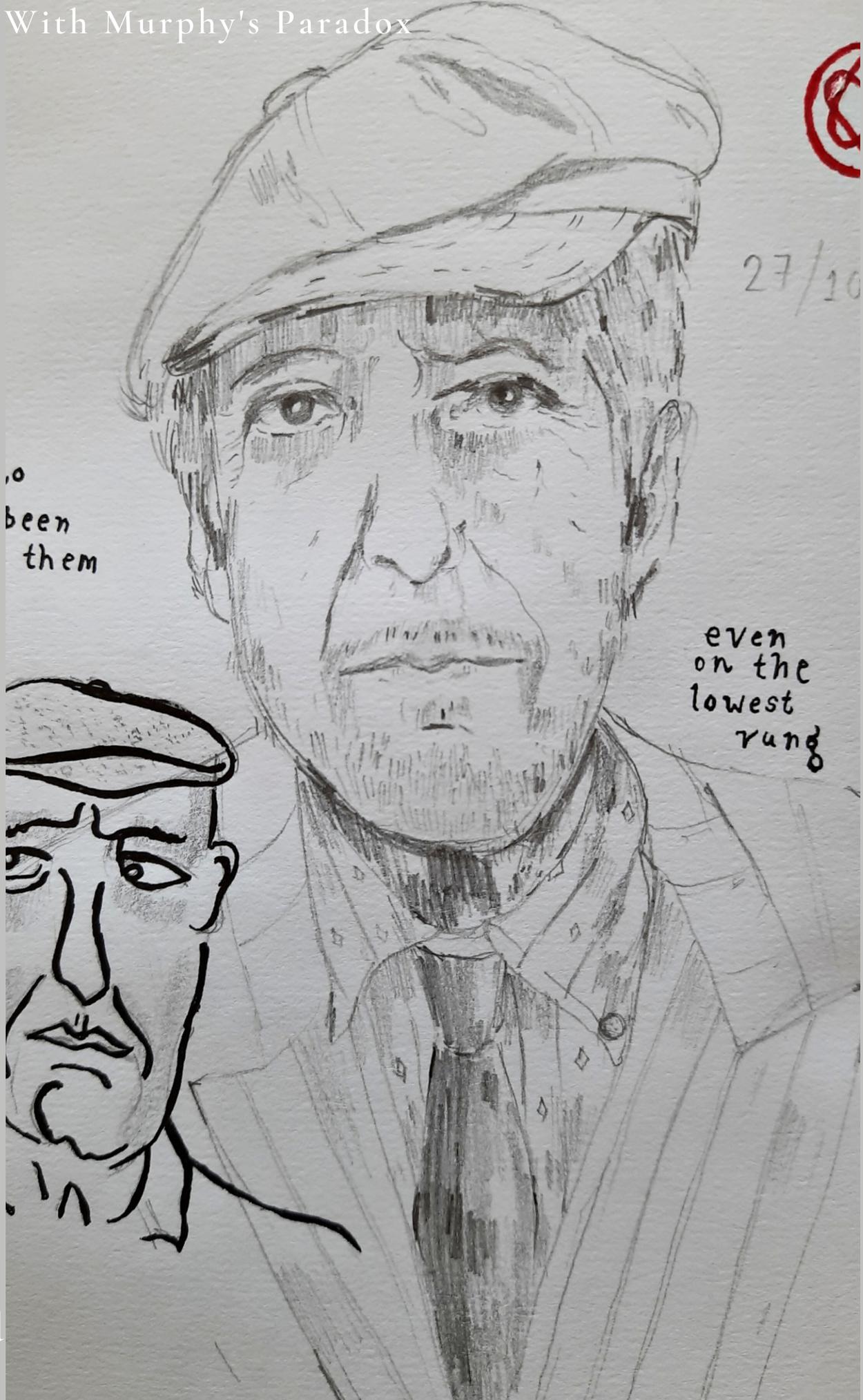


An Exclusive Interview
With Murphy's Paradox

Vol. 10 | July 2021

MONOGRAPH



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Cohen's
Thanks For
The Dance:
Deconstructed

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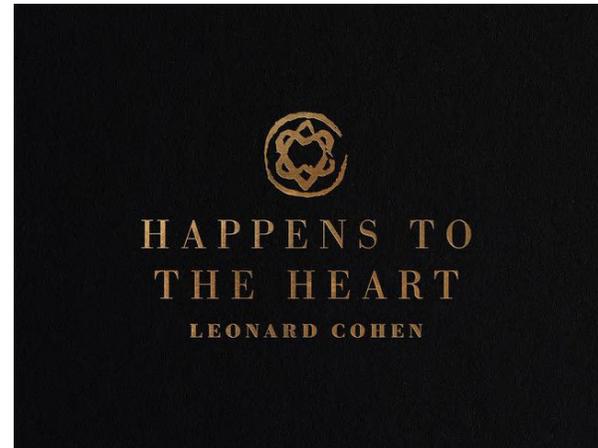
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Editor's Note

Anuraag Das Sarma

With the 10th issue of Monograph behind us now, I'd just like to take a minute to thank each and every one of you, who've allowed us to become a part of this loving community of artists. With the second wave and talks of a rapidly approaching third wave, things look grim. We interviewed Murphy's Paradox this month, a band very close to my heart, and a band I really wanted to meet and talk to face-to-face. But, due to the rising number of COVID-19 patients, we had to decide against it and settle for a mail-in interview.

This got me thinking - of how this current pandemic has defined Monograph for a while now. We started out in mid-2020 with mail-in interviews, happily shifted to sit-down interviews, and now we've come full circle. Most of our contributors are either working or studying from home, and that has shaped the magazine in a lot of ways - with poetry and short stories on the Pandemic Blues(like Love, Lockdown and Longing, a wonderful short story we published in 4 parts).

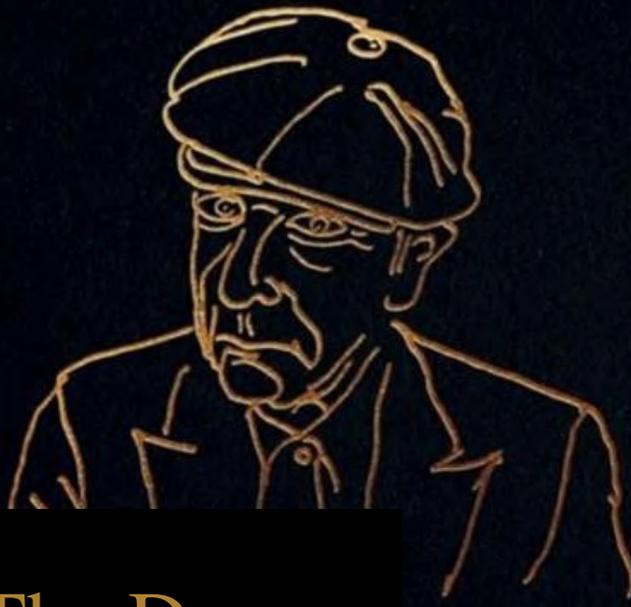


MONOGRAPH



We hosted digital concerts, interviews and poetry nights - all things I wanted Monograph to host offline when I first thought of the magazine and we even considered (and still are) the pros and cons of a Podcast. But, inspite of the pandemic, we grew - our team has grown to 14 hard-working members, we receive a lot more submissions on average and our website, as you can see, has been revamped. All this wouldn't have possible without your support. Thank you for helping us build this loving community of artists, poets, writers and musicians. Thank you. But, we do need your help to cultivate this community, to grow it further. So, I urge you to share this with your friends and family, and help us realise our dream of being a magazine that can help this current milieu of artists.





Thanks For The Dance

Anuraag Das Sarma

*“Listen To The Mind of God
That Doesn’t Need To Be
Listen To The Mind of God
Don’t Listen To Me”
-Listen To The Hummingbird*

Leonard Cohen, in my eyes, has always been, first and foremost, a poet. Influenced heavily by contemporary poets, especially Federico Garcia Lorca, he brought about a style of poetry in English Literature that bridged the gap between traditional and modern verse. However, by and large, his poems weren’t exactly lyrical. Sure, Suzanne was initially written as a poem, but most of his songs were written as songs. They were meant to be put to music and they were meant to be sung in front of an audience. When Cohen started out as a singer, in 1967 (Songs of Leonard Cohen) one could clearly see a split between Cohen the poet/novelist and Cohen the singer-songwriter.

He turned to music at the ripe old age of 33 as a means of promoting his poetry. Leonard Cohen, the musician, was a stage persona. He never thought of himself as a true singer. That was just a role he had to play - one that'd not only pay the bills but also hopefully help him sell a couple of his books. And for a few studio albums (up until *Various Positions*) Cohen kept up this belief. He had, by this point, enjoyed tremendous success, but the split still seemed to be there. There was Cohen the poet and Cohen the singer. But, 1984's *Various Positions*, seemed to change him. He appeared to have tapped into a secret part of himself, something that seemed to connect his two split personalities into a single manifestation of literary songwriting. And here, Cohen, the artist, was born. "I'm Your Man", "The Future", "Ten New Songs"- these were vastly different albums that captured the poet Cohen in song.





Then came, what I personally refer to as Cohen's "Songs of Experience". The three albums- Old Ideas(2012), Popular Problems(2014) and You Want It Darker(2016) contain grim, yet honest material. What is mortality to an artist who lives on through his music? It is but an intensely personal ritual of introspection and these albums are highly personal affairs. "Darkness" from Old Ideas or "A Street" from Popular Problems could easily pass for poems, and in fact they often do. Also, by this point in his career, Cohen had undergone a change in his style of singing, and his almost spoken-word-like delivery of the songs (a-la-show me the place) accentuated the poetic nature of the lyrics. You Want It Darker, an album that released only three months before his death, was similarly poetic ("The Treaty" or "Leaving The Table" being prime examples).

Thanks For the Dance is a difficult album for me. Posthumous albums are often tough to get through, but Thanks For The Dance, it honestly hit me in a different, yet better way. Death had been unable to kill the singer. Even in death, he'd grown as an artist.



*The flowers that I left in the ground,
that I did not gather for you,
today I bring them all back,
to let them grow forever,
not in poems or marble,
but where they fell and rotted.*



HAPPENS TO THE HEART LEONARD COHEN

Happens To The Heart

Happens To The Heart, the opening song to this half-hour long album, sets the tone well. In many ways, this album is sort of Cohen's letter from the Great Beyond and the first thing he (or more honestly his son Adam) does is re-establish his humanity. Humanity had always been what separated Cohen from the other folk musicians of his era, and Happens To The Heart reeks of humanity and all that goes with it - love, hate, anger, reasoning and, ironically, death. The song is brilliantly written and an octogenarian Cohen questioning not only his mortality but what appears to be his entire life, is an apt introduction to this album from beyond the grave. By and large, Happens To The Heart is about a man, a man desperately in search of a purpose. But neither the Bible, nor Marx's manifesto do him any favors. All he can do, and all he does, is slowly watch his spark of life diminish over time. And what does that do to a person's heart?

Cohen's gravelly voice, recorded shortly before his passing, is beautifully complemented by the Spanish Bandurria of Javier Mas. Originally written as a poem, it lends itself well to song and a beautiful one at that. It is beautifully mixed and composed, thanks largely to Adam Cohen, who set out on this journey of finishing his father's last few songs.





MOVING ON

LEONARD COHEN

Moving On

Moving On, the next track on the album, is another masterpiece, especially lyrically. Cohen, the forever ladies man, at the grand old age of 82, reflects on his love life in Moving On- a bitter love life, but a beautiful one.

*And now you're gone, now you're gone
As if there ever was a you
Who broke the heart and made it new
Who's moving on? Who's kidding who?*

Cohen has often been touted as the most romantic folk singer to ever exist and his entire discography can be seen as his attempts at capturing love in song. So, Moving on in many ways, is a fitting end to his journey. Perhaps, we'll never truly capture love in song but we can capture the memories - both the good, the bad, and the beautiful. Cohen accepts this in Moving On, thus delivering another beautiful song.

The vocals here are more spoken-wordish, again complemented well by a beautiful arrangement on the 12 string guitar. The song here is more lyrical than poetic, with the first stanza being repeated as the last- thus coming full circle.



THE NIGHT
OF SANTIAGO
LEONARD COHEN

The Night Of Santiago

The Night Of Santiago is a homage to Cohen's favorite poet, Lorca.

*I took off my neckerchief.
She unstrapped her dress.
Me my gun and holster,
she her layers of slips...
Not tuberose, not shell,
has skin as half as smooth
nor does mirror glass
have half the shimmer.
-The Unfaithful Housewife (Lorca)*

Lorca's influence on Cohen cannot be understated. The singer himself credits Lorca with helping Cohen find his voice. The Night of Santiago is a brilliant adaptation, keeping Lorca's imagery but giving it the Cohen twist. It tells the story of a sordid love affair between a gypsy and an unfaithful wife- a secret encounter no one is privy to and yet holds in it nothing but animalistic love and beauty. The song never justifies the love affair but simply holds it up as a thing of sinful beauty.

Cohen's vocals here are similarly beautiful. A gentle mix between recitation and singing, it lends itself well to the song. The guitar can be heard gently in the background and accentuates the feel of the song - carefully crafting the atmosphere and blending it well with the rest of the song.





THANKS FOR
THE DANCE
LEONARD COHEN

Thanks For The Dance

Thanks For The Dance is yet another gem present in this album. A conversation between two lovers in the twilight of their lives, the song holds a lot of weight. It might not be the most poetic song in the album but it is the most earnest. It is the musical equivalent of Cohen's letter to Marianne on her deathbed:

"Well Marianne it's come to this time when we are really so old and our bodies are falling apart and I think I will follow you very soon. Know that I am so close behind you that if you stretch out your hand, I think you can reach mine,"

The instrumentation on the track is absolutely wonderful, playing second fiddle to Cohen's raspy vocals. But the heart of the song, like all good songs, lies in the lyrics and Cohen's portrayal of a long-time couple about to be separated by death is not only beautiful but almost prophetic, him having passed mere months after Marianne.

In many ways, Thanks For The Dance is also the perfect goodbye-song. A final thank you before the show ends.



IT'S TORN

LEONARD COHEN

It's Torn

It's torn is one of my favorites off of the album - rife with everything that makes Cohen special. It is filled with Biblical allusions, honest critique of a world that is more gray than black and white, descriptive imagery and of course, selfless (and at times selfish) love.

The song begins with a very poetic description of Cohen's muse and slowly progresses towards a more intimate, metaphorical definition of love as Cohen comes to accept his flaws before asking his muse why she left him. Sure, he's a flawed human being, but aren't we all?

It's torn where there's beauty, it's torn where there's death

It's torn where there's mercy but torn somewhat less

It's torn in the highest from kingdom to crown

The messages fly but the network is down

Bruised at the shoulder and cut at the wrist

The sea rushes home to its thimble of mist

The opposites falter, the spirals reverse

And Eve must re-enter the sleep of her birth

The instrumentation is still sparse like all the other songs on the album but it is a bit on the heavier, bass-ier side. The background vocalists are used sparingly but do a wonderful job and not only accentuate but also accompany Cohen's vocals. It's Torn is a beautiful song and ends on a sad-yet-beautiful note (You gave me a lily but now it's a field).





THE GOAL

LEONARD COHEN

The Goal

The Goal isn't a song, it's a spoken-word poem- a simple recitation set to music, and in many ways, this song was my introduction to the album. I regularly find myself coming back to this song, mouthing the words to this short one-minute long poem and I still don't know why. It's a beautiful poem but there are a thousand beautiful poems. But something about Cohen's voice mixed with this poem that exudes a beautiful form of melancholia keeps bringing me back.

The Goal is an acceptance of death, of making peace with the futility of life and the irony of it all (how it is right before death that a person feels most alive, something that had even been written about by Manik Bandopadhyay in his novella "A Puppet's Tale").

I sit in my chair

I look at the street

The neighbor returns

My smile of defeat

I move with the leaves

I shine with the chrome

I'm almost alive

I'm almost at home



PUPPETS

LEONARD COHEN

Puppets

Thanks For The Dance was initially supposed to be the B-side to You Want It Darker, and no song evokes this feeling of interconnectedness with his penultimate album more than Puppets. Puppets is a political song but in many ways it is also an acceptance of death, of Cohen giving into a higher power that has controlled everything since the dawn of time. We are all but puppets. But does that absolve us of our flaws?

Puppets is Cohen philosophizing on evil and power, on control and those who suffer because of it. Thanks For The Dance for the most part is a simple album of love and longing. The inclusion of Puppets in this seemingly lovelorn album however takes it to the next level - making it an album about so much more, especially because of Cohen's Jewish roots.

Puppet Presidents command

Puppet troops to burn the land

Puppet fire, puppet flames

Feed on all the puppet names

Puppet night comes down to play

The after act to puppet day



THE HILLS

LEONARD COHEN

The Hills

One of the only songs on the album that implements background vocals throughout the track- this song brings out Cohen's boyish charm perfectly. Even though the song is about Cohen slowly dying, at parts his vocals remind us of his humble beginnings as a folk artist in the late 60s. The song is about a man on the verge of dying, who talks of his loved one moving on after his death. It is a beautiful song, hauntingly romantic yet lovelorn and the lyrics lend themselves well to Cohen's vocals.

The instrumentation, along with the background vocals, turns this song into a beautiful mix of musical and poetic genius. The poem first surfaced in Cohen's *Book of Longing* (2006) and I am glad he chose to record this before his passing.

*And she will be born
To someone like you
What I left undone
She will certainly do
I know she is coming
And I know she will look
And that is the longing
And this is the hook*



LISTEN TO THE HUMMINGBIRD

LEONARD COHEN

Listen To The Hummingbird

The first time I heard Listen To The Hummingbird was when Cohen read out the poem in an interview to the New Yorker. The song begins with a simple but beautiful piano introduction, consisting of an Fmaj7 transitioning to what I believe is an F6. The chords change for the next few lines (Gaug to G before finally resolving on C) but Cohen's voice remains as honest and gravelly as ever. The song is a beautiful note to end the album on, as Cohen accepts his mortality and his own significance in the universe. He is an artist, nothing more. He is flawed, he has made mistakes. He is not an authority on anything. But he is, nevertheless, one of the most poetic singer-songwriters this world will ever see.

*Listen to the butterfly
Whose days but number three
Listen to the butterfly
Don't listen to me
Listen to the mind of God
Which doesn't need to be
Listen to the mind of God
Don't listen to me*

Abstracts Art's Absurd Fascination

Soumini Banerjee

“Art is subjective. Art is a self-made creative splurge...” These sentences dawn upon you from an outside voice, all the while you stare at a canvas, with nothing but a line on it, and attached to it a price tag of an amount with too many zeroes to even account for. You have a wonder circling around your very confused mind, the reason for that amount to define that “Painting”. But you're too afraid to point it out, finding yourself surrounded by people, looking at canvases bearing almost the same kind of bizarre art around, admiring them instead. They lose themselves in fits of appraisal they term concurrently as “Abstract” Art.





Now, it's a vague collective of strokes on a blank paper, or a blank paper on an expensive wallpaper clad wall, that strikes as abstract: a word you've been hearing since the dawn of names like Picasso and Jackson Pollock fell on your ears. It's a trope taking over the "representative" form, that has been the premise for all the auctioneered art of millions that left all of us in a crux.

We beg to question "Why is it that bizarre art is revered so much, why does it sell and is sheer artistry the only reason behind it?"

I won't lie, but as an unsteady undergrad on my way to a literature major, I've been riddled with this particular query all my life and punished myself for not understanding the fuss around it as such. "You've taken up a creative subject, at least you should know!", the banging drumbeats of which I'm still trying to suppress, by answering my own question.

Scouring all the introspection of this beating answer, I finally decided looking into that deeply dug hole that marks itself as the origin of the abstract, would help in that question.

. . .

19th Century, and art gains traction from the burst of movements varying across the European empire. While Movements all around were ring led by the mammoth revolution of the Renaissance, it was the remnants of primary ideas that built Renaissance's stage for it to flourish like it did.

The classic Augustans hailed "Imitation" of real events. Their practicality of idealistic imagery was gradually countered by the Romantics of the immediate era. Emotions foregrounded in art's helm, digressing its lane to go deep, go free, and express as one wants.

This freedom of expression was a breath of a much-suppressed air when reality did not surmise as the only model for their creation.





19th Century Artist's main goal was summarised by French Symbolist Painter Maurice Denis's statement of 1890, "It should be remembered that a picture—before being a war-horse, a nude, or an anecdote of some sort—is essentially a flat surface covered with colours assembled in a certain order." Such was a sly defence against the classic critiques, who would bind their vision within the layers of the scientific universe.

Colours defining a notion have been the primary mode of symbolism. Colour was a simple entity to define, to adapt to, to express.

Anti-idealism was in the air to promote, to quilt upon art and literature, as realistic depictions scammed to mundanity. It was a different realm of the world to find artistic tinge in an unrecognisable, supposedly faceless picture, and yet ironically full of expression.

Met with a high elitist wave of criticism, to abandon reality in art was the helm of the flourishing of this movement, which rejuvenated under the perils of World War 1, as extensions like the Dada group from Zurich and De Stijl from Netherlands gained traction of unrecognizable, bizarre art.

After a hesitant pull of artists trying to perform this eccentric form of expression for the general public, the 1950's saw a big boom of flourishing this maiden term, explorations to the extraordinary started to become the ordinary practice.



This very notion, of transcending reality, the oh-so-fancy way of terming complete insensible art, sure did puzzle people like you and me, to the brinks of questioning one's own intelligence in deciphering what the painting represents. But there's the crux, there is no representation, only expression, only a flow of fluid emotions and thoughts spray painted on a canvas, of an artist. It just mystically claims how we don't have to "get " everything we see.

But then, what's the point at all if we don't beg to scrutinize a piece of art, and if not, not make any sense of it at all?

Art, over here, is not quite inspired by reality as much as it is inspired from the consequences of reality one faces in his mind. That mind was a model, that psychology deems, is the most difficult thing to interpret. Just how we never get to comprehend what others truly want. The art we find conspicuous amidst practicality, is almost like reading the mind of an individual, a chaos amidst chaos. A chaos that does not make sense. To look at a Jackson Pollock painting, we are a witness to what some may call "random shapes that a six-year-old could have drawn", and that description is flouted immediately by a more succinct "harmonisation of colours in different perceptions" by critics, and definitely not be drawn by a six-year-old, perhaps. There goes the deep, sunken permanent marker lining between a spectator's eye, and a critic's eye.

Now, it all clicks along the lines of the art world, where distorting to familiarity appeals to artists. Slowly, it got engulfed in another world, that of monetization. One we quite recognise, the commercial flashes of economy blending with art was an inevitable clash. The art, as produced by the best knowns of the industry, were sought as a token of “fine taste”, acquired materially by the worldly classes.

Artists adapted to the Oxford definition of “Abstract”, as a general idea not based on any particular real person, thing, or situation, but the quality of being.

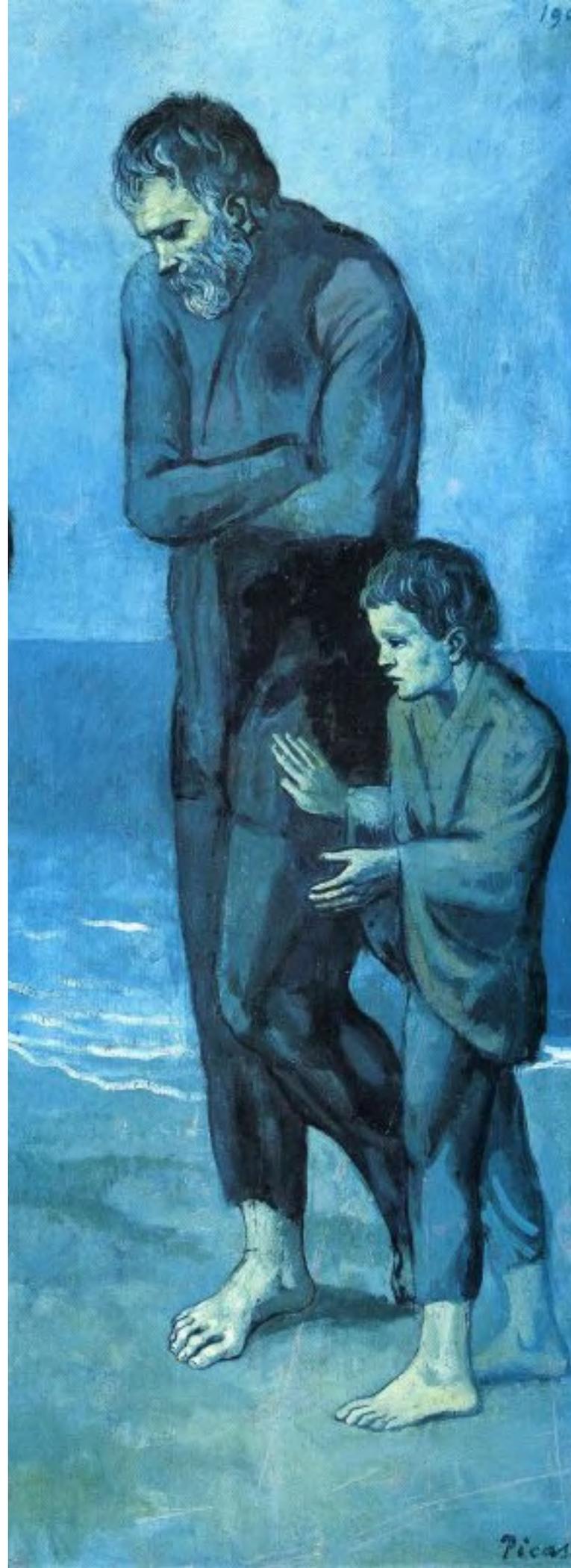
This ‘quality of being’ that fascinates spectators, operates on the outward appeal of its vagueness, letting it gain the title of the 'elitist'. Understanding art became a class act, one defined by his financial clashing with the cultural stature in a sparkling society.

Artists of the roaring 19th Century, from Picasso, Willem De Kooning, Miro, Paul Klee, Kandinsky redefined the aesthetics of art from being pleasurable to the eyes, all the way to sinking deeper levels of construction and dissection.



In an art gallery, one glance at such art does not decode to anything without the guide of the artist's own statement. His viewpoint of what surmises the universe, things, events, loved ones, hated ones, or even himself, is usually written in large pamphlets beside his piece, for us "normal" folks to get something out of it. Analysing art in its infinite layers , projecting onto interpretive statements, is a passion undertaken by many in the herd. It aligns with other forms of collectibles, like high branded but unnecessary fashion accessories, vehicles, gold studded items of the most ridiculous cause.

The more logic minded arc of the sphere does not really give in to the bizarre. This is mainly because the competitive field of economization does not have a place for the bizarre trope among one of its utilitarian assets. Sure, stock markets on company profits mirror the high yielding auctions of the Sotheby's, but it's all again a merry go round, circling on the wooden base, that is money, where appreciation of art is only but an investment.





To give an example, let's look at American artist Jeff Koons here. The eccentric sculptor was once in the working hands of Wall Street, as a commodities broker. He flourished his creativity while leaning on his financially cushioned career. Hence, to him, independent art in the market was a no brainer. His eventual bankrupt state was overturned by a quick sell out of 58 million dollars, thereby putting him back on track to produce the art he was passionate about so much.

So was his impetus to continue in this creative field, as to many others as well. The glamor of art flickers not only in its strokes of depth and perspective but has reached the level of a full-grown object of economic interest.

Such a public appeal has severed the artist's relation with their purist approach in their art. It blinded them into returning back to the literal, the exact, the realistically aesthetic, as they prioritise its entertainment factor, loyal to the wants of the public.

The general spectator can appreciate a beautifully drawn landscape, which is only a landscape, with beautifully painted trees, a solitary hut, a meadow maybe, and no deep nuances of meaning behind it. Hence was the giving in to commercialisation for the smaller artists, as they lived on the approval of the people around them, rather than waiting to have their abstractness decoded by the deep thinker someday on the streets, or a small-town gallery.

Why then, is abstract still turning heads enough, raising eyebrows till now, to be valued so high among the classists of generations back and forth?

This impression of a brush along psychological reactions to the use of colour, shows how an imaginative painter introduces his force, his expressiveness intensely, going all out even in a time bound, space bound environment. Their "eccentric" art finds a way of embodying themselves as a real world inspired entity, is where their true rationale lies.





To be derided as confusing and something that” doesn't make sense at all”, and still finding justification in the present world environment, is where their value goes up. Its creator is deemed a social being, fitting in with the social world, through a persona of his own, very absurd, confounding, “weird” art, notching it up to a pedestal as high as being settled for millions on the market.

Frankly, their shine is as bright as their name value because they are no less in their seated chairs on a bench of innovators, sharing the table with their contemporary scientists, academicians, artists across and within ages. Yes, the forward thinkers are splurged in thoughts of scientific rationality and the next big technological boom.

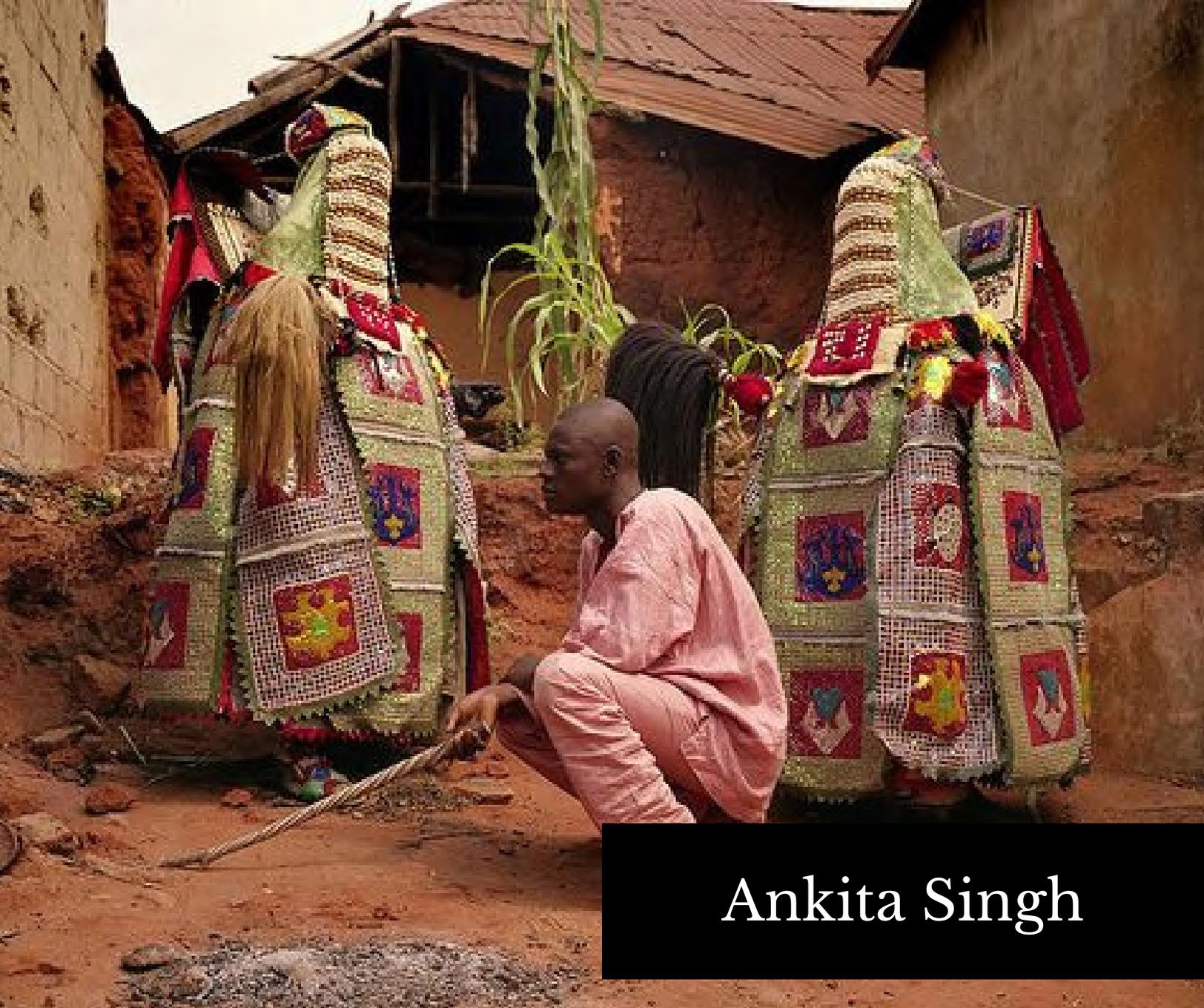
However, it doesn't stop there, as art continues to thrive on the very loins of technology, where digital art, with its pixelated strokes, sees itself as an expensive asset, more precisely going by the name of Non-Fungible Asset, or NFT. Moreover, the 2021 June Auctions at the Digital Sotheby's promotes a variety of digital art to the interested auctioneers. Among them, one such digital art, called “QUANTUM”, curated by artist Kevin McCoy, was placed with the initial bid of \$ 140000. What is the art you ask? It's an Octagon shaped animation on a black screen, describing the “New Age” spinning around cryptocurrency and blockchains. So, there is our established thread between the tech savvy and the art enthusiast.

Hence, we again take a harrowing circle around the sun of abstract art, to come back to that same argument, Art, in all its haziness, picturesque realism, is subjective. With time, it gets harder to wipe the smudges on the lines of actual whimsical art, and random strokes that like to call themselves 'whimsical'. It's hard to boil down abstractness to art in the first place, when history, science, the enamors of quantum mechanics to the eccentricity of biological RNA, must have some abstractness to their composition, as well. We might leave all that aside to find abstractness in ourselves.

Even if abstractness doesn't go beyond the late-night thoughts barging on us suddenly, and "weird" dreams we witness that we can't wait to narrate, but quite not know where to start. Those weird thoughts define consciousness, while the "random" brushstrokes define an aspiring artist's own, in his one-bedroom apartment, not wishing if people would get his art, but just happy he expressed himself in the best way he could. Isn't that the beauty of subjectiveness? A psychedelic mind, if sprayed on a wall, can easily be given the title of "Beautiful, colourful absurd art" immediately, Human minds are just joyously strange that way.

While my own life waddles amidst the path of literary fiction and science, the world tries hard to connect creativity with your next generation advent of technology, and a platform of creativity in pixels.





Ankita Singh

Understanding the Yorubaland
Culture :
The Curious Case of the Masquerade Masks



Introduction :

A Historical Account

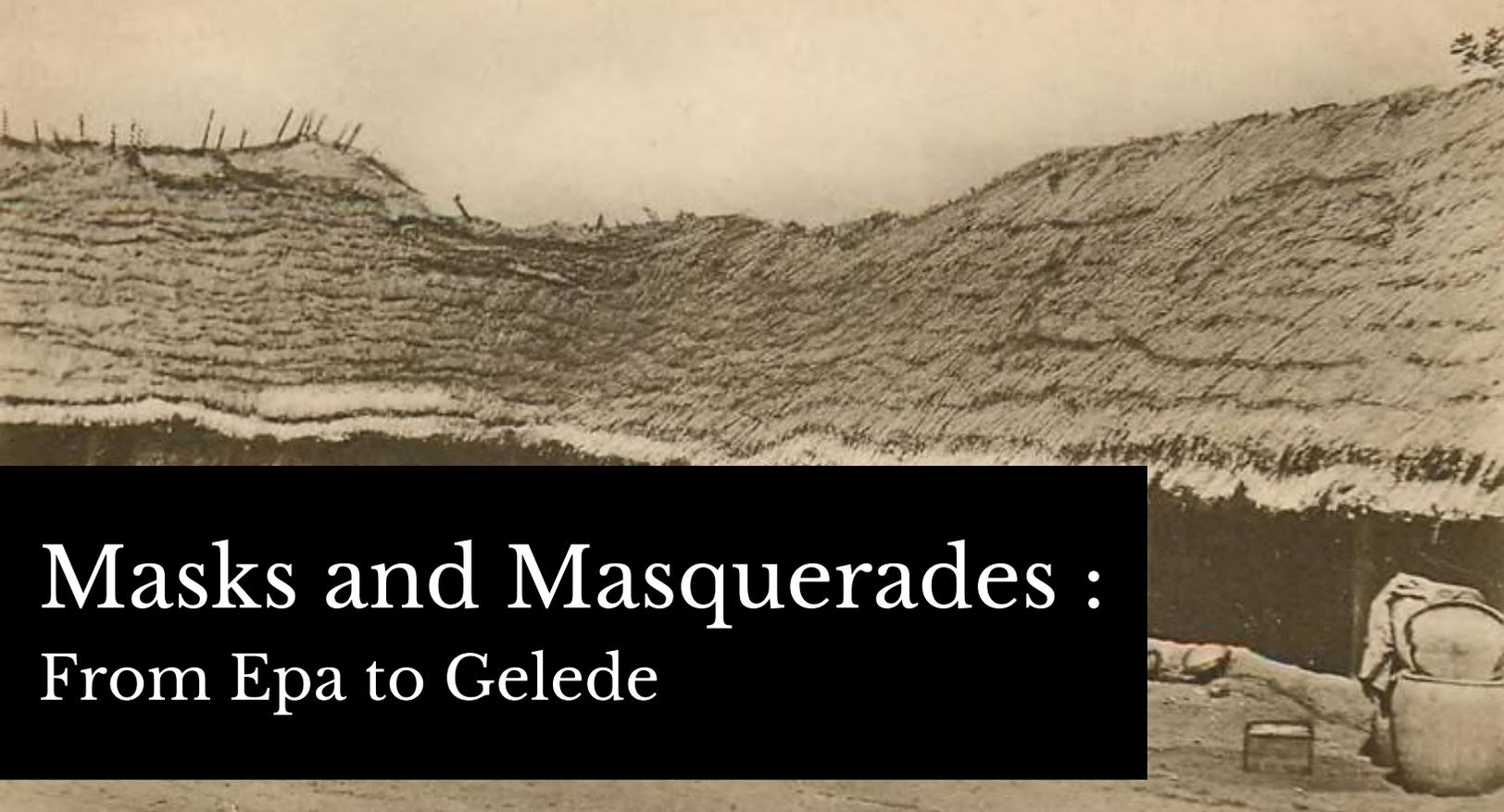
The modern day nations of Nigeria, Benin and Togo constitute what we have come to know as the Yoruba land. The cumulative historical evidentiary accounts as provided by Samuel Johnson in his book *The History of the Yorubas*, chalk out in detail of the many kingdoms that existed in this Yorubaland: from Benin to Ekiti to Ife to Oyo to Owo and many more. These were not only geographical boundaries based on kingdoms, rather ethnic tribes and cultural groups that followed their own customs, traditions, language and governance that existed until their occupation by the European powers of the British Protectorate, the French and the Germans in the late 19th century.

The Yorubaland provides an intricate and profound lens into the diverse African cultures of the time that have evolved and transformed through the centuries. Following through wars, migrations and many other social factors each of the kingdoms has had cultural influences and cross interactions that gave rise to newer forms of practices and traditions through time.

An integral part of the Yoruba people is the masquerades that take place and reflect the myths, celebrations and characteristics proper to the culture. And the outlying essential elements of these masquerades are the masks, varying in shape and size and their specificities that add significance and are also important artefacts of knowledge, belief systems about the culture itself.

This essay attempts to briefly study the different types of masks used during the various masquerades and festivals of the different regions and their relevance in pinpointing the vast Yoruba culture. Moreover, it will look into how these masks, indigenous to the Yoruba people, help paint a detailed portrait of the people and their history. Furthermore, it argues that these masks, as conceived in modern day as a form of sculptural portraits, move beyond the limits of merely perceived objects of art for study, and transgress to acquire a livelier entity of interest that comes alive in the context of the masquerades. As a last point of enquiry would be the representation of these masks in the museum cultures of the Western nations as they exist today and a critique of their understanding as held by these centres of archiving history.





Masks and Masquerades : From Epa to Gelede

The most prominent masquerades that have been recognised and written about through the 19th and 20th centuries are the Epa and Elefon festival and the Gelede masquerade ceremonies. Each of these festivals follows their own particularly carved out masks and costumes and are performed in veneration of the different eminent warrior figures, ancestral gods and the goddess mothers.

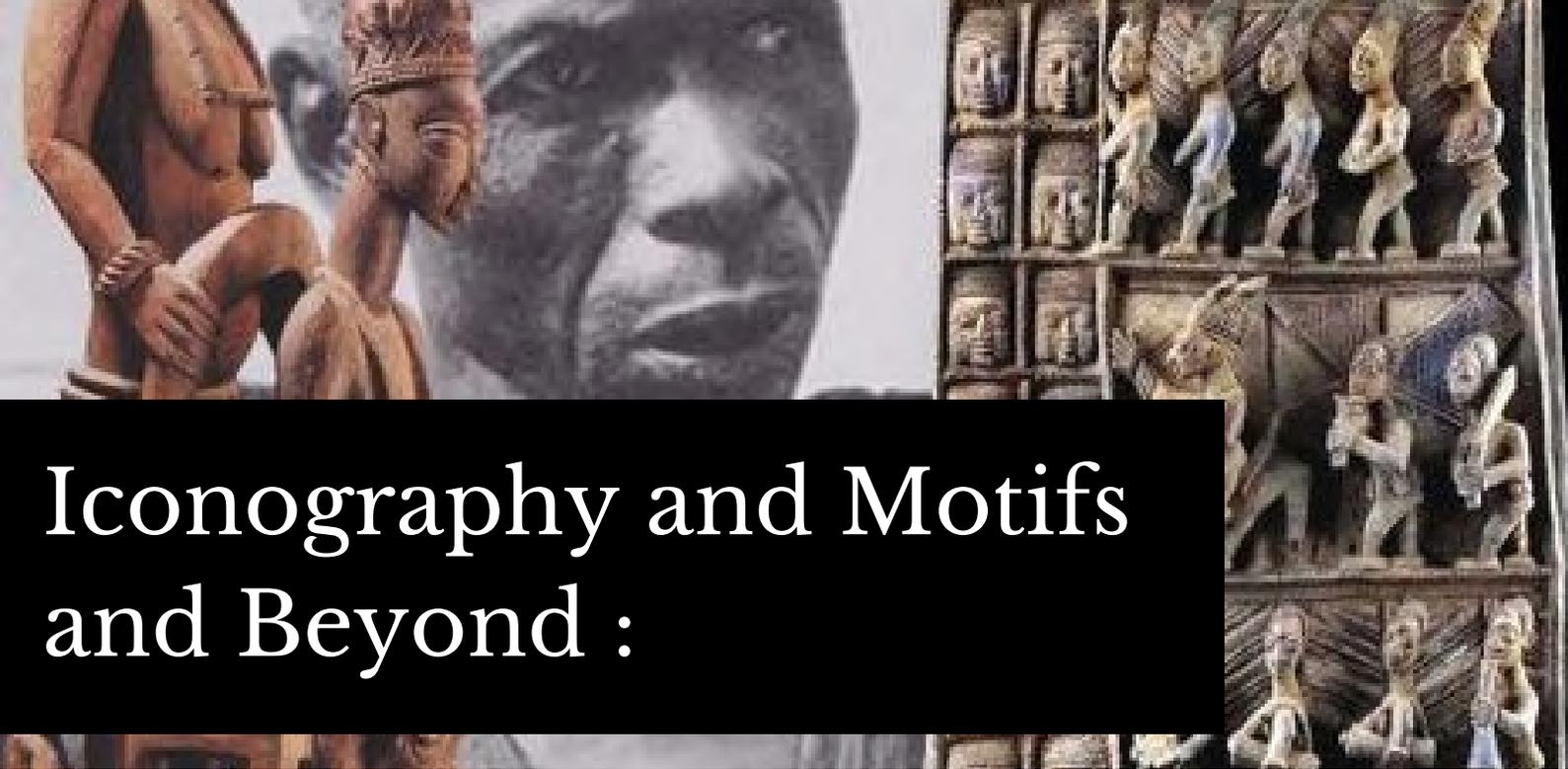
J.R.O Ojo remarks how these annual festivals are popular among the Ekiti and Igbomina Yoruba groups (Epa and Elefon festival) while the Ketu, Egbado, Oho, and Anago groups are renowned for their extremely decorative and expansive Gelede festival respectively.

The Epa masks, elaborately carved out of wood, rest as headpiece of the performer and are often huge and heavy. More importantly, the mask is an integral part of the whole costume that includes further assemblage of vegetable fibre and cloth. Ojo also mentions that the carved headpiece individually is referred to as *ere egungun* while in its entirety as *eru*. As regards the form of these masks themselves, they are constructed in the form of round, circular helmet like shape called *ikoko* and often have superstructures of carved out figures on them.

A further interesting fact that Marsha Vander Heyden notes in her accounts of being witness to an Elefon ceremony in 1970 is these masks having proper names rather than commonly referred to as masks. These masks, guarded by families and passed on from generations to generations thus acquire a unique identity of their own. She summarises how the Epa ceremonies are dedicated to ancestral heroes, men and warriors while the Elefon ceremonies worship the ancestral deities and spirits. These masks at their core and in their performative spaces hence transform into a living entity and acquire an immortality of sorts that transcends the realm of the mere relic or object of historical value as they are very much living within the whole duration of the ceremonies.

In a similar understanding, The Gelede ceremony worships the mother goddesses, the elderly women and the ancestral females that are believed to protect the tribes. A celebration of motherhood: a reverence in praise of the witches that were believed to protect the men, women and children from the different evil powers. These spiritually powerful women possess powers that can challenge the gods, ancestors and spirits for the benefit or destruction of the societies.





Iconography and Motifs and Beyond :

As mentioned earlier, these masks that often have superstructures (in the case of Epa masks) are replete with iconographies and motifs that are pertinent to the Yoruba peoples in their traditions and customs. Before going into the major iconography figures, we first delve briefly into the process of the carving method itself that has been extensively researched upon.

An elaborate four step phase work that involves the artists to first figure and block out the central forms to secondly dividing in detail these figures into the minute parts like ears, limbs, eyes is extensive. The third and fourth steps are more towards refining and smoothing these chalked out central and minute forms and lastly the process of cutting out sharp details and patterns into these forms requires extreme observance, skill and practice. The tools used in these four steps called as Onà lílé, Àlétúnlé, Dídán and Fífín 4 respectively are axes, chisels and knives.

The most commonly found sculptural iconography in the case of Epa masks are that of warrior, leopard, mother with children and the healing deity, Osányìn. A close look at these figures bring to fore the ritualistic and historical importance of these in the culture of the Yorubas. For example, the warriors are a remembrance of the different periods of wars among the ethnic groups and the leaders that came up during the period to resolve the disputes.

Will Rea goes on to define and term the relationship between such imagery and the cultural history of the Yorubas (the Ekiti group) as:

“[...] the corpus of Epa-type masks and performances is a deeper, more nuanced, socio-historical account of Èkìtì, one that accepts the iconological analysis as broadly correct as a function of Èkìtì’s general history, but which also puts an emphasis back onto more precisely understanding the position of the “mask” (as a thing) and the relationships that pertain between lineages, cults, and the forms of manifestation contained within Epa-type ritual.”

On the other hand, the Gelede masks and costumes have motifs from animal, vegetable and the world of man like snakes, monkeys, tortoise depicting various actions in motion, for example, a snake coiling around the tree, market women, nurse with children, etc. These motifs are believed to reflect the more religious and secularist belief systems of the people: the intermingling of these three different worlds and their mutualexistence. These embellishments



serve as markers for the spiritual and social forces that live in the world. Furthermore, they also often carry satirist ideas and notions that are used to warn people of their behaviour, to follow proper social rules and regulations. Within the context of the dances and the ceremonies themselves, the masks are used to diffuse the myths and values associated with the groups.

These masks therefore throughout the ceremonies and after acquire a stature of that of a living and not stagnant form of a sculptural portrait. Interestingly, these masks are often repainted, reused and coloured for the subsequent ceremonies which helps instil in them a continuous living flux of change and movement in their existence.





Of Masks and Museums in the Contemporary Times :

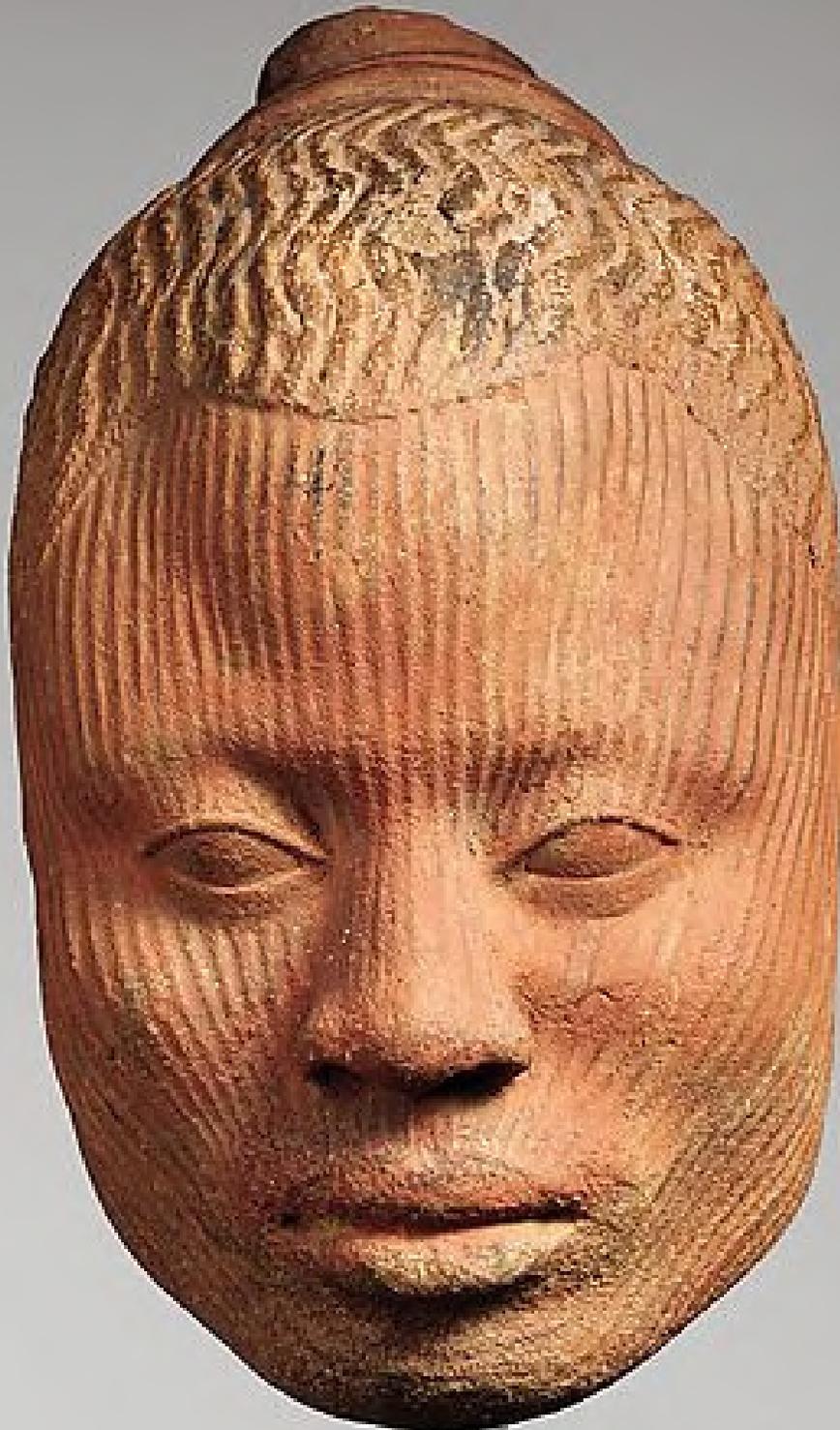
The “discovery” and acquirement of the artefacts belonging to the African cultures by the western colonial powers so as to study the primitive art and society of these ethnic groups all throughout the 19 th and 20th centuries has had an entirely different effects on the understandings of the African cultures in the world. The then “studies”, which removed these important cultural objects from their environments and tried investigating them came out to be mere exotic, superficial and regressive in nature. The Europeanist viewpoint subjected these into enquiries of attempts to comprehend the indigenous tribes and their strange practices and rituals. Furthermore, an aggravating factor that worsened the historical relics and understandings among the generations of the tribes themselves was the rip off to project these artefacts in the white museums so as to garner and pique interests among the white masses.

Over the decades the representation of these artefacts in museums has been dwindling in two extremes: either they are extremely ripped apart or “bared naked” into self derived meanings and interpretations of their importance or they simply hang in the museums with minimal thought to their names or for that matter their contexts of origins.

The notions of cultural curiosities of the empires towards the non western cultures have often seen to diminish and harm the references and resources belonging to the indigenous groups. The whims of desires and the ideas of commoditization have had relegated these artefacts to be seen and marvelled at without any real comprehension.

Ruth B Phillips recounts these practices of the western museums as voyeuristic violations of the African cultures that serve only the whimsical desires of knowing the unknown and the other. For the contemporary 21 st century museum cultures she calls for a more hybrid and profound understanding and representation of these artefacts within the museum cultures. 6 She elaborates it as “translating” the artefacts and their significance with the help of the indigenous researchers and then bringing them to the fore. Moreover, this hybrid nature of the modern day interpretation is what she signals as a networking that helps understand and mediate the origin communities of these artefacts and the museum cultures to associate and provide an inclusionary knowledge system of the cultures both in historical and contemporary relevance.





She discusses the cases of the two exhibitions, first of Chewa exhibition at the UBC Museum of Anthropology and that of Headdresses and Masks of the Torres Strait at the National Museum of Australia that bring together anthropologists and art historians coming from within the specific cultures to curate them and by using installations, video essays, the labels and details both in the native and other reference languages for the visitors to better understand the contextual history and contemporary evolution in the practices associated to these artefacts. Such curatorial works help in bringing to the fore a more holistic understanding of the cultures and this approach moves towards a much needed interconnectedness among various cultures.



Conclusion :

As seen through the course of the essay, the African Epa and Gelede ceremonial masks constitute an essential part of the cultural traditions, rituals and myths associated with the Yoruba peoples of the Yorubaland. Moreover they are an interesting entry point into understanding the historical, social and cultural elements associated to the past and contemporary Yoruba society. In lieu of understanding and constructing histories of these societies through these objects in isolation, the museums today in the 21 st century need to approach these artefacts and their significance and deconstruct their meanings in a more profound and integrated manner.

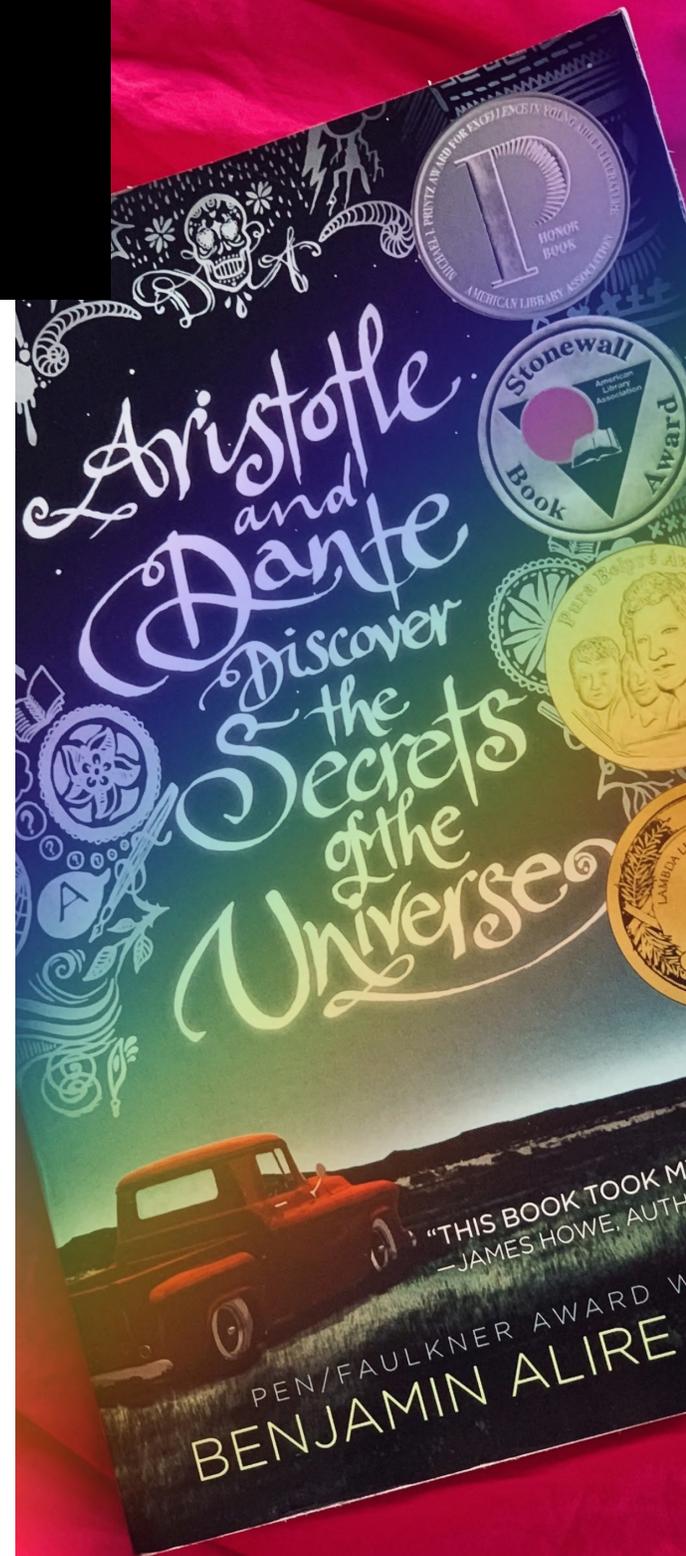


Aristotle And Dante Discover The Secrets Of The Universe

Kinjal Chandra

Who could tell that a sincere delineation of two Mexican American teenagers discovering the secrets of the universe inside and around them could concoct such a phenomenal experience, without for a single moment coming across as implausible or frivolous?

Unlike other YA stories, Aristotle and Dante is purposeful and eloquent. Its crux lies in its profundity and material. It deliberately eschews the run-of-the-mill tropes associated with YA fictions. It is not just about the smoking, drinking, and the kissing. It goes much beyond simply scratching the surface by addressing issues of heteronormativity, cultural and ethnic identity, familial associations, and PTSD.



Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe

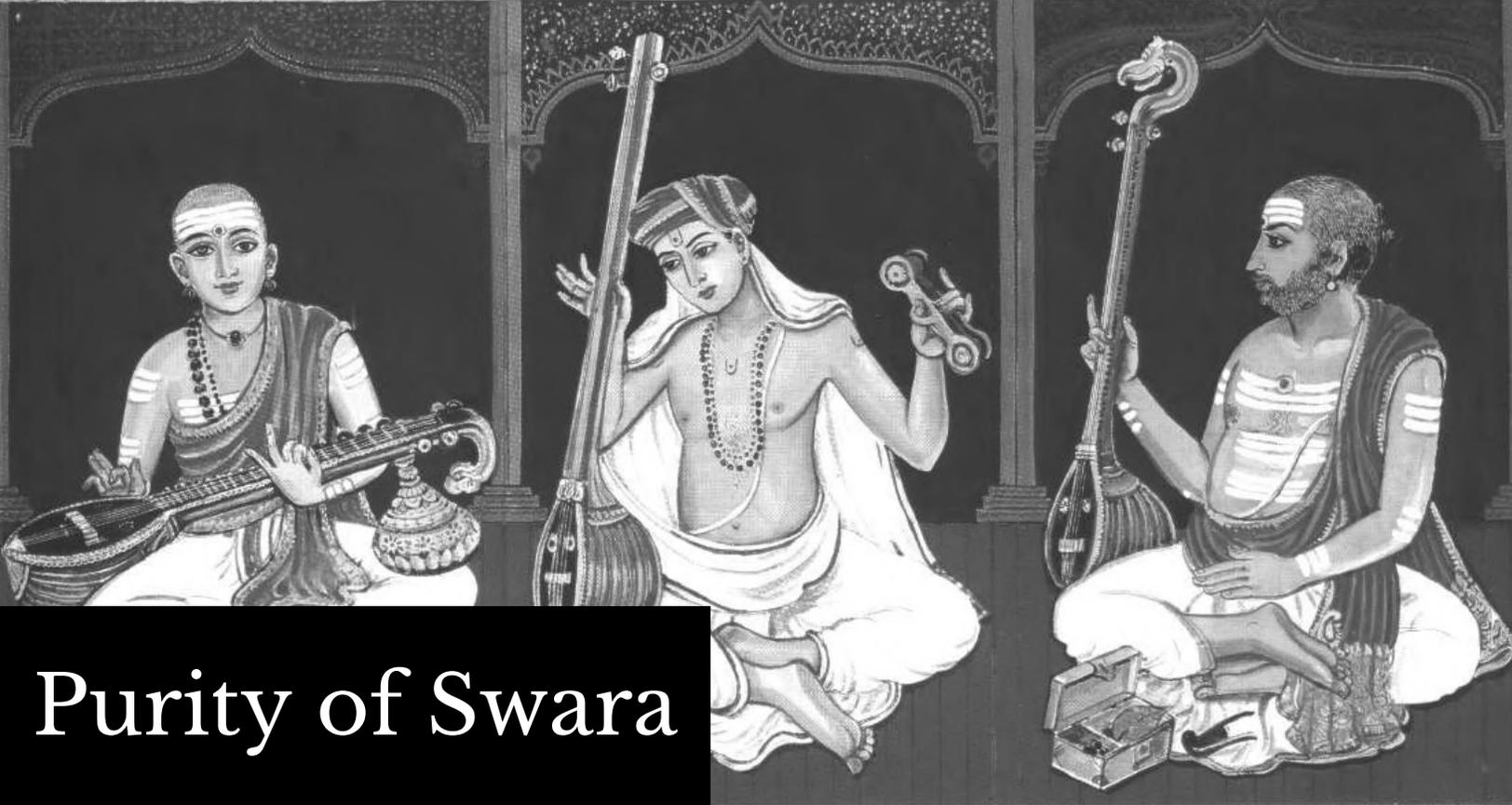


Aristotle Mendoza and Dante Quintana are practically antithetical in nature. One is of the quieter sort, while the other loves to fight back. One is an expert swimmer, while the other cannot swim to save his life, Dante prefers poems and sketches, while Aristotle loves his truck and his weights. The scant discomfort in their relationship owing to their differences commingles with their mutual love and longing for each other to foster an inviolable bond that is true to life yet passionate.

The language used is absolutely unembellished and conversational adding to the practicality and authenticity of the narrative. The writing style is suffused with an effortless flow that is candid and unassuming. I did not track page numbers while I was reading this, I went ahead and eventually, could not help myself from being enamoured with Ari and Dante. This IS the pride literature you are looking for!

The ending brought tears to my eyes. Tears of happiness, contentment and attachment . And tears I want all of you to experience.





Purity of Swara

Akash Sulochana

I

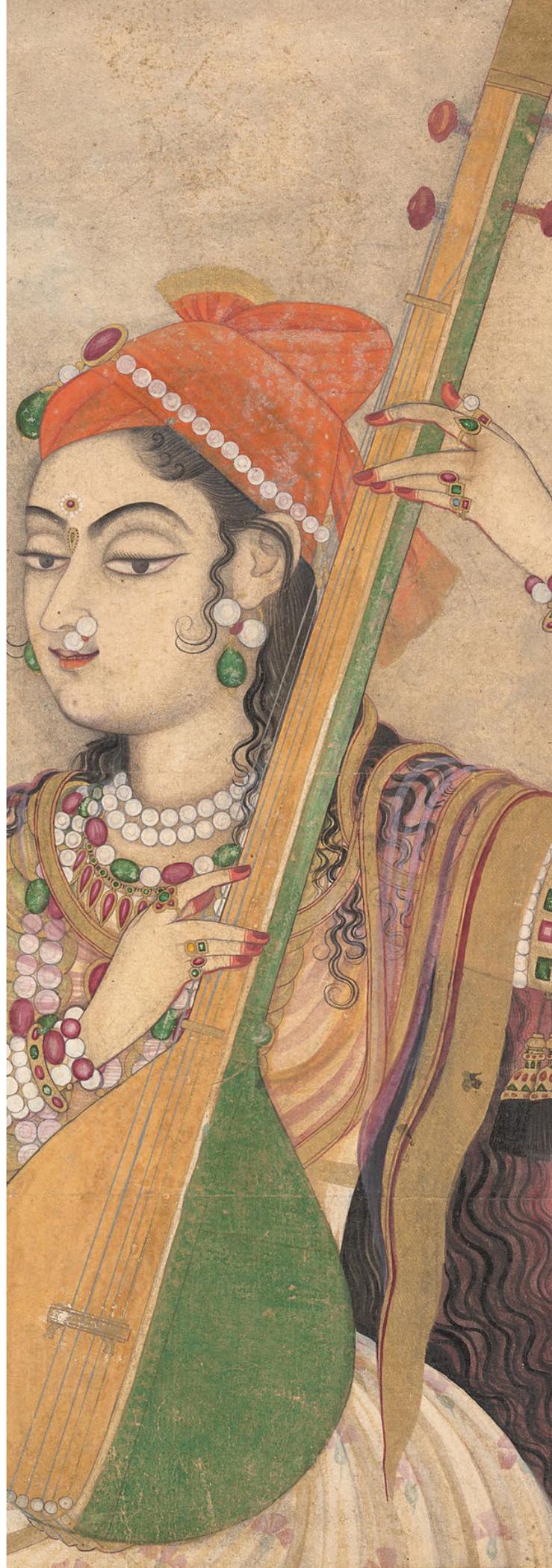
“Saaa.....

When you release the breath, release all negative thoughts from your mind. Again, when you inhale, take in all the positivity around you. Do not try to control any thought that comes to your mind. Just watch it like a stranger and then, let it go. Do not try to control your mind or your thought.

With these subconscious instructions, I try to concentrate on my Riyaz. It has become hard for me to concentrate for a few days now, maybe because I have become obsessed with my thought. Thoughts are like magic; when they are distant, you underestimate their power. But once they take hold of your hopes, expectations, and desires, it's hard to escape them. They constantly follow you like a shadow. You beg for peace, you remove all external material and digital resources to forget the thought. Alas! It lives in your brain and tortures you constantly like an intimate tormentor.

When the obsession becomes unbearable, you start throwing things, trying to destruct everything in the hope that your physical power manifests all your anger, that in the end, it loses its strength, first physically and then mentally. So that, your brain becomes calm, smooth, and hopefully, without the one thought which you try so hard to forget. But no matter how much you strain your body, how much you cry and punch the walls with your unclothed wrist, you can't fade the thought away that easily.

I don't remember, at what point music started to torment me with this obsessive thought of making myself pure, so pure that I erased the presence of guilt from my mind to concentrate on music. Without any guilt? Is that possible for any human? Who is without guilt in this world? Why this precondition in music, and when did it become dominant and started tormenting me? When I try to trace all these questions through self-introspection, I return to the original "Sa", where all my riyaz begins. C Sharp is my "Sa", the middle of my convenient vocal range. The practice of "Sa" is like the soul of Indian classical music.





As much as you command the “Sa”, you become more ruleful over other Swaras. But here lies the paradox: You can’t command “Sa”. Likewise, you can’t command other Swaras. You recite it again and again with your pure heart until you are blessed with its command one day. But if you show arrogance afterwards, it will be taken away from you. It is a kind of magic, hard to comprehend with a rational mind. It happens to even the most famous musicians, sometimes magic in their voice just doesn’t work. That is why, an honest, humble, and pure heart is a precondition to learn any kind of music.

II

I can tell you why I cannot concentrate on my Riyaz for some days. But let me start from the beginning. It starts with my friendship with Shidhodhan. I met him at IIT-B at a music conference. He is a Ph.D. student at Mumbai University and from a rural background. When I asked him, he told me that he was working on Dalit Aesthetics. He was the one who opposed almost everyone at the conference. I found it impressive, not because I agreed with him but because I found attractiveness in his revolutionary anarchism. At first, I was hesitant to talk to him, wondering about talking to such an arrogant person. But then, I decided to talk to him.

During lunchtime, I met him with a smile and agreed to his comments to start the conversation. We spoke for a while, and I enthusiastically exchanged phone numbers. In this little conversation, he seemed calm and talked less, and, to my surprise, I found him less arrogant than he had seemed to me in my first impression. I guess this was maybe because I had come to an agreement with him. After this, he contacted me one fine day for some technical help in music, and I invited him to my home. I anticipated this opportunity to satisfy my intellectual curiosity.





On his arrival, we exchanged the usual greetings, and I asked him, “Don’t you feel what you told in the seminar that day was a little bit extreme? I mean... don’t you think you exaggerated and over-generalised things a little bit...Don’t you think so?”

“No. I was just describing reality from my perspective.”

“Acha. No, I agree with you on certain points, like the Brahman’s hegemony over music. But I felt that you reduced the essence of music in your political discourse. Don’t you feel music is beyond that?”

“Amm...Okay. It may be, I don’t know. But I certainly asked valid questions.” I felt like he was going into a justifying mode, which I absolutely didn’t want at that time. I wanted to know about his perspective more clearly. So, I thought to provoke him a little bit. I said,

“You spoke that day that the Indian Classical Music tradition is Brahmanical in nature. What did you mean by that?”

“Yes.” He took a slight pause. I felt him assessing the tenseness of the situation and also my intention. Then he firmly spoke, “See the entire cultural practice of Indian Classical music. You know better than me. This Namaskara, respecting gurus like god and divine. Why glorify them beyond the limits like they have done something extraordinary? And touching ears while taking a guru’s name...This Guru-Shishya parampara...Touching the guru’s feet before singing. This is all bullshit.”





I intended to provoke him further. “But don’t you think such kind of humbleness, purity of heart, honesty, the Guru-Shishya relation is required to learn Shashtreey Sangeet? Don’t you think Swaras are pure, and they are Ma Saraswati’s blessing? And you can achieve them only through commitment and everyday Upasana.?”

He listened to me and started impatiently, “Well, I think Swaras are nothing but frequencies. You recite these frequencies and use consonants to remember them. So, in the end you merely recite frequencies. As well as you remember the exact frequencies, you become a master of Swaras. You recite a range of frequencies and call it a Saragam, the major-minor scales, or solfege. In the end, you recite frequencies and impress an audience. You control your breathing and learn to stabilise your voice in one frequency for a long time, but these are all technical skills. Anyone can command these by practicing them regularly. And once you gain command over them, you can use them for anything. For Swaras, they don’t belong to any morality. These are dead frequencies. You learn and use them and maybe make them alive. If you need a pure heart as a precondition for learning Swaras, then why are the majority of Indian classical singers casteists, nepotists, and full of superiority complex and jealousy?”



And tell me: Why not a single Indian classical music programme starts with greetings like Jai Bheem instead of Namaskar? Leave that expectation. Have you ever seen any participant in a classical music competition start his recitation by saying Jai Bheem at the beginning or at least by not following the Brahmanical customs? Can you do that? And this is not because Goddess Saraswati blesses Swaras but because the Brahman hegemonises Swaras. Swaras are not controlled by Saraswati but by Brahmans in this country...”

When Shidhodhan speaks, you don't want to stop him even though it makes you agitated. He always has new ways of seeing things. He disturbs you. Although, I didn't like his attitude of reducing Swaras to frequencies, I resisted giving any reaction, so that his monologue wasn't interrupted or influenced. I wanted to listen to him and know what he really thought. I was entertaining him because, I thought, secretly, I liked this anarchist idea – to bitch about the gurus. I cannot imagine doing things as such, even in private, as it leads me to moral guilt.

I certainly know his limitations. The most significant of them is that as a student from social sciences background, he never knew the secret pleasure of music, the power of music to tremble your emotions. Nobody can teach how to feel music. One can only do it with active listening, with one's ears and body. So, I gave him a kind suggestion. While ending the conversation, I told him, “It's easy to speak about music while remaining untouched by it. I mean, if you listen to Indian or even Western classical music, it just moves you emotionally for a long period. So, keep criticising it but do listen to good music.”

“I will,” he said with a smile.





III

Days passed after that conversation, and I realised that there is an omnipresence of Shidhodhan in my music contemplation. When I contemplated on my contemplation, I found that they were just my various responses to Shidhodhan's speech. Not to mention, in every contemplation, I talked, and he listened, and I expressed myself fully until I was satisfied. And because he didn't respond, I took it as a gesture of agreement and slept well.

I was thinking of meeting him again. So, I called him and asked him about his convenient time and place. Finally, we decided to meet near his place in the evening.

He was a little bit provocative this time, maybe because this was the second conversation or because we were meeting outside or that it was me who had insisted on this meeting, I don't know.

As usual, we exchanged regular questions and ordered something to eat. After a sufficient pause, I started my intended subject, "I was thinking about what you told me last time. I think musical notes are not just frequencies. They represent different emotions. Music is a medium to express our emotions."

"Yes. You can express yourself through musical notes. You can express yourself through words by using your enriched adjectives. You have both: words and frequencies. But one thing you don't have, and that is: lived experiences like us. We have real pain, and you have nothing other than romanticising your small worries. So overall, you have nothing to express."

His words made me furious. "Nothing to express?!"



"Well, you have a mystifying subject which you may romanticise." He gave me a despised look while speaking dramatically.

"Why do you see music in such a reduced form? It is not definitely a tool of your revolution. It has an independent existence beyond your political discourse. See, music manifests different emotions. Everyone has emotions, so everyone can react to emotions expressed in music. And if you accidentally listen to instrumental music, it expresses different emotions without taking help of words. Emotions which are universal-

He cut me off as if he wasn't listening to me at all and continued, "Dalits are the ones who toil this land and do all the labour and get nothing. Still, suppose you ask them about their pain. In that case, they can manage to say, "It's bad". And suppose you don't give a meal to a brahman boy for once and ask him how hungry he feels? In that case, he will give you all adjectives with his enriched vocabulary to describe his physical status and feeling..."





"Well, you're diverting from our main subject. And in vocabulary, don't you think education plays an important role? You can also learn the language if you make enough efforts and use new words to express your emotions."

"Exactly! That's my point. But who has the privilege to do so?"

"Nobody restricts you from learning new words and increasing your vocabulary!"

"You have restricted our entry into education for generations. Now, we have just started to come to the university spaces. These are our first and second generations who are able to reach these university spaces. We don't have any Gharanas and social connections to train our words and voices from childhood. When you were a child, learning ragas, we were cutting grass on your farm..."

He spoke for some more time, and then we wound up our conversation with a goodbye smile.

IV

When I sing, I sing for my inner peace, not to impress anyone or for any political purpose or for any external purpose. I think Swara-Sadhana needs two things: patience and total concentration. These external reward systems burn this minimum condition required for Swara-Sadhna: They make you impatient and lead to lose your concentration. And then, you waste your time in the name of "Swara-Sadhna". You definitely need a calm and concentrated mind to do Swara-Sadhna.





Everything was fine until I met Shidhodhan. But now, everything in my mind has been disturbed. Shidhodhan is like a tormentor. He is a thought in my brain. No matter how hard I try to throw him away, he doesn't leave. I can't separate him from his thought. In every riyaz, I face his questions like a ritual, and until they get satisfied, I have to answer them. He enters my mind when I just begin my riyaz in the morning by taking a deep breath and try to release it with "Sa".

They say that if you get the first "Sa" right, then your whole session will go well without any doubt. The first "Sa" is very crucial. It must come from a concentrated pure heart, must be patient enough not to tremble. And my problem starts with my very first "Sa"; I can't concentrate, I am impatient, my voice doesn't come from my throat but from my mind and from my brain and from my soul. But my dry throat keeps insisting on singing, and I sing my "Sa". It comes out like my mental state: Trembling, baryphonic, shivering, fearful, skeptical, insecure. I hate my voice. I really do.

I hate my voice. I hate his thought.



On Loving

Rayan Chakrabarti

1.

In an attempt to understand his rhythm, I settled into the nook of his neck. It tasted like pink, or a blossom during a year when everything else was still. We were painting music from this sweat, sheet after sheet of piloo and khamaj, accidentals and augmentations.

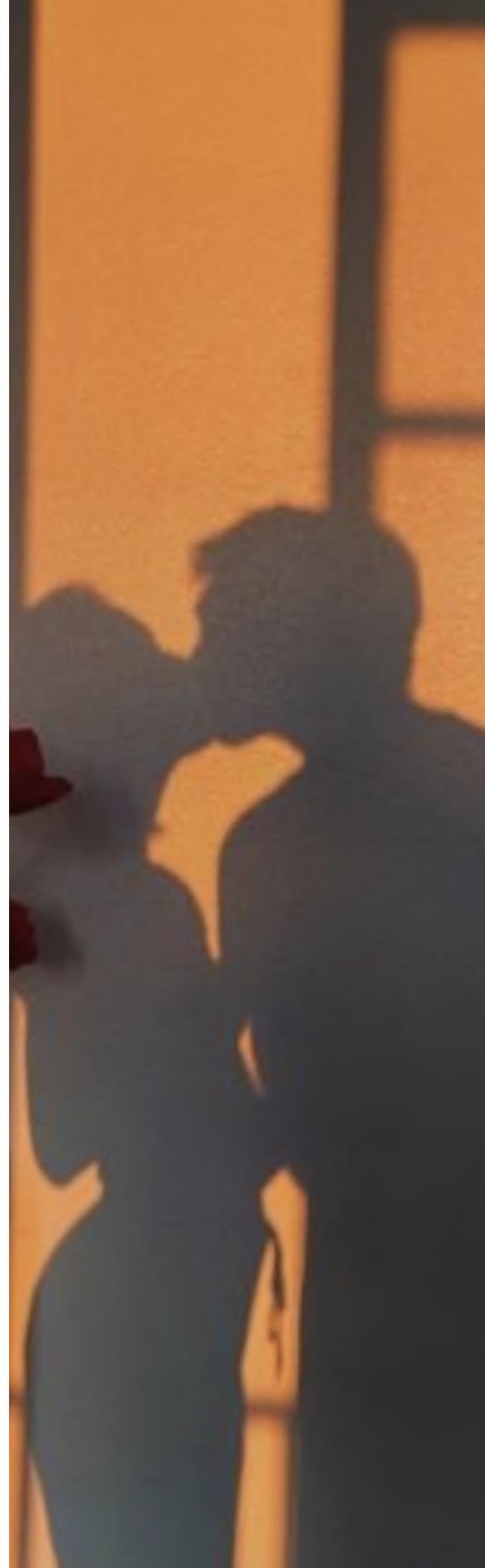
The violin was melting into my chords, trying to show them their place in the world, trying to discipline them. What I would not give to hold this print again, even this tattered remnant, so scattered like the leaves that cannot rustle. What would I not give to settle into his neck and understand the lilt of his veins.





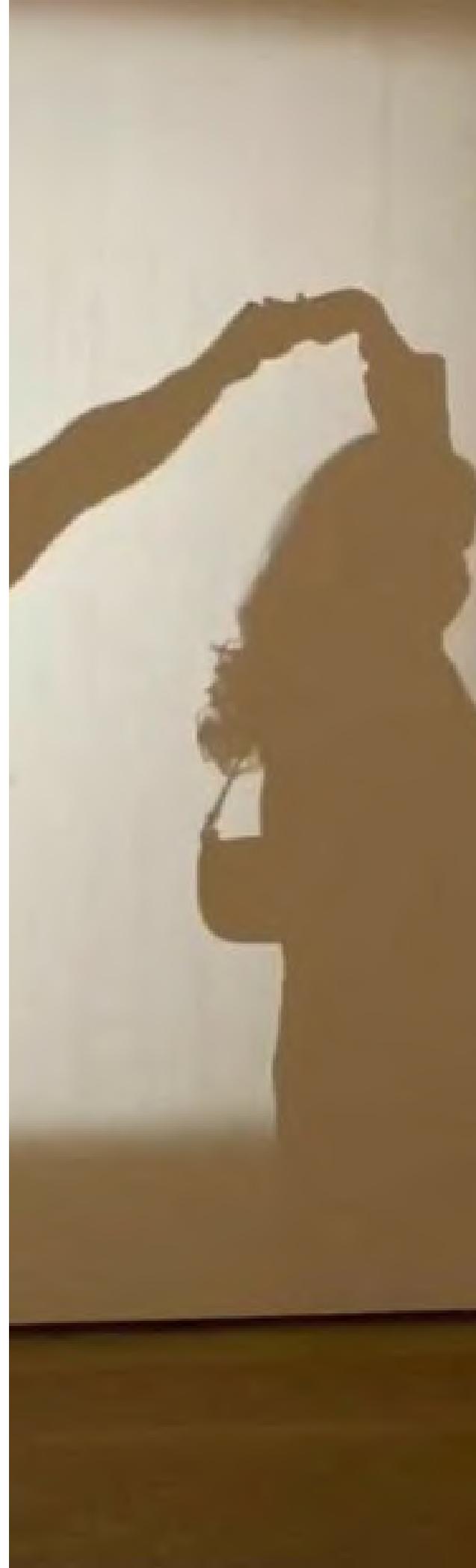
2.

The towel still smells of you. You wiped your arms in it, then your hair, then your thighs, your lips. The running water had created rain, a simulation to be trusted. Your torso had reached for the shower head, twisting and turning it, almost with some expectation. The floor had started to move, first with devotion but it didn't take long to turn into possession. A vile, archaic dance, challenging you to keep pace with it. Where did we fall? Where did we fall through the cracks? How did it happen? Teach my mind to remember, because it drifts to the day the air was so full of you.



3.

I don't want you to touch me today. Your hands are like a forest, whispering, like a labyrinth in season. You are pregnant with ideas, touching the shorelines of my palm dotted with shaving blades and affection. The index points towards a catalogue of our dreams, now horridly disbalanced, a ledge with no mercy. Yet, you will leave. Your hands will touch the bus steps, your tiffin carrier dangling like a child gnawing at our threads. You will look around, stupefied, as face after face makes an appearance, scheduled and colloquial. Yet, you will stay. This is where you will try to make a home. Like a pickpocket, you will search for the silence within the crowd, almost stealing it in a rare, mystic lunge. Almost.



Lullaby For The Drowned

Munjarita Mondal

The river wishes me dead, Mother
You know it and I know it too
Lokkhiti amar,
You plead and I give in
Like ripples on your river's skin I sigh
As you stitch open my eyes
Set me free, Mother
Look away and I will too.

The river visits me at the dead of night
with rancid, putrid and other fears
They choke me till I stop screaming
when the smell of urine trickling down my
thighs
coils around my neck,
I promise I won't think of you anymore

I dread the water, Mother
I look for respite in the satin of your
Saree tightening around my neck
It's gentler than what I'm used to

I could never love the river as you do
He won't make me dream of home
He wants me to himself, Mother
I won't go, no I won't.





In a sultry summer noon
with prayers on my knees and sand in my
throat

I will come to you, Mother
With screeches of a broken doll
You will come alive to
tear through the stitches and kiss my eyes
shut

Sleep my little Moon and dream of home
You'll whisper and I will scream no
more
rest my head on the ripples of your river
and
dream and dream and dream of home

When the dream ends and the night
begins,
The fishes with eyes
Deader than yours
Will find whatever is left of me
Under your feet
Writhing in ecstasy.



বর্ষা

Now the wind, through concrete blows.
The summer sky retreats.
And I, to whom summer is dear,
Softly accept defeat.

As whispers drown in the rains of Calcutta,
And night torments the innocent-
The poet remains, vigilant as ever,
An eye on the city grown decadent.

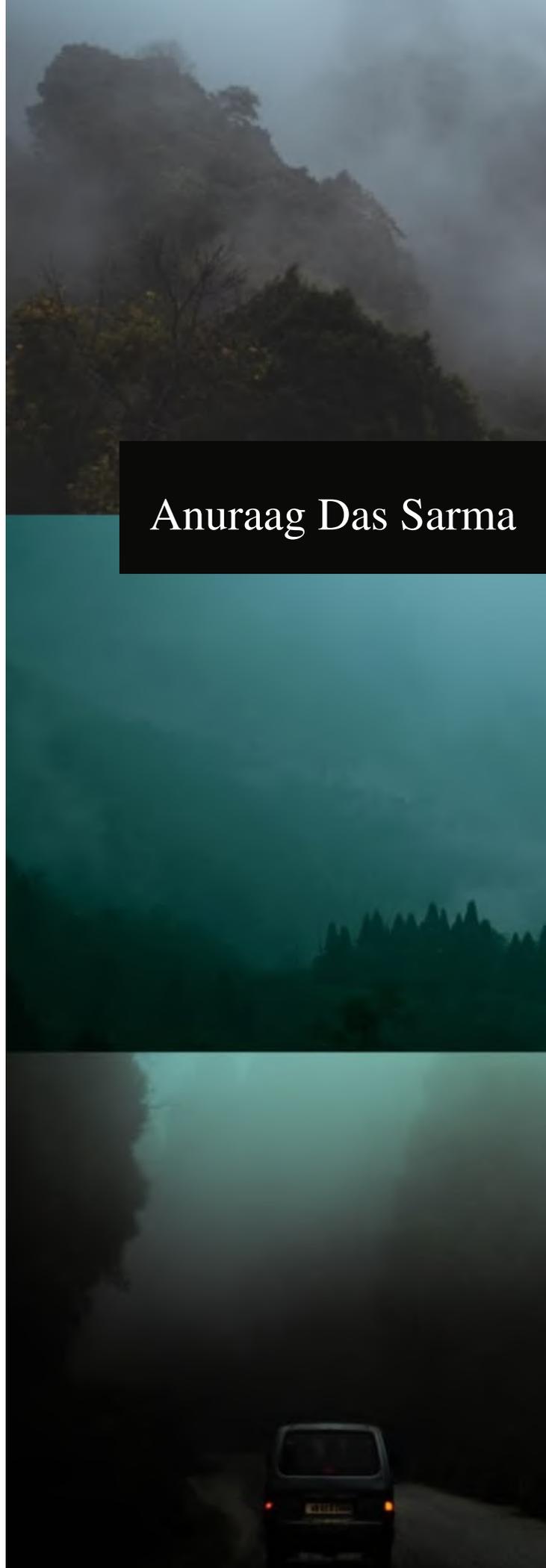
The wind blows through the mustard fields
And reaches the city by dawn.
A final tug on his heartfelt sea-
Before the fleeting moon is gone.

And the poet, who can't think of rhyme,
By moonlight, or by the cloudy sun,
Retires to the simple vice-
Of sounding the ancient Damask Drum.

Then again, by Night grown fair,
The stars, trapped by time and space-
Dine at the poet's body grown old,
Once so full of love and grace.

আর এখন, এই বর্ষার রাতে-
অন্ধকার ঘরে বন্দি আমি ।
মেঘের তলায় চন্দ্র ঢাকা,
ঝড়ের বেগে হারানো তুমি ॥

Anuraag Das Sarma





Murphy's Paradox

The following transcript has three different responses, from the three members of the band. Arka Chatterjee (drums), Budhaprabha Roy a.k.a Totti (bass), and Durjoy Choudhury (vocals, guitar, and songwriting).

I. *Murphy's Paradox broke into the scene in early 2019 with the single "Dreams in Technicolour". How did the band come into existence?*

Arka Chatterjee (A.C.): "We knew each other through our workplaces, for some time. Totti called me up one day and asked me if I was willing to record an EP with them. He and Durjoy were working on our yet to be released debut EP, Lost Astronauts. It was quite fun working with them, and we kind of got along with one another. We started working on more songs and started understanding each other's vibes. The bond became stronger, and the band came into existence."





Buddhaprabha Roy(B.R.): “Durjoy and Abhibroto (our previous fourth member) had started an artist showcase project called Friday Night Originals (FNO), which I had the pleasure of working on, by joining the video team. Both Durjoy and I had been in separate bands before and thanks to FNO we were around musicians so often and watching them from the other side that we realised we really missed the entire process of jamming and creating something from scratch and playing live. So, we thought what the hell, let's just get into it and try make some original music. It, of course, helped that Durjoy had a whole bunch of original songs that he had been performing solo. We had a friend, Anindya Sundar Maity, who played drums with Durjoy's previous band ‘Bee and the Buskers’ and we just got together one day and started jamming. Maity eventually had to leave the city, before the EP released and luckily, we found Arka, who was also a part of the FNO recording team and voila.”

Durjoy Choudhury(D.C.): “When Totti came and asked me if I could join him and Maity, for a couple of jam sessions, I reluctantly told him that I didn’t think that I had it in me to start playing music again. I was hesitant of starting another band. Especially after all the emotional stress that I had found myself in, after the dissolution of Bee and the Buskers in 2016. But he kept insisting, for the fair part of 2018, that we should do something with the new songs that I had been writing. He heard all the unrecorded material that was there, on my hard disk and picked out a couple of old songs to go along with three of the new ones. I could understand that he was already building a narrative inside his head. We decided to go, as a trio, for a five-song EP, after a few practice sessions.



We got into Blooperhouse Studios. Stayed there for a couple of nights, with our sleeping bags. Recorded the five songs. Just the three of us along with our recordist, Abhibroto Mitra. It was right after the recording that I had my tickets booked for a couple of international travels, for FNO. After I came back, Abhibroto, who also worked with me and Totti for FNO, as a recording and mixing engineer, approached us and expressed his desire to be a part of the band, as a guitar player. I had heard the recorded material, possibly a million times, in the month when I was not in the country and kept thinking that there was possibly something that was missing. Maity was already heading out of Kolkata, during that time, and Arka just fit right in, with the drums. The four of us spent a couple of months with the songs and finally recoded it, for a second time. By June 2019, after just a couple of months, we were almost stage-ready with an all original 12 song repertoire. The band had finally taken shape. Beside the EP, we recorded two more songs that we released a fortnight before the EP, in October 2019, and a couple of more that we didn't release. "Dreams in Technicolour" was one of them."



Album Art: Swapnanil Das



2. *What difficulties, if any, did you face when you guys started out and how has the journey been so far?*

A.C.: “The difficult part was to sit with the new songs. Every member had their own opinion to make them sound the way they wanted to. Some came out smoothly while others had differences of opinion, which were at times difficult to handle. Being totally honest. At times we thought of calling it off, but one or the other member, almost always made an effort to dissolve the situation. There have been ups and downs, but it was fun.”

B.R.: “When four people come together to create something, the main challenge is to make sure that each individual identity comes through rather than get overshadowed. And at the same time, making sure that no one takes anything away from the actual emotion of the songs. That is quite a difficult thing to achieve. But then again, the whole process can be quite educational and keeps the music honest. All in all, it's been exciting so far. Never a dull moment.”

D.C.: “The journey has definitely been quite exciting, till the pandemic hit us. Rehearsals, recordings, gigs. Honestly, it was a setting that every artist wants to live in. But then the pandemic hit us. And strange incidents do occur during strange times. But that is what life is all about.”





3. *A song from your catalogue that really stands out is শীতরমণী (Winter Lady), which is sort of a homage to the great Leonard Cohen. Who else, would you say, Murphy's Paradox draws influence from?*

A.C.: “I think we kind of drew influence from each other. Well, this is our only Bangla track, so far, and we wanted to take a different approach.”

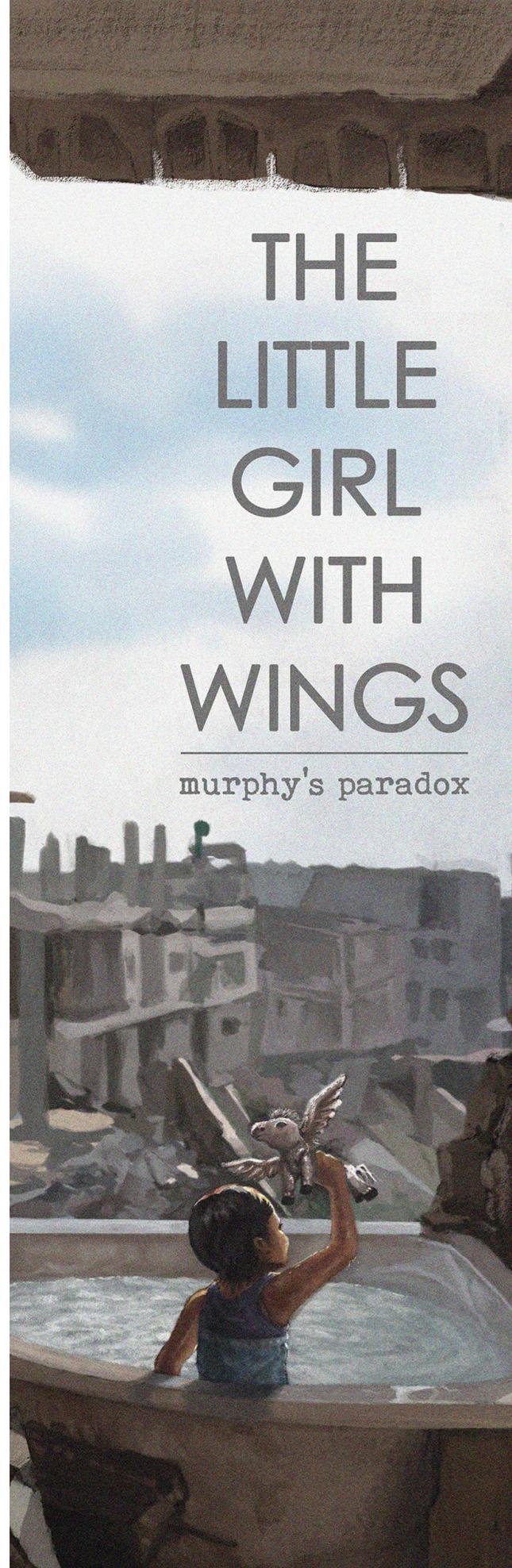
B.R.: “That song was translated by Ritam Sen. We were asked to write the music for it. Individually speaking, I'm subconsciously influenced by everything that I've listened to in my life. The fact that Durjoy writes about his personal thoughts and experiences in life and considering they are unique experiences, I also have to make a conscious effort to try and not be influenced by anyone else.”





D.C.: “Ritam and I, go back a long time. Since our university days, whenever he stayed over at my place, we usually ended up drinking, smoking up, reciting, but more importantly writing songs. His language of expression was Bangla, quite unlike me. He translated Cohen’s “Winter Lady” and asked me to sing it for him. I decided to change the tune as much as I could, keeping the emotion intact. It was much before Murphy’s had formed.

It is difficult to point out the exact influences that the band, as a whole, draws from. But personally, I draw my influences from life and all the questions that it throws at me. All the emotional chaos. The disorder. The confusion. The love. The happiness. The failure.”



THE LITTLE GIRL WITH WINGS

murphy's paradox

Album Art: Swapnanil Das



4. *The music videos to your songs are absolutely fantastic. We especially loved the video accompanying your song "Songs for You". What's the story behind it and what do you think is the secret behind making great music videos?*

D.C.: “The story behind the video of ‘Songs for You’ was the first wave of the pandemic, in short. I was going through a difficult time in my life, but I was hardly affected by it, with all the video projects and the band filling in the void. The moment the pandemic hit us, that void was split open, in a fraction of a moment. Everything was exposed. All my insecurities. All my disbeliefs. The deepest-darkest fears. The video, I guess, was a reflection of that. It was not planned, before it hit the edit table. But I believe, it talks about loneliness – the four a.m. rhymes and the eleven o’clock smokes.

There is no secret, except honesty.”





MURPHY'S PARADOX

5. With the Pandemic digging well into its second year, how has it affected Murphy's Paradox?

A.C.: “We had a lot of plans, back in 2020. Shows lined up. Some songs to release. But it has affected everyone in this music industry. And I think that things get difficult before it gets levelled up. So, there is hope.”

B.R.: “The terrible thing for musicians is not getting to play live and the pandemic has affected that. Also, we were working on material for our first album which we hoped to release this year. That's been postponed. We just hope things will be better soon for everyone and that we can get back to a certain sense of normalcy.”

D.C.: “It has affected us, in ways that we did not anticipate. But I wouldn't crib about it. It has affected everyone from the arts and entertainment industry, especially the indie artists.



6. *Lost Astronauts* is a wonderful EP, one that has been a favourite of ours. What was the writing and recording process like? What shaped the album?

A.C.: “Thank you so much. It was an EP, composed primarily by Durjoy and Totti. They had all the parts sorted out and I was there to add some additional flavour to it. It was difficult to get the idea, at the beginning. About how the songs would sound but Totti and Durjoy was a great help throughout our recording sessions.”

B.R.: “The title track shaped the EP. The five tracks talk about two people/two lovers coming together and consequently drifting apart. The recording was a lot of fun. We took our sleeping bags and camped in the studio for two full days.”

D.C.: “Well, I guess, I have answered most of it, in the first question. But talking of the songs, there were a couple, which were written almost fifteen years ago, when I was just twenty or so. ‘Lovers in the Rain’, ‘Songs for You’ and ‘Two Lost Astronauts’ were comparatively new songs, when we were recording them in early 2019. They were possibly written in 2018. Songs that came out of incidents that I found myself in. Out of the love. The rejection. The loneliness. The longing.”





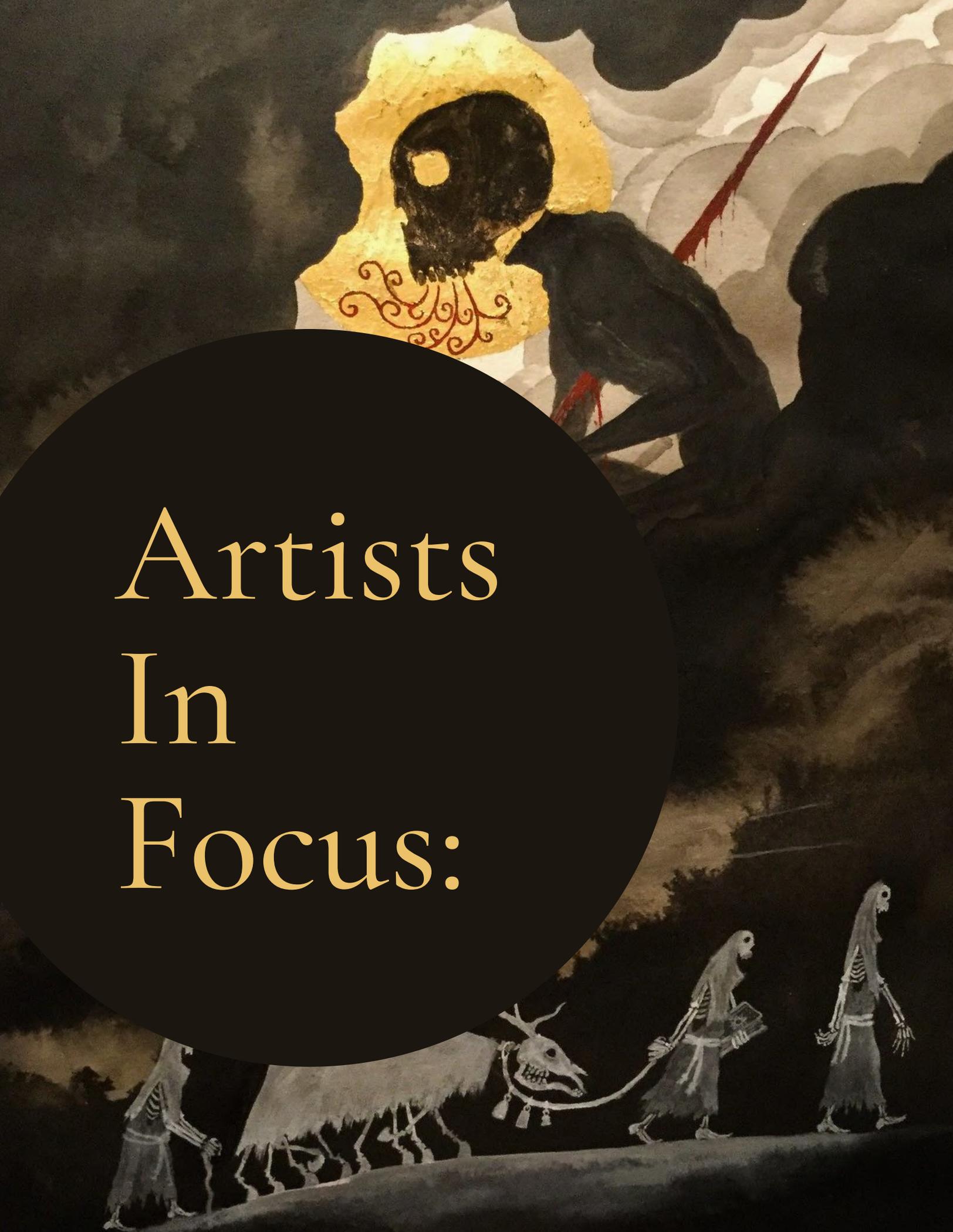
7. Do you have anything you'd like to tell our readers who might be envisioning a career in music?

A.C.: “Nothing can stop you if you really want it. Things can get hard and might also take some unexpected turns, but all you need is to be focused on what you want and what you want to be. Never lose hope. There will be no regret.”

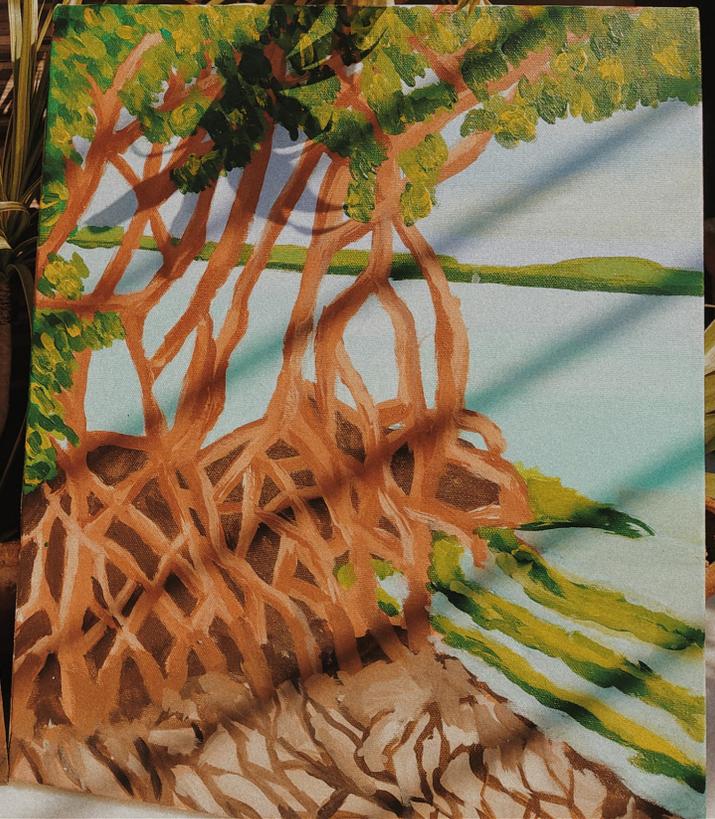
B.R.: “Find your voice/ expression and express it with honesty. More importantly, don't give up.”

D.C.: “Music is the most beautiful art. One that cannot be defined. And if you are venturing onto this path, then you are the blessed one. Be honest to yourself and you will find your sound.”





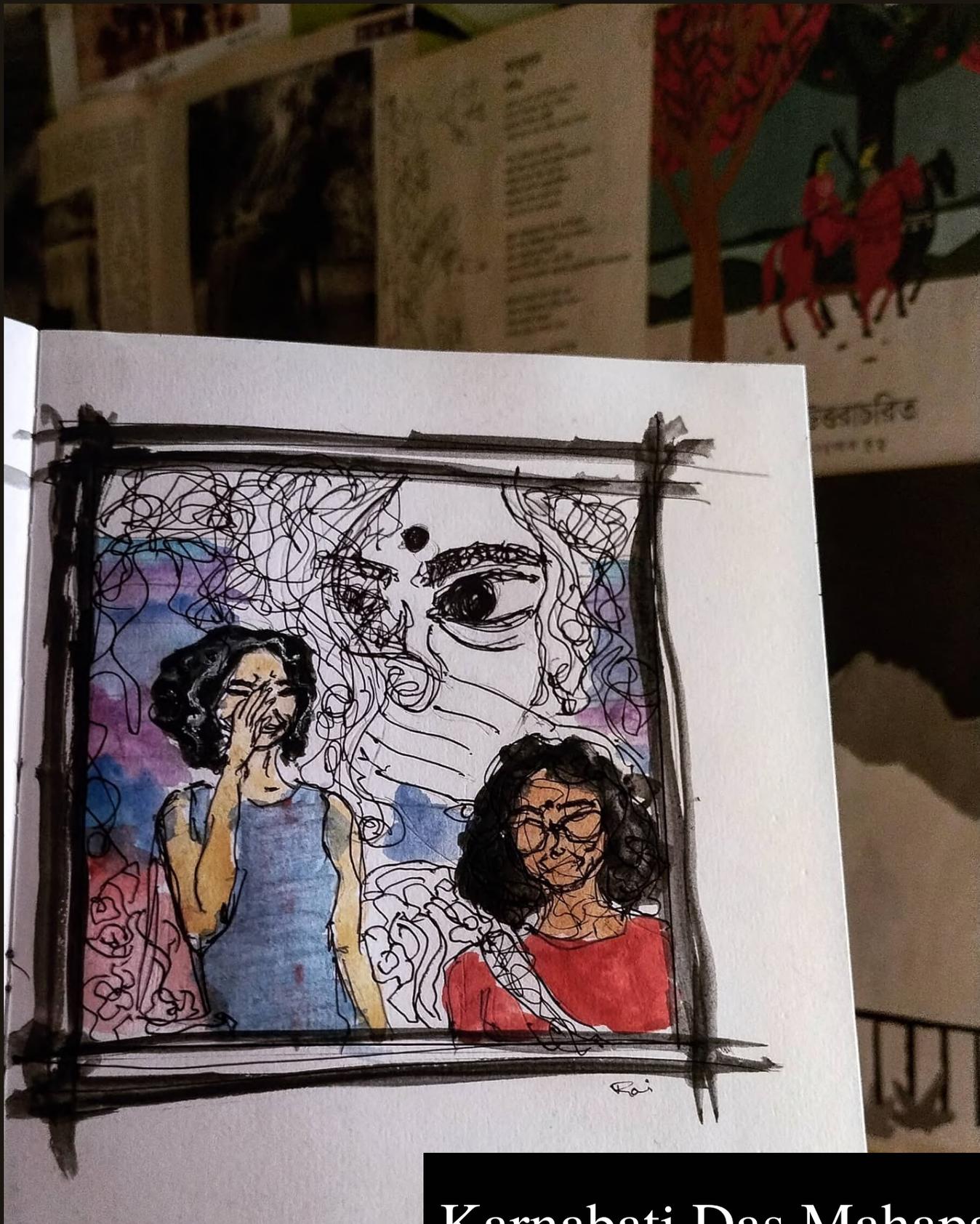
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