely due to the spot on casting - her porcelain doll face not betraying the sinister sociopathic tendencies lurking underneath her skin while Viola Davis did stun everyone with her rendition of Ma Rainey (I personally still maintain her best is Doubt where she stole the entire film from Hoffman, Adams and Streep in the matter of exactly ten minutes). But if I was given the choice I would have personally handed over the statuette to Kirby for the sheer physicality demonstrated in her performance and that devastating one-take opening sequence.

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Obviously her win suffered its setback owing to the Shia Labeouf controversy and I was initially harbouring mixed feelings about the Frances McDormand win. However on reflection, the choice does not seem too out of place considering that *Nomadland* is first a character study, a portrait of sorts, that through its many shades attempts to offer its commentary not just on loss and loneliness but what it truly means to be and belong to America today. And with this McDormand, a powerhouse performer from day one (her winning range includes a black comedy, a tale of revengeful grief and now a quiet quest for identity) ties with Meryl Streep and Daniel Day Lewis to have the second highest number of Oscars for acting.

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## Best Actor

Now this is the most juicy bit of the Oscars this year. The moment the Best Picture announcement preceded the ones for Best Actor and Actress, everyone knew the producers were hoping for Chadwick Boseman to win the award posthumously and end the event of a note of emotional crescendo. Their hopes were not unfounded for, according to me, on grounds of sole sentimentality Boseman had been sweeping the award season for his excellent turn in *Ma Rainey*. His legacy is one that needs to be honoured for he truly is a talent lost early. But that said this had been the year of Riz Ahmed for his astonishing performance in *Sound of Metal*, till *The Father* released and Sir Hopkins came with all guns blazing. At 83 he is the oldest man to win an acting Oscar and his performance in *The Father* is perhaps one of the singularly greatest performances of the past decade. The physicality of it, its unassuming attention to the minutest of details and its portrayal of emotional complexity in a dialogue driven narrative is going to be studied for years in acting schools across the world. I had been silently praying that by some miracle he ends up winning the award and my prayers did get answered tonight, although I think the BAFTAs too had a huge role to play in this.



I do feel sorry for Ahmed. I truly do because this was his hour to shine. But I hope fate grants him one more chance to prove his talent because despite the absence of the closure of an acceptance speech from Hopkins, this was a performance by a genius that needed to be awarded, that needed to be acknowledged for its devastating beauty. Just watch out the last scene where he breaks down while holding onto a postcard from his daughter. You won't know if it is real life or acting. You just cannot. And that is, perhaps the greatest feat of this performance.





# The Majesties

Kinjal Chandra

A book that starts with the line –

*“When your sister murders three hundred people, you can't help but wonder why”* is bound to evince an ingenious chain of events ahead.

Countless reviews on Goodreads and even the Amazon page of *The Majesties* describe the book as “Crazy Rich Asians meets My Sister The Serial Killer” and by the end of this review you will understand the precise reason behind the same.

*The Majesties* offers a grand glimpse into the luxuriant and extraordinarily extravagant lives of Indonesian business families. They travel in extortionate cars, throw Hawaiian themed birthday parties, relegate themselves to nothing less than rhinestones and branded perfume and wear no clothes more than once. From Fashion shows to foreign travel, opulent furniture, and gourmet diets – their lives are ideal and all the more desirable until you take a keener look into the sinister secrets hidden up their sleeves.



Gwendolyn and Estella, two sisters belonging to this affluent clan are the principal characters of *The Majesties*. They bond strongly over their mutual interest in entomology; until an abusive and violent relationship distance the two sisters apart. One day Gwendolyn finds herself in coma, as the single survivor of the mass murder of her extended family due to poisoning by her sister. Devastated and desperate, she makes every possible attempt to recollect all possible instances that could've flung her into her present, miserable condition, thus forming the taut narrative of the book.

Not only the characters, but also the writing style is incredibly rich and vivid. Tsao unleashes all her efforts into giving shape to this brilliant storyline with a jaw dropping culmination. The book is in equal parts vibrant and eerie, with an air of mystery hanging throughout the length of the book, in spite of not being “the” conventional thriller. The ending is open to interpretation, but absolutely astonishing which disseminates Tsao’s intelligence and prowess as an author in bold letters. *The Majesties* is too terrific to skip. Read it already!





Gauri Singh

# Rediscovering Humanity During the Pandemic

*“Being human is given. But keeping our humanity is a choice.”*

*- Anonymous*

Success, money and prosperity are incomplete without our humanity and innate goodness because there is no religion beyond humanity. The pandemic has brought the world into a topsy-turvy space. The unpredictable nature of the virus has affected all aspects of human lives. The activities which once were a common part of our daily lives, have become a distant dream, or a luxury, at the least. With everything coming to a standstill, survival being the biggest question of our lives, economy being at the brink of shut down; this period of hardship brought forth the best and the worst in people in a very explicit manner.

With “Working from Home” becoming the “New Normal”, one sphere which was completely unaffected was the entire crew of doctors, frontline health workers and the police personnel. They were and are continuously working relentlessly for hours, and thus, coming in contact with innumerable people and risking their lives for the sake of national duty.

The pandemic has adversely affected the lives of so many, especially, people belonging to the lower income group. However, the fatal and lethal nature of the virus did not lessen the humanitarian spirit of the people and they came to the forefront and took an initiative to help the affected people. With profound compassion and generosity, people came forward to contribute their bit in making the existing situation better for their fellow human beings. They, along with NGOs came forward to distribute food and other necessary articles, donated money to the needy, facilitated transport for some so that they could return to their home towns, etc. On the other hand, some people volunteered to donate blood and also took an active part in the vaccine trials. When staying indoors is being given utmost importance, people held their humanity over rationality and took care of their near and dear ones in hospitals. The Didi Kitchen of Jharkhand feeds almost 4.5 lakh people daily and free of cost. All of us are one family and our relation is not defined by blood but by the very essence of humanity. This has been very aptly proved by the police men of Panchkula. They went to the residence of a senior citizen in the locality and wished him “Happy Birthday!”. That person, shocked upon receiving birthday wishes from the police men, asked them as to how they got to know about his birthday. They told him that his children who were away from him because of the lockdown had sent them to wish him and to tell him that they’ll always be with him. And that very moment made that old man’s day. Such thoughtful gestures filled with love and benevolence can make such unprecedented times easier for all of us. The delivery agents of Amazon, Zomato expose themselves daily, as a part of their job. There have been so many instances of innumerable unsung heroes who have let go of their profit incentives and proved that humanity is the biggest religion.





However, humanity is not only measured by how we help others monetarily but also through our acts. The pandemic also brought forth the worst side of humanity through many instances. Some people became so concerned about their health that they chose to put others at risk to ensure their own safety. People, despite drawing heavy salaries deducted the salaries of their house helpers when they have been the most affected group during this period of hardship. A general tendency has been reported among people to look down upon the Covid-19 patients and treating them as untouchables. This has resulted in an unwanted fear among people from getting themselves tested because of the social stigma that comes as a part and parcel of testing positive. A recent Supreme Court judgement has declared that the names of the affected patients cannot be released on any public platform. There has also been a laxity on the part of many regarding the abidance of Covid-19 guidelines and thus putting a large number of people at risk. People fail to realize that non-compliance of norms on their part can have adverse repercussions on the health of many.

With the advent of this race for perfection, we have all become so engrossed in our professional lives that we have all let go of a portion of our family lives. Professional commitments and social work life have become an integral part of the lives that staying at home throughout the lockdown became an undoable task for many people.



There have been numerous instances of people experiencing panic attacks, depression and anxiety due to staying indoors perennially. Another common phenomenon reported by many households has been the daily fights and arguments taking place at homes. Ironically, when staying together was expected to improve relations among the family members, National Commission for Women (NCW) reported a drastic surge in the complaints pertaining to domestic violence in the year 2020.

The Pandemic has given us a very unique opportunity to study human psyche and how individuals react when put in extraordinary situations. Human nature, being a multi-faceted dimension of the human personality, has varied aspects attached to itself. While the lockdown began with an array of uncertainties, it gradually unfolded how humans would tend to behave in such circumstances. When some enjoyed the much-needed family time and indulged in activities like cooking, dancing; some became frustrated and irritable creating a negative atmosphere in their surroundings. When some reflected absolute humanity through their deeds, some people chose to politicize events. Many people would agree that the lockdown gave them a chance to reflect and self-introspect themselves about a number of things. A large number of people embarked on the journey of self-discovery during this period and actually carved a new dimension of their personality.

While the Pandemic has given birth to a new world in some sense, where many have given birth to humanity and set an example for their fellow human beings, some have brought forth the inhuman and insensitive shade of their personalities which lack even the basic traits of humanity. In the words of Michael Teal, “It is our Humanity that makes us Spiritual and our Spirit which makes us Human”.

# Ray: The Illustrator

That Satyajit Ray is one of the world's greatest film auteurs is, on the eve of his centenary birthday, well established, but what is perhaps lesser known is his brilliant – and in many ways – pioneering work as a graphic designer. Ray, in fact, had no formal training in filmmaking, but actually studied to be a painter at the Visva-Bharati University in Santiniketan founded by Rabindranath Tagore.

However, he dropped his fine-art degree midway to start his career as a junior visualizer at the British advertising agency DJ Keymer- and later went on to work with Signet Press and become one of India's leading book designers. He also designed magazine covers and used his training in calligraphy to create typefaces for Bangla and English, including Ray Roman, Ray Bizarre, Daphnis and Holiday Script.



Anwesh Bannerjee



Two books – Looking Beyond: Graphics of Satyajit Ray by Jayanti Sen and Satyajit Ray: A Vision of Cinema by Andrew Robinson – cover his groundbreaking graphic design work in great detail. Glimpses of his heavy reliance and tendency to narrate with visuals in his cinema can be seen from his seminal work *Bishoy Chalachitra* where one finds hand drawn sketches of specific shots by the director himself. That his minimal directorial sensibilities were largely influenced by his stint at Shantiniketan becomes evident from the way his screenplays rely more on the power of images, and music, than on the effect of the spoken word.

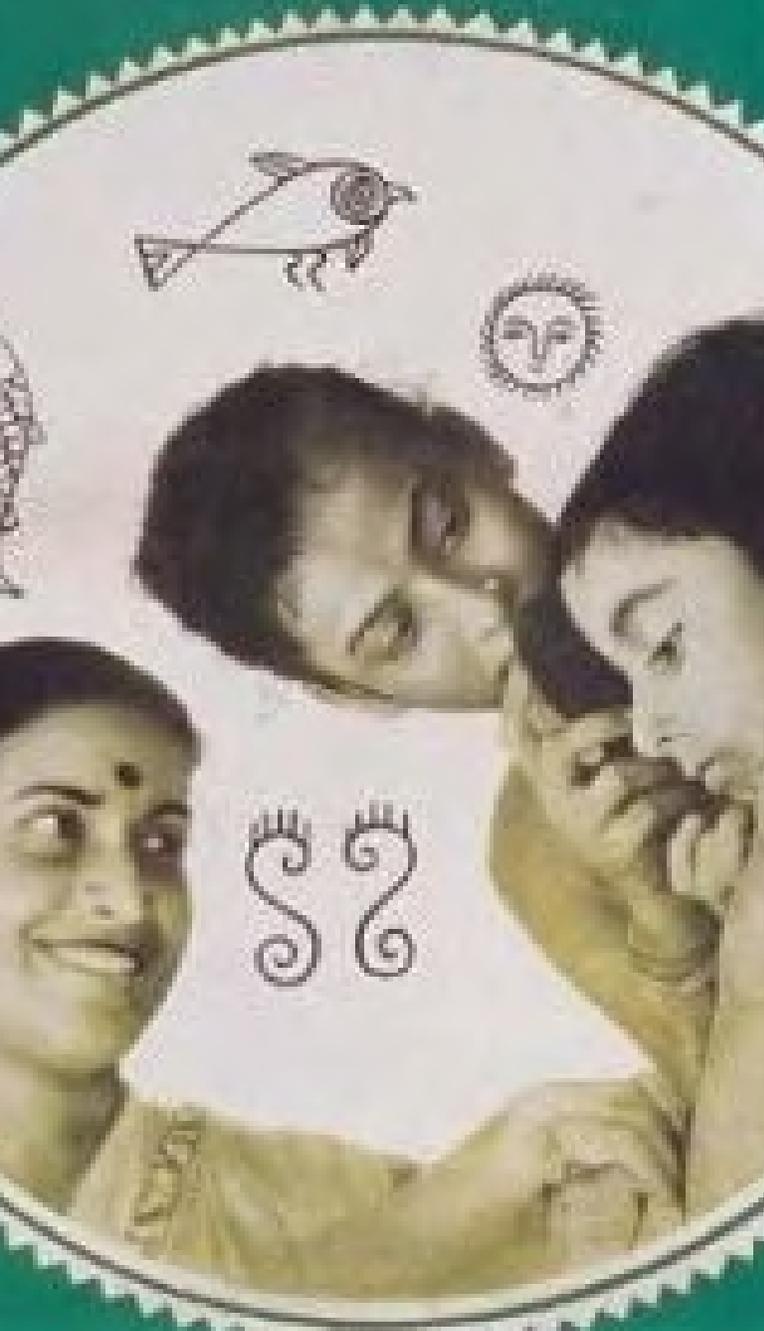
With his dexterity as an artist and extraordinary design skill, it was only natural that Ray also designed many of his own film posters, billboards, publicity materials and title cards.

Ray's posters weren't just eye-catching film advertisements; they served as an extension of his artistic vision of the film, each one giving the audience a distinct take on the film in question and boiling down its major themes and emotions into one striking image.

In this article, I look at some of his most iconic and memorable film poster designs, as a reminder that this cinema auteur had skills beyond the celluloid, that need urgent recognition by his ever expanding international audience.



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Pather Panchali

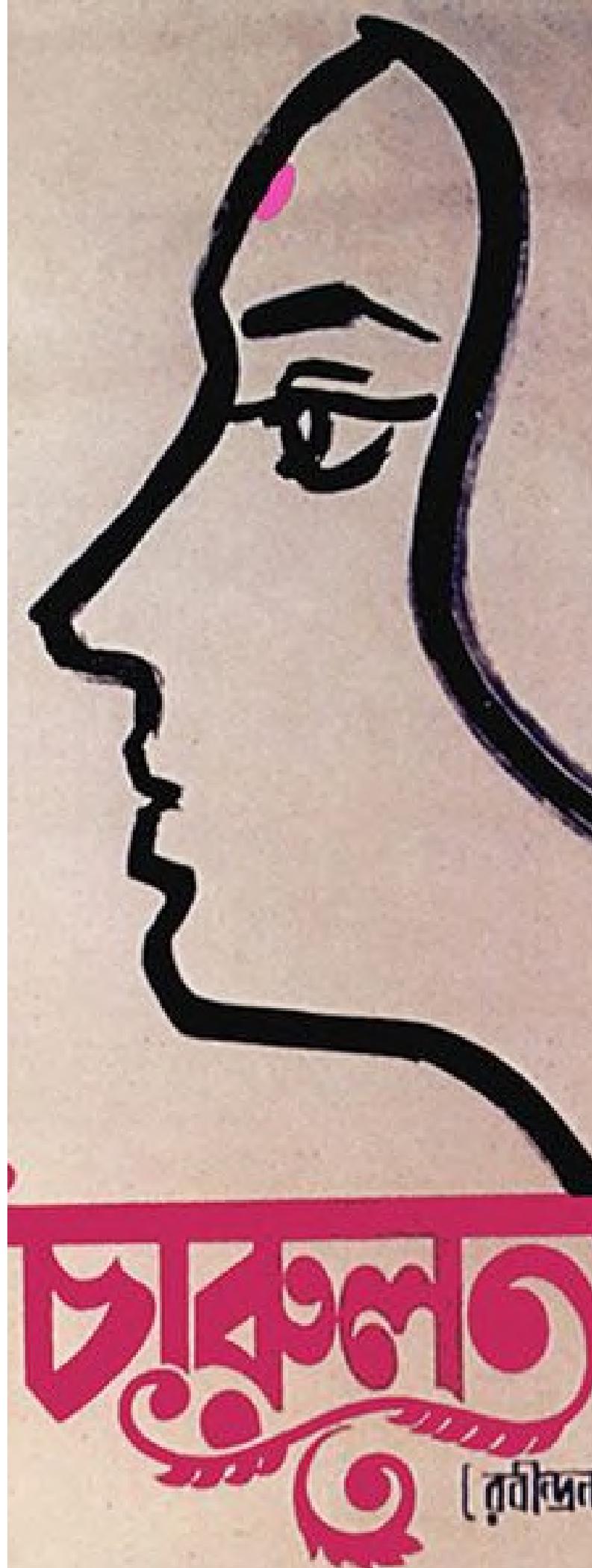
Direction - SATYAJIT RAY • Music - RAYI

# Pather Panchali

The poster for Pather Panchali gives us a window into the life of young Apu, along with Sarbjaya, his mother, and sister Durga – the two most influential figures in his life. It's a lovely portrait of a family oozing with warmth and affection. The image is set inside a circle that resembles traditional alpana art. The folk-art inspired motifs of footprints, fish and the sun give it a childlike feel and also a rural simplicity and charm. It is a tale of innocence in the Bengali hinterland, the lush green of the poster amplifies the importance of nature in the narrative and the juxtaposition of the white and the green can be further read as an evocative representation of the iconic train sequence with the swaying kashphool in the foreground. The poster is also in a stark way, owing to its overlying simplicity and innocence, deceptive in terms of the final tragedy the narrative culminates in.

# Charulata

A masterclass in minimalism, the poster for Charulata features a portrait of the protagonist created simply with a calligraphic brush stroke. It's a testament to Ray's artistic prowess that he manages to bring out Charulata's longing and pathos in such an evocative and seemingly effortless manner. It also establishes her gaze and point of view, which dominates the film. The minimalism of the drawing is beautifully offset by the ornate title typography which bespeaks the decadent wealth of Bhupati and his mansion. Later renditions of the poster have used the iconic shot of Madhabi Mukherjee holding the opera glass, but as classic as the shot may be, the sparing depth of the original poster with its transgressive shades of red against a background of white will always be remembered and revisited.





# Devi

The poster for *Devi* is probably one of Ray's most recognizable and iconic designs. He depicts the protagonist Dayamoyee, played by Sharmila Tagore using iconography related to the Goddess Kali – big almond shaped eyes staring directly at the viewer, a red bindi and thick, arched and decorated eyebrows. This make-up in itself has become iconic and has been recreated by several fashion photographers in recent years as a tribute to both Tagore and Ray. It is also through *Devi* that Ray brought back the original minimal style of wearing chandan on the forehead and the cheeks before Tagore incorporated alpona art in the same - a tradition that continues to the modern day. Sharmila's face is divided into light and dark shades, symbolizing a split between both the gentler and more aggressive sides and the mortal and divine sides of her personality – which further gives the image a distinctly surreal and heightened quality. The title typography is made to resemble a temple.



# Mahanagar

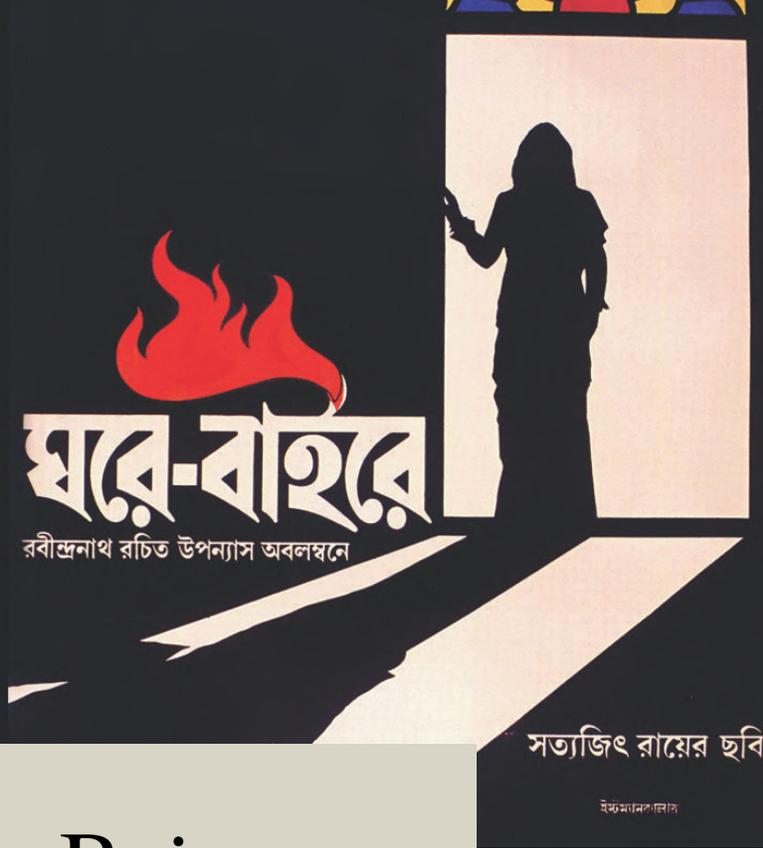
Mahanagar's photographic poster features arguably the film's most memorable image, where we see the protagonist Arati apply lipstick for the first time, which becomes a symbol of emancipation, independence and reclaiming her own identity and agency. The red which nicely pops against the rest of the desaturated image again becomes a symbol of transgression. Recent renditions of this poster has also seen designers employing the image where Arati, played by the quintessential Ray muse, Madhabi Mukherjee, looks at herself in the bathroom mirror, money in hand and smile on her face. The significance of this scene is definitely enormous in terms of the character, but it is the subtle significance of the act of applying the lipstick that Ray wishes us to remember and keep in our hearts. The typeface of the title, resembling the intimidating skyline of the ghastly cruel city looms large over the poster like an ominous presence.



# Aranyer Din Ratri

The illustrated poster for Aranyer Din Ratri pretty much is a visual representation of the title – the sun and the moon juxtaposed against the silhouette of a night forest. Unlike the other more conventional posters featuring the faces of the many characters, this one makes the forest itself the protagonist of the story. However, floating faces of the characters was a trademark of Ray when it came to designing the posters - one remembers Mahapurush and Nayak in this light. And showing the entirety of the cast seems to be the primal need of any ensemble movie. One recalls the poster of a much more recent film like Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara, which certainly deeply uncannily resembles to this Ray classic. There too the main poster sees all the characters of the film standing before their blue. I personally think Aranyer Din Ratri is one of Ray's weaker posters. Yes the typeface is beautifully original in its resemblance of the silhouettes of trees and a forest-scape but I wish Ray had thought of playing around with some of the other largely important scenes and symbols in the film. Later photographic renditions of this poster have seen employment of the iconic picnic scene image which seems a far smarter choice, as this scene in all its iconic complexity is the point of the story where the characters finally begin to unravel themselves.



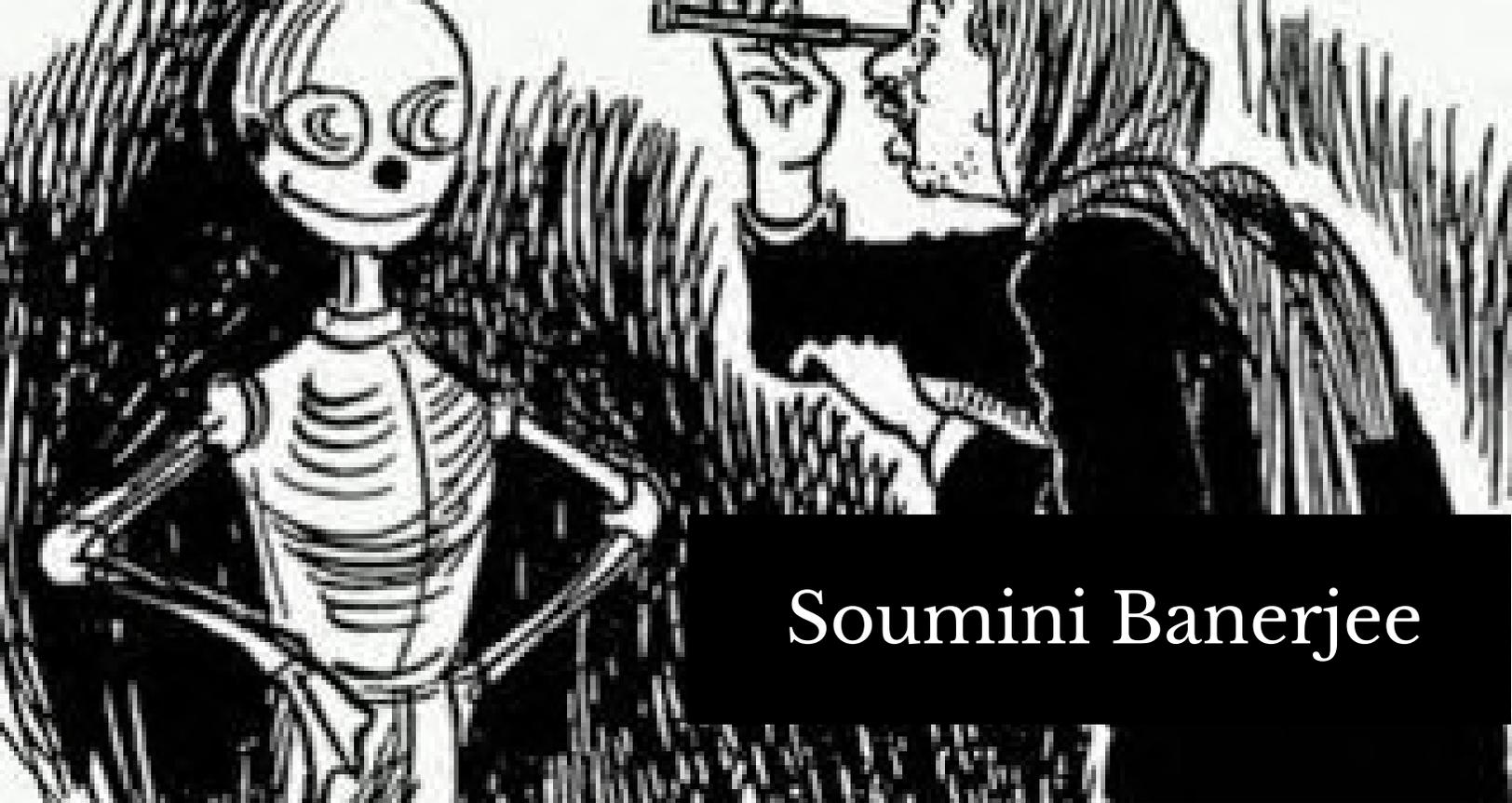


## Ghare Baire

The chiaroscuro inspired poster for Ghare Baire powerfully uses the play of light and shadow to create depth and contrast, depicting a woman standing at the threshold of the outside world, while the dark interiors of the house symbolize tradition and old social mores. The title treatment seems to suggest that crossing this lakshman rekha will be a trial by fire for the woman, which truly becomes the fate of Bimala in the film. Fire assumes a special significance in the film too. The opening credits pay out against raging fires, the first lines of Bimala refer to trial by fire and the most obvious indication would be the fire of passion itself. Ray underlines this too by colouring the flames not in shades of yellow but something between a deep saffron and a burning red - a palette that encapsulates the entirety of the film in one single visual.

This also just happens to be my favourite among the several posters the maestro made in his life-span.





Soumini Banerjee

# Science Fiction in the Indian Camera Reel

Incredulous space suits, metallic equipment towering up, machines incepting our brain, taking us over eventually ; this coloradic world of clairvoyant androids and technological instruments really do a number on our already puzzled brains. Nonetheless, this hard hitting Futurama doesn't fail to rile our senses up incessantly. Why shouldn't it, when it is quite naturally now reigning, and soon to be taking over our fragile, dolefully existing humanity, which has been made too familiar to us through the silver screens , time and by. As children, we yearned for the future of robots that led to our commands, the same thing, that now alarms us, frightens us, as we grow up. It is simply so, because we recognise how dangerously close we are to the fiction shown to us, tediously, agonizingly unfolding into our own reality.



We caught this exact idea of the world, fuelling on the oils of machines, within the casings of western movies and American shows. Be it the inexplicable world of space and beyond, thrilling our senses in classics like *The Martian* and *Space Odyssey*, or the dominance of AI riding on humanity's back, in crumbling nature, like *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix*, or the epic conundrums of complex human innovation, as the movies *Inception*, *Predestination*, and more have projected onto screens. A utopian dystopia indeed, and yes, while it is a strange contrast of words, it quite frankly remains the only way to describe it.

Being a student of arts and having my writing and reading circling around the mammoths of classics in descriptive lores and histographies, science fiction in general leaves a fresh breath of the air to my life, and I assume many others, for its incredulous showcases and a world you expect the progressive "futuristic" canvass would look like. However, that canvas only carries an insignia of the wide known Western directors, makers of the classics just mentioned above. An Indian director rarely comes forth, when our culture, so heavy in its nuances of colour, traditions, and themes infinite, falls short to carve for itself, a niche on the scientific, utopian front.

Science fiction in general is a genre not upended with the big leagues of artistry since its emergence to big screens. The directories of science and speculation has the title of ludcrity attached to it by traditional film watchers.





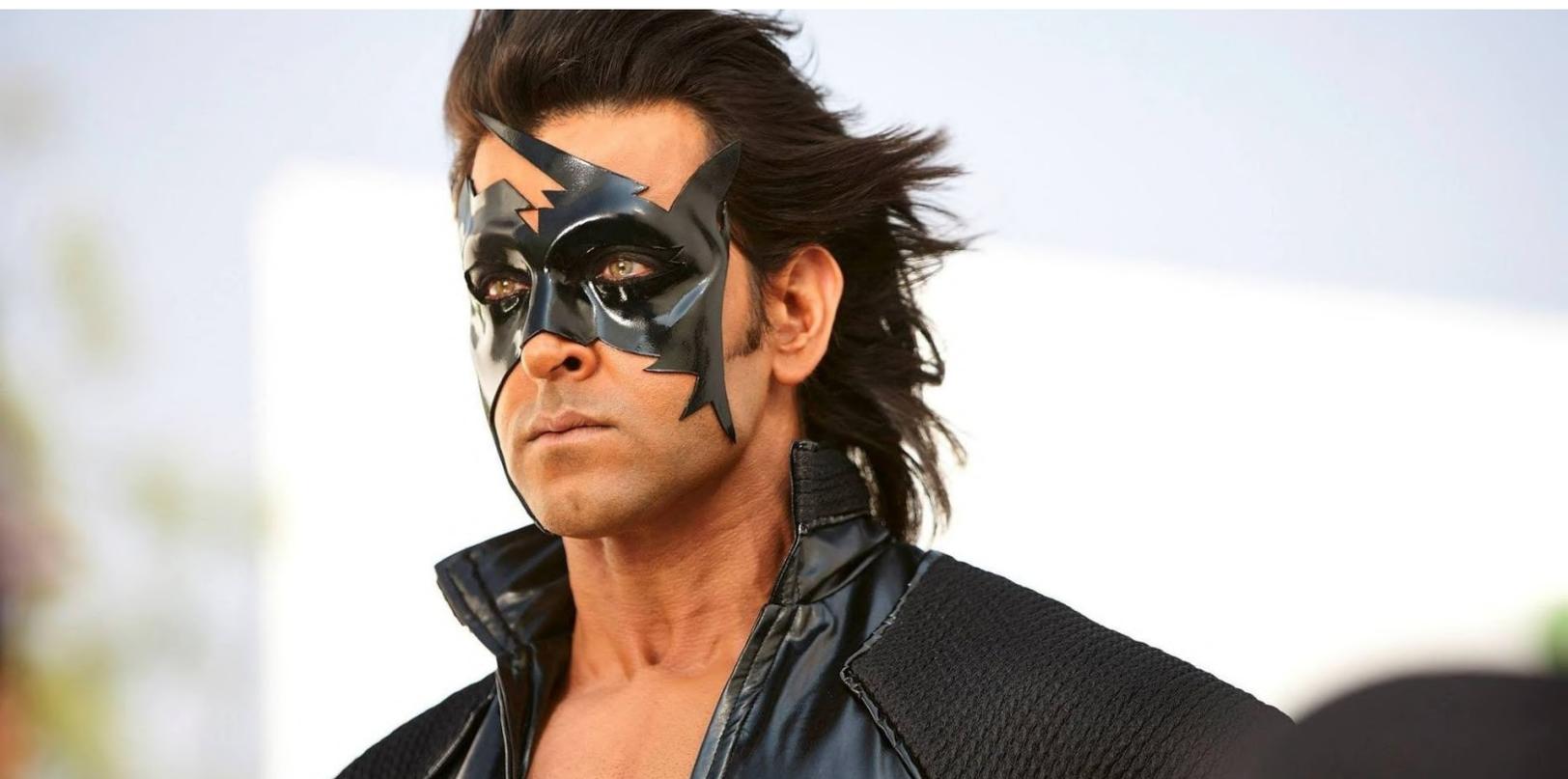
Tamil, holding the earliest titles of Indian language, garnered the "Tamil Pulp", with the "Blaft Anthology Of Tamil Pulp Fiction". As adaptations slowly started to push science fiction further, the first ever original plot line sci-fi was that embraced true colours of the techie illusion, was the 1963 Tamil Drama Kalai Arsai, directed by A Kasilingam, known mainly for his fluid storylines. The first movie ever to bring extra terrestrial into the mortal realm, this movie was definitive of a new genre entering the club. As Hindi and Bengali cinema began to grapple with the idea in their own cultural cadence, the 70's and 80's saw sparks of sci-fi blending in the trajectory of Indian cinema. The robust breakthrough in this path, hauled by legendary Kishore Kumar performance, was Shantalil Soni's eccentric Mr X in Bombay. Playing with the mad scientist trope in dry humor and slapstick comedy, it undeniably paved the way for its successive blockbuster film; the gritty, entertaining superhero hit, Mr India. It thus introduced to the general public the beauty of special effects in tandem with a gripping storyline.

The wheels of cinematic time travel and cosmology gained traction as popular cast embraced acting along with such convoluted scientific tropes, and movies like Koi Mil Gaya, Krishh, and many others skewed a bespeckled fandom of their own.

Science fiction ,as mentioned before , saw itself enveloping the pages of long novels and fiction articles before it could be projected. Many bengali artists, mainly ones in the grasp of literature, were already fanatics of the hard hit genre. The icon himself, towering through to reach global acclaim in filmmaking, Satyajit Ray, was a silent pioneer in this field.

The mass appeal to the bizarre alien image ; yes I'm talking about the fluorescent green body, the large leaf shaped black eyes we have been seeing for so long, caught the humdrum of space fiction. It was picked up as a common archetype, where exactly Ray and other notable writers built their worlds on. Ray's earnest fascination with detective futurology sparked from his father, the legendary comic writer Sukumar Ray. His widely adored and recapitulated Professor Shanku emerged in full light from Sukumar Ray's The Diary of Professor Heshoram Hoshiar, which was in itself a satire on The Lost World by Arthur Conan Dolye. This is just one of the many instances of how the West typewrote imprints of their works on the indogenous minds of creation.

Moreover, Ray did not believe that science and technology immediately meant a barren dystopia. He treated the concept as a blooming progression, whereby stories like Bonku Babur Bondhu and Professor Shanku rode on the jovial travels of discovery and innovation.





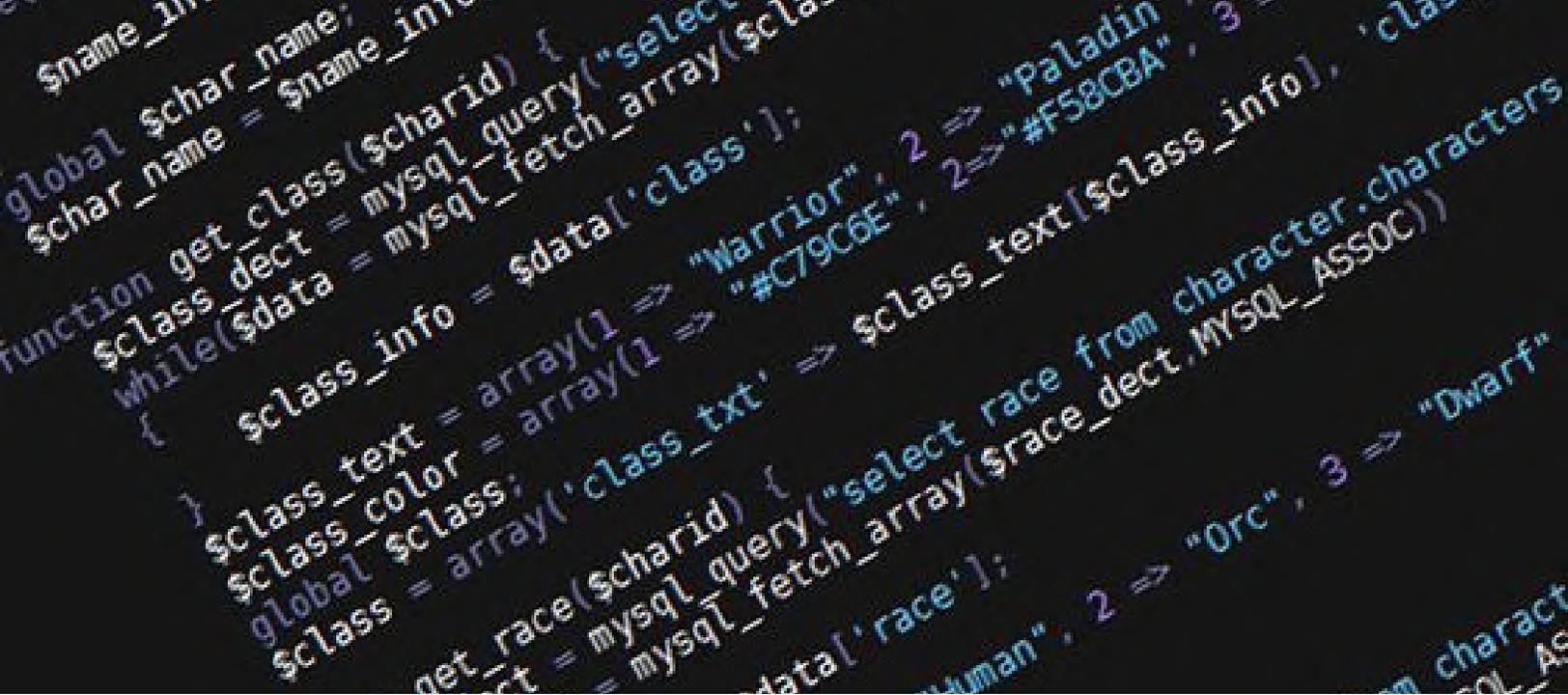
This stands way too contrasted by the otherwise negatively looked upon robots and their subsequent "taking over humans", brandished by the West. Satyajit Ray wrote the immaculate script for his movie "Aliens", which unfortunately stayed behind Ray's trove of unreleased gems. Later released in the sci fi magazine Ashchorjo, the narrative tails around queries on philosophy and religion, all the while anthropomorphizing technology and cosmic space with humane characters, just like us, facing complexities in life.

The Isaac Asimovs and Ray Bradburys on print inadvertently projected into Christopher Nolans and Stephen Speilbergs, on the big screens. The same evolution took notable time to flourish on indian grounds of fiction , as contemporaries of this world building genre , Ray and Premendra Mitra gave abode to aspirants of film direction , and present makers like Samit basu , Vandana Singh , Indraprasit Das rummaged through critics to make names for themselves in this generic corner.

Science fiction is also widely inclusive in the superhero trope of movies, with added laws of space and cosmology garnering the attention of viewers while action scenes unravel before them. Huge franchises , comic books turned silver screen treasures, like the beloved DC and Marvel , were also greatly influential in introducing the genre to a relatively younger audience. The desi side of the coin tried their hands to do the same , where movies like Krishh and Ra-One tried inoculating meagre elements of fantastical fiction amidst deep blue laser beams and enemy chases , and stand alone castes. The plotlines, however furnished with such effects, still harrows over the same old love story cliché, which indefinitely limits this genre to bloom in its true colours.

Hence, there still remains a spec on the board of Indian Science Fiction, as there is still a long way to go for Bollywood, Tollywood, and other Indian industrial mammoths, to reach that exuberant height. Ofcourse, there are social and political correspondences that tightly hold back the genre to gain full traction in Indian Cinema, and the overarching cause of it all, is the dominant rural population taking most of the audience populace. Technological advancement and how robots and hyperactive humanoids function in space travel doesn't exactly appeal to them, as they hold no merit in their books, well, at least not yet. This inevitably brings us to why sci fi doesn't have its essence explored in full range, as production houses don't believe in its success in the Indian box office, with previous takes on Sci Fi tunneling down badly in the general public. Exceptions, such as the extra terrestrial PK, and the new netflix series Cargo, are hardly sufficient to counter the big leagues opinion. While being somewhat entertaining , they kd not embrace what science fiction truly entailed.Special effects and CGI rumination of elements do not become an unwanted burden to production teams, as the huge budget required to make a sci-fi movie look significantly competent, doesn't deem worthy for them, for the same reasons alike. The streak of silver lining behind this huge cloud looming over the industry however, is that it's trying to stand up, and explore the genre in New, indegenious ways.





A reprobable nobody hits a sudden breakthrough, and now he's a notary nobel laureate scientist, acclaimed by people and peers. No, this is not the plotline of a new science fiction movie we may be getting. Rather, it mirrors the very evolution of this genre ; how it gradually untangled its form in our eyes , from a criticized , ridiculed trope to developing an actual artistic repertoire. The world, obscure as it may seem, is set to be ruled by technology and all the ridiculous machinery we once thought lied in far away imaginations. Art, driven by the remnants of society, is bound to follow where the world is going. The world, in a crux of digitization and neural virtual networks, types in binary code a warning of what's to come in the future, glimpses of which alarmed us in fiction, in the form of dystopian movies and thriller books. Science fiction remains a genre of its own merits, but there is little time until that "fiction" gets obliterated into a blissful nothing, and what remains, is the debris of humanity facing rife, witnessing it all happen, with no screen and red curtains between them, anymore.

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# Animals In Translation

Renata Pavrey

Dr. Temple Grandin is a prominent author and speaker, a professor of animal science, an activist and proponent of animal welfare, has an Emmy and Golden Globe award winning movie made on her life, has been featured on Time magazine and Forbes, with several appearances on other forms of media as well. She also didn't talk until she was three and a half years old, was teased and bullied in school and college, has undergone immense speech therapy from her early years, and was told to be institutionalized for her autism. Her only solace was animals and science.

Today Dr. Grandin is known for her trailblazing work as a spokesperson for individuals with autism, her work towards autism rights and neurodiversity, and her lifelong initiatives as an animal behaviorist.



# ANIMALS IN TRANSLATION



“Autism made school and social life hard, but it made animals easy. Animal behavior was the right field for me, because what I was missing in social understanding I could make up for in understanding animals”, writes Grandin at the beginning of the book. *Animals in Translation* is a literary treasure that helps us understand animal behavior through the eyes of an individual with autism, and also explains autistic behavior through the lives of other species.

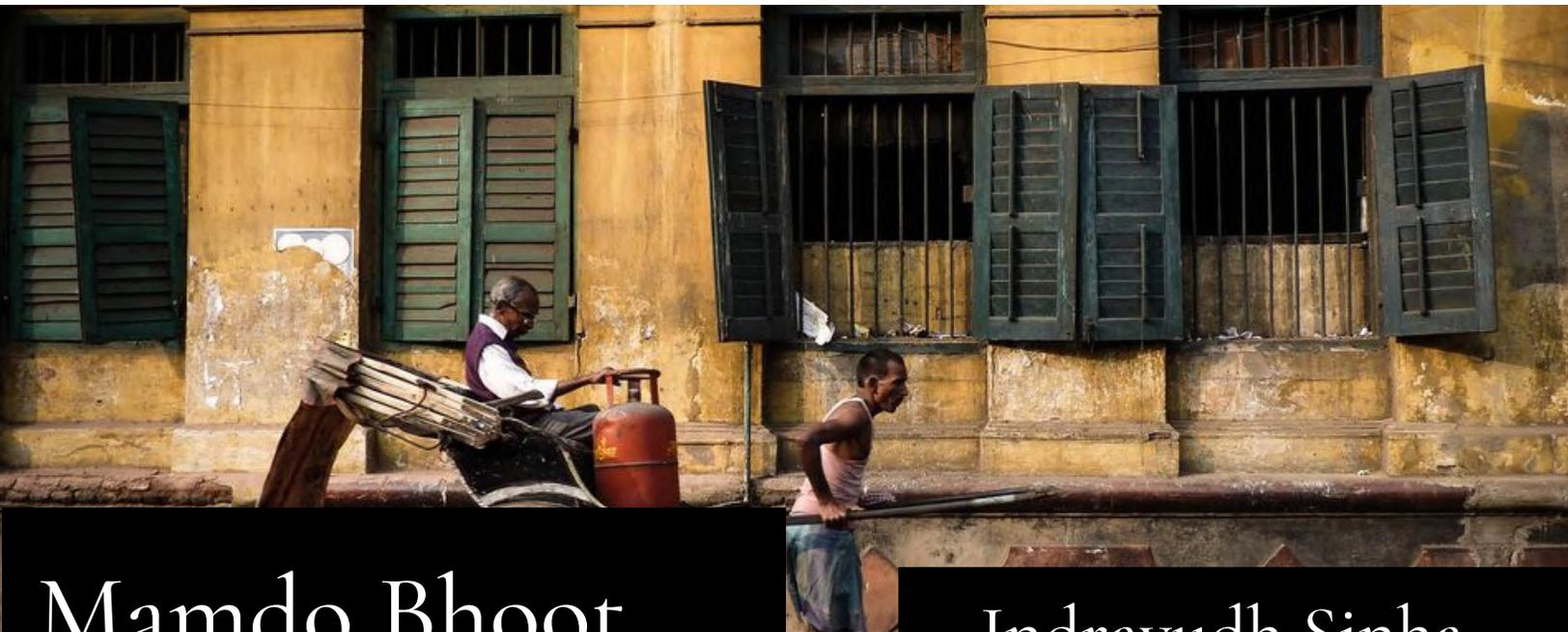
Why are labradors getting lazier? How do animals react to reflections and shadows? Why do whales form delinquent gangs? How has domestication changed animals from their ancestors? Why cant humans hear elephants roaring? Whats common between the cheetah and the greyhound? Why is riding a horse like ballroom dancing? Why do dogs bark and wolves dont, and why are dogs easier to domesticate than cats?

Some of the behavioral traits characteristic of autism include a lack of speech, repeating words or phrases, hypersensitivity to sounds and lights, avoidance of physical contact, preference for certain textures, and visual and auditory fixations. Through decades of experiences, observations, research and work on both, her own life with autism and her work with animals, Grandin proffers groundbreaking perspectives into how people with autism often think the way animals think.

An absence of talking does not mean a lack of communication, not showing emotions is not the same as not feeling emotions. Grandin serves as a guide into a world of fear, love, pain, anger, community, friendships and relationships, communication and intellect, as she breaks down why animals behave the way they do, and also helps us understand autism and its spectrum disorders, by addressing the commonalities in processing information.

How animals perceive, their feelings and thoughts, their pain and suffering, their genius and the trouble they cause, when and why human companionship and socialization with other animals is important, high visual acuity, low pain sensitivity, location of the eyes in prey and predator animals, learned behavior versus instinct, the role of night vision and color differentiation, the left and right brain, mixed emotions versus open emotions, the significance of novelty, pictures as a language instead of words, facial recognition versus other forms of remembering, exploration in strange environments, importance of play, the similarities between animals, children, and autistic people – *Animals in Translation* is a smorgasbord of research and experience-backed information presented for the reader. Through stories of her own pets and anecdotes about the pets' of friends and animals she has worked with, we are taken on a neurological trail across cattle and poultry, reptiles and rodents, elephants and giraffes, birds and humans.

April is dedicated to World Autism Month, and the 2nd of April celebrated as Autism Awareness Day, with a focus on sharing stories to increase understanding of individuals on the autism spectrum. Written in a refreshing, matter-of-fact style, Temple Grandin helps us explore emotion, cognition and consciousness in both animals and autism. A fascinating book that educates on so many levels, while raising questions and starting discussions to foster support and acceptance.



# Mamdo Bhoot

Indrayudh Sinha

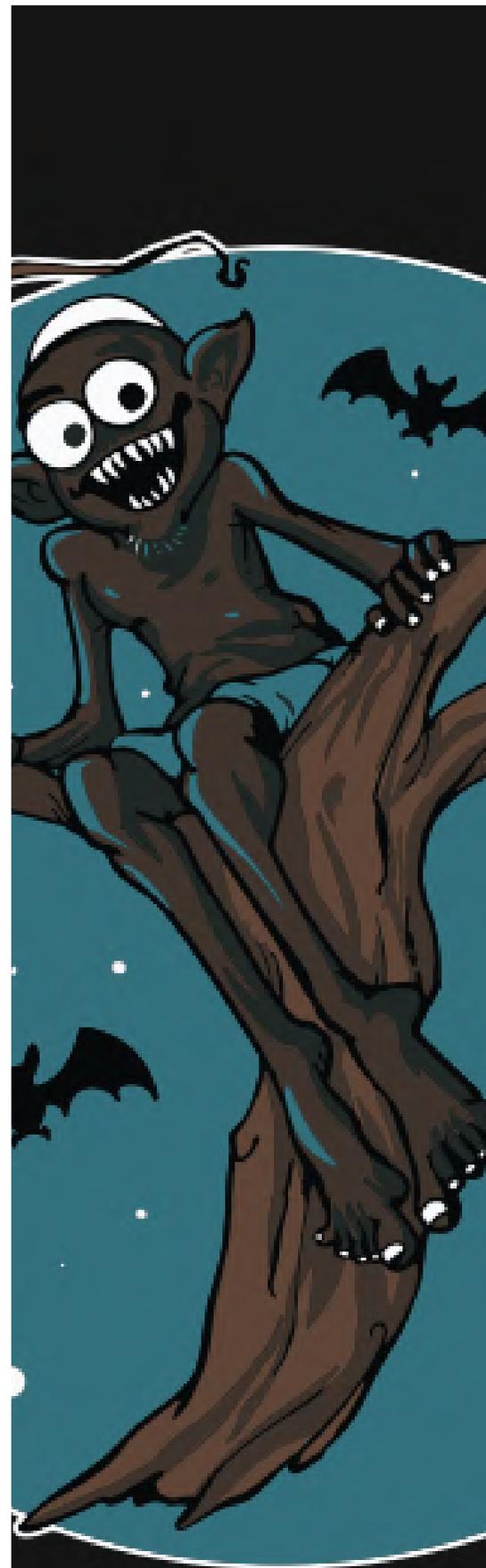
The babumoshai's realm of spectres had one of every kind. Although, the most horrifying characteristics of these ghosts, invented by upper class Hindu Bengali families are the traits that they sustain of the living than the powers they possess as the dead. It is only the unpredictable consequences of being dead which fuels the notion of the lives they lead. Such a spectre is Mamdo bhoot. Whose power appears to be rather less than the usual human extent as its only ability is to crack the necks of the living. But wait, here's the catch: The mamdo bhoot is an Islamic ghost. This, perhaps, makes it much more able as a spectre. Bengalis have treated Islamic offerings to the culture with much cynicism. We took the Biriyani, we took the Thumri but we left the populations to stagger with their lives in ghettos and as ghosts. The alienation of Muslims but the promotion and consumption of their cultural elements has been among the key practices of the contemporary Bengali.

What it means to be Bengali has been inoculated by the different inclusions of cultural elements and practices. The initial notion of being a Bengali and its accompanying radicalisation has been tempered down with the assistance of English and Islamic culture elements and Communism, if broadly stated. The naxalite generation rejected the policing notion of being a Bengali. So did some of the western-educated upper class Bengalis, who were later deemed as reformers. The Islamic cultural partaking of the Bengali's induced, if anything, a secular temperament.

For a reality check, in the city of Kolkata, the Muslim populations occupy what we've come to understand as Ghettos. The areas of Metiabruz and Rajabazar are the largest Muslim-occupied areas in Kolkata and in the city, the Muslim population is concentrated in these demarcated spaces and areas. Primarily because, they face much discrimination if found occupying homogenous places. The Bengali's disaffection for Islamic familial ways of living is very well reflected in the city's organisation of its Islamic population. The contemporary Bengali like the colonial one, is particularly fond of its Christian population. Nothing being wrong with being so but perhaps one can argue that there were elements in upper Hindu Bengali culture which paved the way for adapting English manners and Christian cultural elements. Perhaps, there is a systemic alienation of the Islamic population.

Indian cities have always applied some form of segregation based not only on religion but also on caste. Each group lived in one mohalla or even one lane, as evident from the pattern of most of the old cities. This precise topographical divide had to do with the archaic considerations of ritual purity, including food habits.

What makes me particularly curious is the exact basis of the adaptation and inclusion of Islamic cultural elements by Bengalis. Is it purely benevolence which laid the Bengali to adapt new elements into its culture or is it a crisis which drove the supposedly syncretic Bengali to take up new cultural elements? The city's ghosts are its repressions. The incomplete syncretism of its individuals. The ghost then, is the gadfly.



মামুদা



# Love, Longing and Lockdown

Shubhankar Sengupta

In the evening, Taposee emerged from the guest room and headed towards Biplop, who was making notes with all his books spread out on the floor. Lately, Biplop preferred to work in the drawing room. He made notes sitting on the floor, sat with his newly fixed laptop, watching a documentary on history on the sofa, had long conversations with his friends or colleagues about the Corona crisis as he chopped vegetables on the dining table.

"Indrani was taken to the hospital," Taposee said.

Biplop removed his reading glasses and asked, "Why?"

"She contracted COVID-19. She was experiencing difficulties in breathing and fever for the last five days. Neel took her to the hospital; she had been tested and got the results an hour back. She just talked with me before heading to the hospital."

"What about the family?"



"Neel and her kids are told to stay in home quarantine for the next fourteen days."

"Do I go and buy them some essentials?"

"I will ask Neel once he is back from the hospital."

"Don't worry. She doesn't have any major illness. She had been healthy most of her life. She will just be fine."

She nodded and went back to her room.

. . .

At about three in the afternoon both of them felt the winds swelling under the dark clouds. The trees on the other side of the road moved like a dancer banging his head to punk rock. Their similar view from the Veranda which they often compared to a domestic animal, easing the tension at the end of the day had turned into an angry animal staring at them, waiting for the right time to attack. At this time Taposee got busy along with Biplob shutting all doors and windows, double-checking the bolts.

After a while when they were done, Biplob asked, "What do you want for dinner?"

"Dinner? It's just four."

"Well, the electricity might be gone any minute. So, I better finish off everything before."

. . .

He was in the middle of his chores when the storm intensified. Despite the windows and doors being completely shut, the sound of the gusting wind sounded like a loud ghost revolving around the building.





Biplob left whatever he was doing and stood beside the sofa, where Taposee was sitting with anxiety all over her face. Back when both of them were dating, during a trip to an amusement park, Taposee had fainted inside a Horror Park. Afterwards, she had said, "I fear the darkness. I feel claustrophobic when I can't see anything around."

Taposee pressed her palm against the ears to resist the sound of the wind that slapped the glass of the windows and kicked the building. At this moment, Biplob, who was hovering down the hallway, with hands locked behind his back and slouched stomach, came and sat beside her. With the utmost attention to her, Biplob ran his fingers aimlessly over his mobile screen.

When the storm took a breather, he asked, "Are you okay?" She nodded her head lightly.

"Good. Let me check if the water is coming in through the corners of the doors or the windows." He had left her seat by the time Taposee moved her head.

"Can you come to my room?" he screamed from inside. When she reached near him, he was holding the mattress of his bed. The rainwater had made its way in, drenching his bed. "Can you help me move the bed?"

By the time they were done moving the bed and putting an old cloth below the windowpane, the storm had intensified again. At this time, lights went off. "This is what I was fearing. Luckily, dinner is ready."



Taposee's face had turned anxious again looking like a scared cat drenched in the rain as Biplob pressed on the flashlight of his mobile having returned to the drawing-room and put it on the centre table, upside down. Taposee sat quietly on the sofa while Biplob kept moving around the sofa with hands behind his back, he kept circling the sofa as if he was guarding her against all the evils and all her subconscious fears. But then they heard the loud sound followed by a massive scream, and the next moment she caught hold of his hand. He removed her hand and moved towards the front door.

"Where are you going?"

"To see if everything is alright."

She gulped the air and said, "Don't. Please."

He ignored her and unbolted the front door. People from the other apartments were on the stairs, staring at each other with questions.

Then someone from upstairs screamed, "A windowpane wedged off completely in Mukherjee's flat. Fifth floor. Everything is okay."

He nodded, entering the drawing-room and said, "We have the luxury at our fingertips, many don't. They suffer—different gods for rich and poor. In the negotiation between nature and life, nature always has the upper hand."



If you raise your hand against it will crumple you, the only way is to bow down in front of nature instead."

That night both of them slept on the sofa facing opposite to each other. He faced the roof thinking about her. The presence of someone in the room gave Biplob a feeling of someone in his life. It never occurred to him that it was all mandatory. He felt safe. He fell asleep, having grasped with happy thoughts. Taposee faced him seeing him occasionally through the crevices of her halfshut eyes.

Electricity came at four-thirty in the morning by then both were too sleepy to move to their rooms.

. . . .

The next morning at around ten, Taposee woke up to find Biplob nowhere. Upon investigating around the apartment, she deducted that as there was another power cut, the water supply was cut too.

As soon as Biplob entered through the door, he fainted, keeping the jar of water he brought along. Luckily, Taposee was near him, preventing him from falling.





She checked his pulse: slow. He was sweating. She was fast to kneel near him and raise his heavy legs and his shoulder- something she learned while watching a movie, helps in restoring blood flow to the brain. When there was no response, she supported his legs in an inclined position and went up to open the door and windows. There were leaves stuck on the windowpane. The storm had subsided leaving behind its footmarks.

After some time, Biplob opened his eyes, and as he was about to raise his head, Taposee pushed it down with authority.

"Who told you to carry the heavy jar up the stairs? Are you ageing backwards?"

"There was no water in the house."

"So?"

"The condition is horrible everywhere. The small shops that sold vegetables in the bazaar are destroyed, branches hanging from the broken electric poles like kites. So many trees are uprooted. Social distancing is down in the drain. Everyone is on the street. There is no electricity supply, no water to drink."

I have seen the condition from the Veranda."

"That's nothing."

"But who told you to go outside. You didn't even wear a mask."

"I was in a hurry."

"Always reckless, always stubborn." She said, "We could have managed. A few days back, you bumped your head, and now this, God only knows how you manage without me."

Both gaped at each other. Biplob had done something he shouldn't have, and Taposee had said what she shouldn't "I'm sorry".





Both gaped at each other. Biplob had done something he shouldn't have, and Taposee had said what she shouldn't "I'm sorry".

Biplob had a problem of not apologizing even when he was wrong, that's the one complaint Taposee always had. He would stop talking for days but won't utter the word 'sorry'. Something had changed him in last year, or so, she noticed. It was a surprise to her, a surprise that gave her a hidden pleasure.

. . .

With the cup of evening tea in his hand, he stepped towards the veranda. She followed with her cup. There was no evidence of a broken tree on the street, although some branches were cleared. There was only a faint footprint of the cyclone near the Geetanjali apartment. The storm had changed the dynamics of their relationship too. They didn't feel awkward in each other's presence.

The electricity was restored after two days, water supply soon after and the internet after five days.

Then watching the sunset with a hope for a new day, he started singing:

*Amaro porano jaha chay*

*Tumi tai, tumi tai go Toma chara ar e jogote mor keho nai kichuu nai go*

*Amaro porano.*

Everything my heart desires, you are the one, yes you are. Apart from you, in this entire world I have none, I have nothing.

Everything my heart...

At this moment, Taposee closed her eyes and sang along with a smile.

*Tumi shukho jodi nahi pao*

*Jao shukhero shondhane jao*

*Ami tomare peyechhi hridoyo majhe Aro kichu nahi chai go Amaro porano.*

*Ami tomaro birohe rohibo bilino Tomate koribo bash. Dirgho dibosho dirgho rojoni Dirgho borosho maash.*



If you fail to get happiness,  
Travel in search of happiness,  
As I keep you deep in my heart, Nothing  
else do I desire more.  
Pining for you, in your absence  
I will fade myself to live in you.  
Long be the day, Long every night  
Long be months and years that go by.  
Having a rainbow of a smile in his face  
and a river of tears welling up inside her,  
they continued:

*Jodi aaro kare bhalo basho Jodi aaro fire  
nahi aasho*

*Jodi aaro kare bhalo basho Jodi aaro fire  
nahi ash*

*Tobe tumi jaha chao tai jano pao Aami  
joto dukho pai go Amaro porano..*

If you love someone else, And you never  
do return

Then whatever you covet

That you get,

And may all your sufferings be mine.

Taposee straightened her back as Biplob  
came near the sofa, waiting for Taposee to  
slide so that he can sit. All the while  
Taposee was acting a little naughty, she  
knew what his body language meant, but  
she wanted him to speak.



"Do you mind if I sit here?"

As she slid her hips to make space for him, she laughed and said, "you'll never change".

A reporter had just started reading the hours' bulletin when Biplob switch the TV on, "The government has extended the lockdown, offering a number of relaxations to people".

Biplob pressed the mute button of the remote and said facing Taposee, "Can I use your laptop?"

Mine is not charged. I need to check some assignments submitted by the students." She closed the YouTube window and opened the Google Classroom, "this one, right?" He nodded.

While he got busy on the laptop, she fidgeted with her mobile, checking her social media. As Taposee was scrolling through her feed, she saw a news article: Domestic violence cases up twenty-one percentages since lockdown. When reading the news piece got boring, she shifted to another app. "What are you laughing at? Some meme?" He said, catching her giggling at the mobile screen.

"No, a news article."



"Yes, the news is funny nowadays."

"A gram panchayat in Odisha hired a sari-clad woman with chalk-white on her face and payel on her feet to roam around the village at night. This was done to ensure people don't roam on the street and follow the lockdown."

"There's still some chicken left. I was thinking of making Biryani today. Do you mind?" Biplob said, having checked all the assignments an hour later.

She shook her head and curved her lips to give a slight smile.

He smiled back, "Okay."

After their evening tea as Biplob did the dishes, Taposee got busy ironing the clothes that were washed and dried this morning.

. . .

On the sixty-fourth day of the lockdown, Biplob was washing the vegetables for lunch when

Taposee came inside the kitchen and said, "Indrani is released from the hospital."

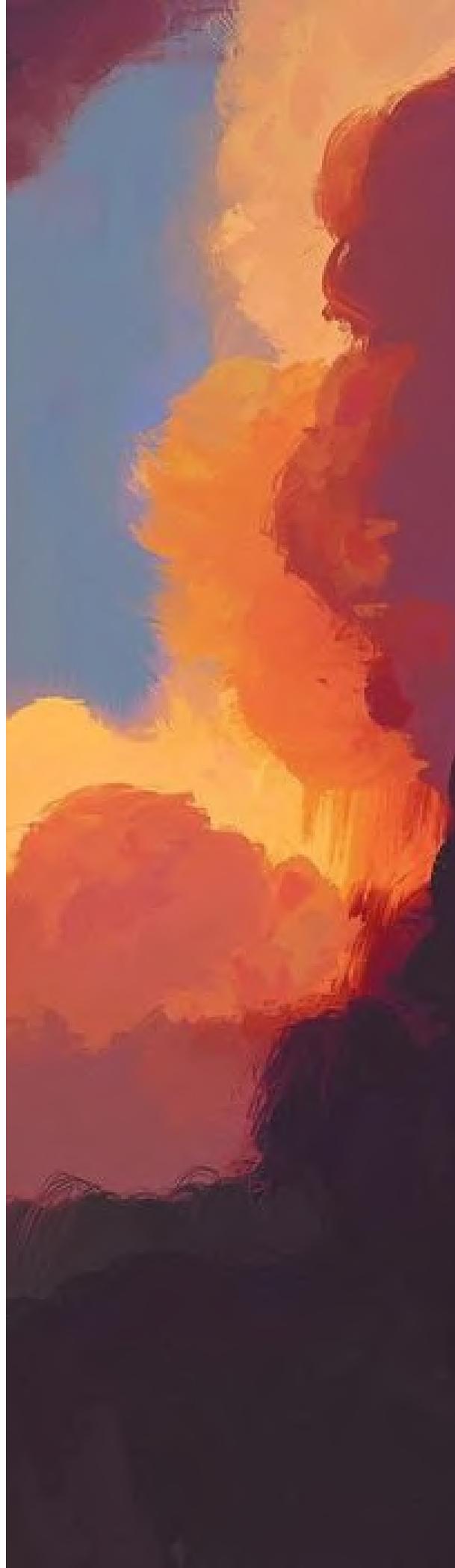
"Ohh"

"She is weak but good."

"That's nice to hear."

Biplob nudged her with his elbow and signalled to pass the wiping cloth.

She looked around the kitchen, passed the piece of cloth, and then asked, "May I?"





He passed the potato to her and asked, "Did you hear the news?" They had never prepared food together before.

"The airport is up and running."

"Hmm."

"The first flight to Bangalore is on the Eighth of June."

"We have to continue working from home for some time now." She looked at him, waiting for him to meet her eyes.

"I was thinking of getting the home painted., Topo."

With excitement in her voice, she said, "A certain combination of Orange and Citrus for the Drawing Room and light shades for the bedroom and guestroom would look perfect. I will look up the specific colours."

They made prolonged eye contact, and this bought an inviting smile to his face, a smile he had forgotten that he ever had.



# A Solemn Hymn

Anuraag Das Sarma

Of free will and those who detest it,  
For men must be kept afar'd, lest they know,  
Of fellow man's glory for which the pious-  
Credit God so masterfully.

Let the hate flow into the glasses,  
Of the hedonistic ruling counsel.  
Let the man of their choosing be proclaimed  
Son of God, then quickly taken care of.

Place the crown of thorns on the poor pagan,  
Let him turn to the old bald Nazarite-  
Who lies crushed under Dagon's columns,  
Dreaming of a harlot.

Of the first congregation, of Adam-  
And God, The hill forsaken, hath begot,  
Man unholy, and his son the One,  
Who wields omnipotence, is crowned king.

Sing of Man's collective wrath, that your lord  
Cannot sing,  
Sing of Man's collective wrath, and pledge a-  
Solemn hymn.  
So, Arrest them both, the Jew and his harp,  
Arrest the Christian and his sinful heart.





Mother

Olipriya Roy

Love is found in teacups.

Love is found in sarees and mothers.

Every time I see my mother draped in twelve inches of motherhood,  
love blooms in me and

Affection flows through me like an addict with a newfound love for his  
drugs.

My mother puts her love for me in little teacups, she puts it in her green  
tea with honey and then, in the black tea with a pinch of cinnamon. She  
puts it in her Chamomile tea and asks me to sip slowly. She puts love in  
her Tupperware and stores it in the fridge to use for later.

Love feels like my favourite comforter in winter. It seems to be there  
forever.



Love feels like the chilled blueberry cheesecake slice from my favourite childhood confectionery. It feels like the tall glass of orange Raasna after a hot summer day or like the cheap Shikanji found in my school feast. It feels too calming at times, like a synthetic drug that makes the world a better place.

Mother says love is found in a mother's heart, it is found in pregnant wombs, in teacups in home-cooked burnt food and goodnight kisses. Mother says love is found in everything reminding you of home. I find love in nothing but mother.

Love is found in my mother's laughter and her slim glass bangles. It is found in her sweet afternoon slumber and in the bottles of baby lotions she buys for me. I find my mother's love in her winter chicken stew and her never-ending arms. I find her love everywhere in me and in her delicate teacups.

# On The Other Side

Nimrat Kaur

It flowers in the distance  
The first hue i perceive  
I see you here  
The red of you,  
flowing away  
The grey seeping in  
And yet  
I am the one on the other side

I see you there too  
A full smile, a waning moon  
And a fading bloodstream  
The spaces between the stars  
Gather you up  
Bundle and adorn you  
With the sequins of stars  
The blossoms fall on my face  
You take each one  
And leave it where the red  
Ceased to follow you  
And the hue  
Melts away



# Separation

Anuraag Das Sarma

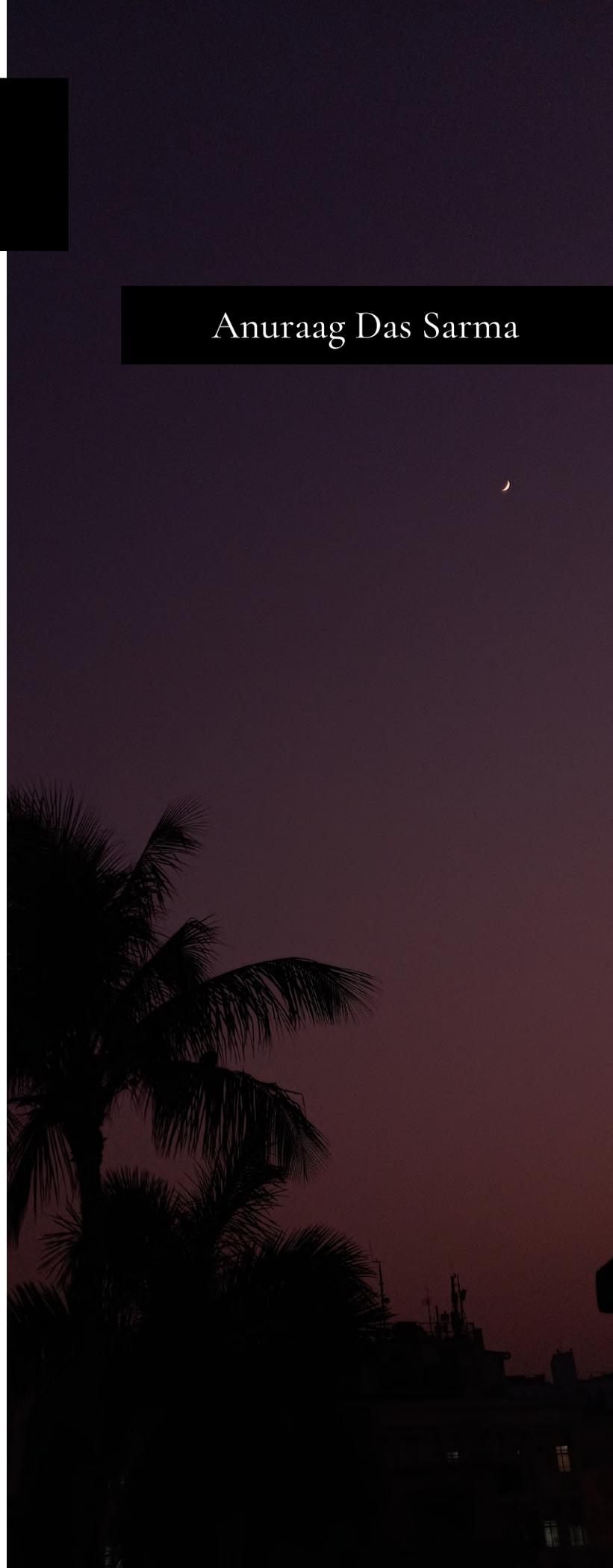
Crescent moon on a windy night,  
Neither full-bellied, nor pregnant;  
Claims that my love for her,  
My love has grown distant.

I slip away, a youth in love;  
The rooftop, the lit cigarette,  
Our sordid little love affair-  
Under very careful neglect.

You touch my fingers, run it through-  
Your own hands with its many lines.  
It speaks of separation,  
And it speaks not in kind.

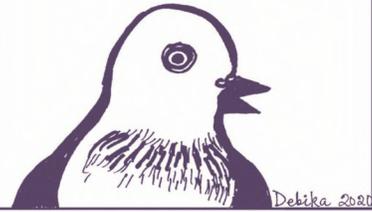
Rest your head on the boundary wall,  
The stars will set you ablaze.  
You are cold to the touch,  
But the night, it seems to age.

Sleep my lovely and dream of home,  
With all your troubles forgotten.  
The cycle, it will continue-  
Daylight has broken.



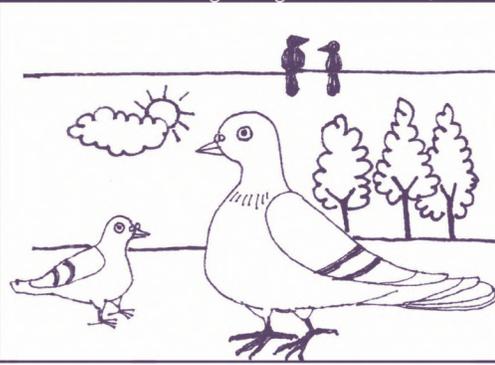
# THE BIRD'S EYE VIEW

- By Debika Banerji



Debika 2020

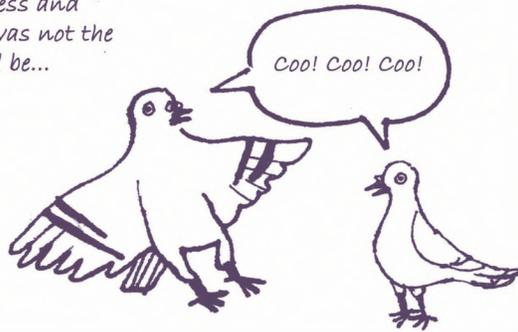
And then suddenly everything went quiet...



Where are the humans?



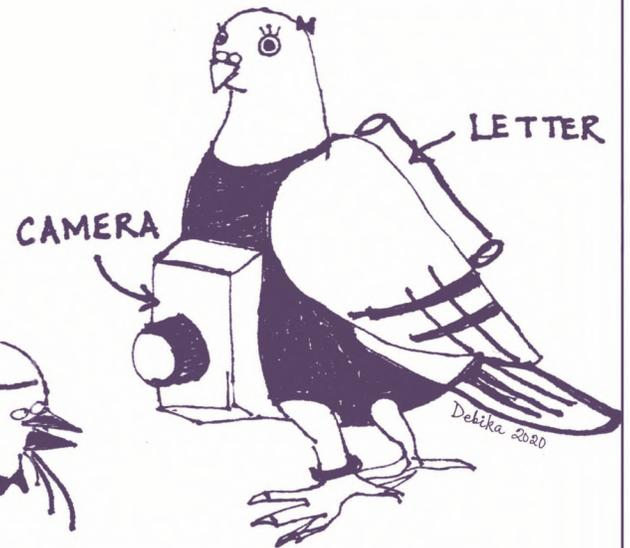
Asked my neighbours. We were clueless and scared. This was not the way it should be...



She was a World War 1 'Battlefield War Pigeon'

WORLD WAR 1

During the war everybody would hide inside their houses



Debika 2020

Are they doing so now because of a war?

The oldest grandfather told us stories of his great-great-grandmother



We flew to the marketplace, the plazas and the town square....



...they were empty. Only a few aliens roamed.

I argued with my neighbour



Debika 2020

There was a food crunch because we scavenged the cities for food.



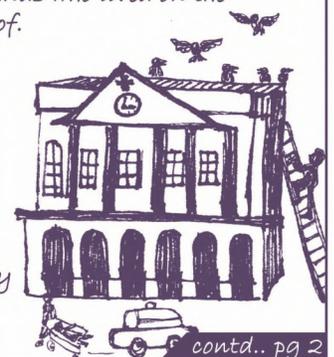
It was the first crisis.

A kind lady threw out some bread from a café.



We swooped down as we were hungry!

We met friends who lived on the Hospital roof.



They were shooed away and were homeless.

contd.. pg 2

.. from pg 1 After a few days...

No air and noise pollution!

We fly away to faraway places in search of food.

But all was not happy...

I saw her in the Hospital!

Debika 2020

A week later we stopped seeing the kind old lady in the Park.

A young girl replaced her... with But now we had food...

... we were safe!

Debika 2020

She was carried to a distant place and lowered into the earth. Her daughter was crying as she stood at a distance. She was DEAD!

The next week...

BROWN BOX

AMBULANCE

WHITE CARS

There were white cars all over the city.

A neighbour told me that...

..the old lady had slipped into a brown box.

We had become bolder!

Debika 2020

We now would fly to our favourite balcony.

They gave us food and water.

#pandemicpigeons #natgeo #OllieandDollie

Wifey claims that 'her' side of the family was photographed by a very famous photographer. They were all over those glossy books.

COOOO... ..COOOO

She tells all these stories to our twins. I half believe them anyways...

1 month Later...

Debika 2020

Our twins have learnt to fly!

The city has transfigured. We are waiting for the humans to come out of their nests.

This work is inspired from true events. A lot of volunteer groups have been working round the clock to help animals and birds in distress (especially in urban areas) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A special mention must be made of Jasper Doest, a Dutch photographer who befriended a pair of pigeons Ollie and Dollie during the lockdown in March. The photo story was published in The National Geographic in May 22, 2020. The love, care and compassion shown is truly very motivating.

The end.



# *Monograph Interviews: Vaibhav Sethia*

With the second wave of COVID-19 consuming the country we decided against an in-person interview this month. However, we were able to get the incredibly funny comedian Vaibhav Sethia for an insightful and exclusive interview.

The following transcript is an excerpt from the aforementioned interview.

# Vaibhav Sethia



Vaibhav Sethia is a stand-up comedian, writer and story-teller. He has done more than 500 shows around India and has done shows with popular comedians and groups like Vir Das, Kanan Gill, AIB, etc. With a special out on Amazon Prime, and sold out shows across the country, this Calcutta boy has made it big in the comedy circuit.

***1) So, first of all Mr. Sethia, how was your recent show, “Apple is Red” at Topcat CCU and what do you think of Calcutta’s first stand up venue?***

I don’t think this is Calcutta’s first stand up venue as such but yes it definitely is Calcutta’s first dedicated stand up club and I really hope it stands the test of time. Calcutta has been a bit harsh in these terms but I definitely hope it works out.

As for my experience performing there, it’s a great venue and I was glad that even with the pandemic scare a lot of people came to watch the show. It was a really fun experience overall.



***2) I think on the same day Sumit Anand had his parking lot show and people who came for your show had no idea where to park their cars?***

Haha oh yes Sumit was doing his club tour that week performing 7 shows at 7 different places all over Topcat. I got to see a glimpse of his show that day and it looked like a lot of fun.

***3) So, Calcutta, as a city, is known for its heritage, art and culture. But, being an artist yourself, do you think it lacks opportunities, especially in fields such as stand up?***

Well, not just in my field but I think Calcutta hasn't grown as fast as the other metro cities such as Mumbai or Delhi. Even in terms of job opportunities, I don't see too many people actively going to Calcutta. It's sad to say but I don't know a single person from my batch at IIT Roorkee who got placed in Calcutta.

I saw my batchmates go to even the so-called relatively unpopular cities such as Lucknow or Jaipur but not Calcutta. Nobody's coming to Calcutta for education also as such I mean there are some good courses at say Jadavpur University for example, but not many when we compare it to the local colleges at other metro cities such as Mumbai and Delhi.

It might be my narrow perspective but commercially, Calcutta hasn't really been a hot favourite for many fields, right?



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*4) Moving on to the next question, if we look at comedians Munawar Faruqui, or even Sourav Ghosh with his stand-up on Mumbai Airports, we find something disturbing. Recently, for example, even Rahul Dua had to take down his crowd interaction video on youtube. Comedians, it seems, aren't allowed to talk and joke about certain topics. Do you think this mob mentality of the people is justifiable?*

I mean, no, not at all is it justifiable. Even the ones who are doing it will probably never accept it on video. Or maybe they will, you never know, haha. People's actions and words can be different, that's alright. I've seen all the artist's videos that you talked about and honestly, I didn't find anything offensive in them. See, anyone can get offended by any joke, it's very much possible. I can't ask you to not get offended by something. That's not humanly possible. Even I've made jokes on pilots in my special, 'Don't', and I did get some hate from pilots for that.





*5) That was a great answer Mr.Sethia. Very well, said. Moving along, we've all seen your special "DONT" on Amazon Prime and you've had one before that as well called "This One Time" When do we get to see you on an OTT platform again with "Apple Is Red" or maybe something else?*

Oh man, that's something only Amazon can answer! But yes, if any OTT platform does approach me, be it Amazon or Netflix, I might think of putting 'Apple is Red' out there. As for the other show, 'This One Time', I've decided to put up snippets of it on YouTube in the coming days.

*6) How different is performing a special in comparison to small bits at open mics?*

When we perform new bits at open mics, the initial nervousness is there since it's new and you don't know how the audience will take it. As for specials, it's just something you've worked on a really long time and polished it along the way.

*7) And what's your take on Zoom shows owing to the pandemic?*

Initially, I was a bit skeptical, but then I came around to it and did a few shows because of brand work such as the bit on the environment that's out on YouTube. The company had approached me and I liked their initiative so I scheduled a few zoom shows of 'Apple is Red' and what you'll see on YouTube is an excerpt of the same.



---

*8) Coming to your college days, when you were in IIT Roorkee, pursuing architecture, what were your career goals back then? Because you were a really good student and stand up comedy was unheard of in India at that time.*

Yes, back in the day I had no idea that stand up comedy as a profession even existed. I just knew I liked getting on stage and wanted to become something like a performance artist. I was really drawn to it and wanted to give it a shot. During the college days it was more of a fascination but later on definitely it got more serious. But even then I didn't know what to do and theatre and acting were the only things I could understand.

*9) But you also worked as an Assistant Director at one point right?*

True, I was an AD and it was my first time on a movie set but I don't know if I did justice to the title given to me



There was only assistance and no direction in what I was doing, haha. There were three ADs on the set and we all were doing the same thing so I just kept on doing what the other guys used to do. Basically, whatever was the need of the hour, you had to do anything and everything accordingly.

***9) During this lockdown, you played a lot of chess and got to stream with legends on Samay's channel. It is evident from the fact that you have played more than 10,000 games on chess.com, that you're a big fan of the game. Then Cob happened with All Stars ending just a few days back. So, if you could tell us a bit about your relationship with chess.***

So, first of all, these 10,000 games that I've played on chess.com haven't been played only in these last 9 months of the pandemic. I started playing online chess back in 2016, when I was suffering from dengue. There was absolutely nothing to do in the hospital and I spent all my days playing chess non-stop for almost two weeks. I have easily played anywhere between three to five thousand games back then since I was so bored in the hospital. I only started playing and thinking about chess since I had to write something on it but immediately after I suffered from dengue.

***10) Besides chess, you have also done Kvizzing With The Comedians hosted by Kumar Varun and How Weird Is This Guy with Anirban Dasgupta and Sourav Ghosh. How were these new online experiences owing to Covid?***

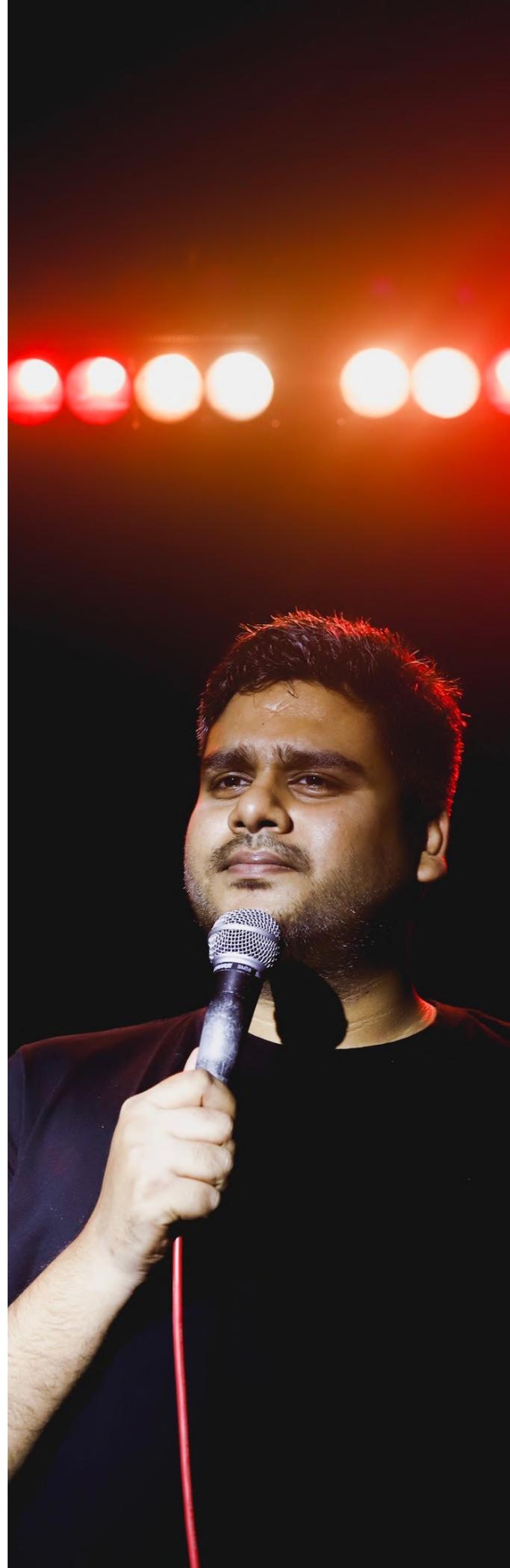
Oh, Kvizzing With The Comedians was awesome. Kumar Varun is the loveliest quiz master and he never fails to amaze us with his beautiful questions. His enthusiasm and dedication towards quizzing is just so good. He's just perfect for that role.



Coming to How Weird Is This Guy, me, Anirban and Ghosh were just sitting together one day, chatting, sharing weird stories, incidents and we thought to ourselves maybe this could be a game show where we let people decide if the stories are actually weird or not. After discovering the poll format, we tried out a few shows and it turned out to be super fun for both, us and the audience.

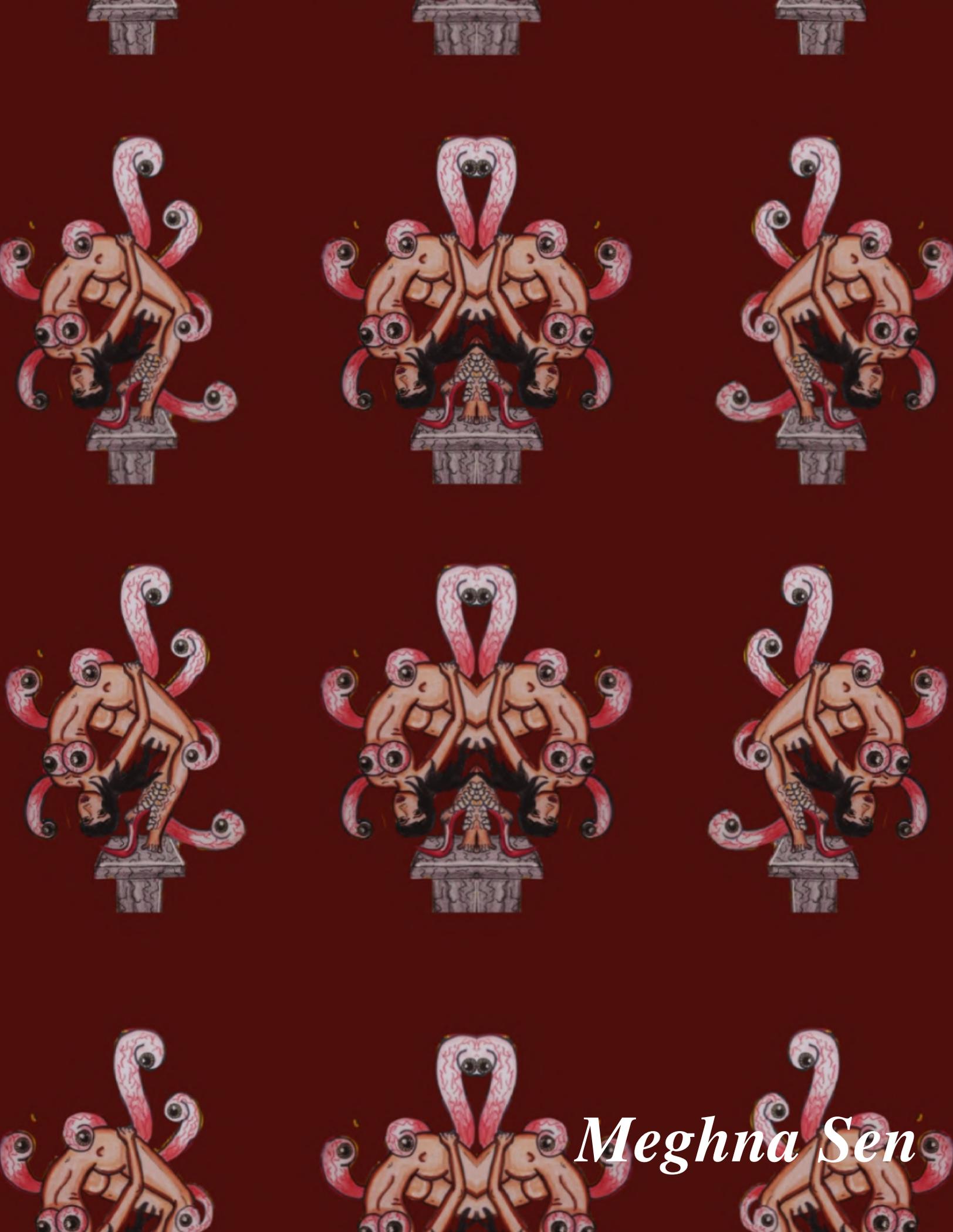
*11) Now, we know for a fact that you're a big foodie but not so good with cooking. Did you give that a try with Neha ma'am during quarantine?*

I did try a few things but I've come to the conclusion that cooking isn't really my thing. I would have loved to cook for myself but just the whole feel goes away somehow. If I cook, then it's like I'm happy feeding other people and them liking my food. It's a very selfless feeling after you cook..which I don't care for! I want to feel the fun in eating it since I really enjoy my food. Cooking also really drains all my energy since I have an issue with heat and can't be around such high temperatures for long.



A painting of a tropical landscape. In the foreground, there are several thatched-roof huts on a sandy or dirt ground. The middle ground shows a body of water, possibly a bay or a river, with a few small boats. In the background, there are palm trees and other tropical vegetation under a warm, golden sky. A large, semi-transparent circle is overlaid on the center of the painting, containing the text.

*Artists  
In  
Focus:*

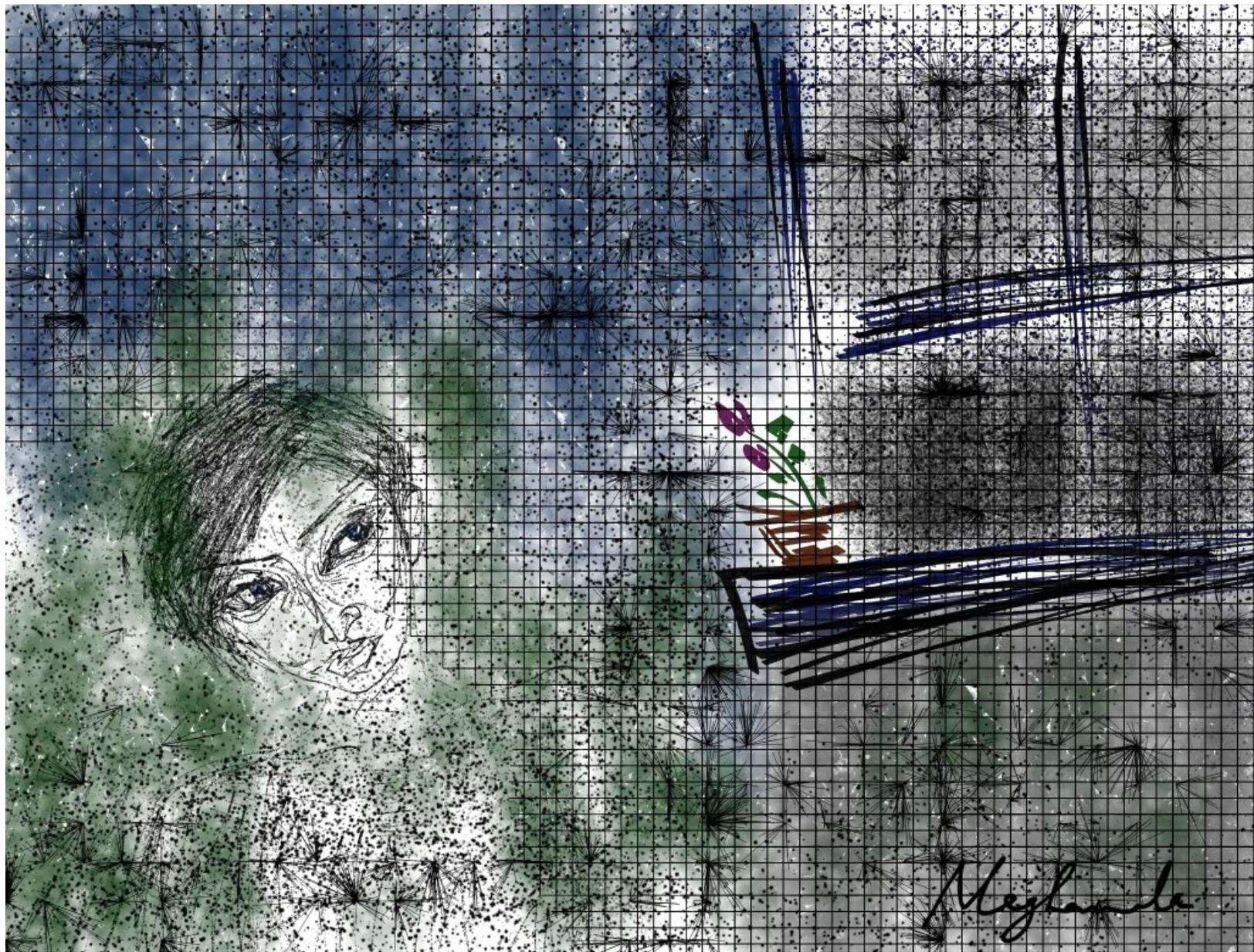


*Meghna Sen*



*Kushal Garg*





*Meghamala Chakraborty*



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*Vaibhav Sethia*

*Calcutta Anti-Covid Belt*

*&*

*Bleed Eco*

MONOGRAPH