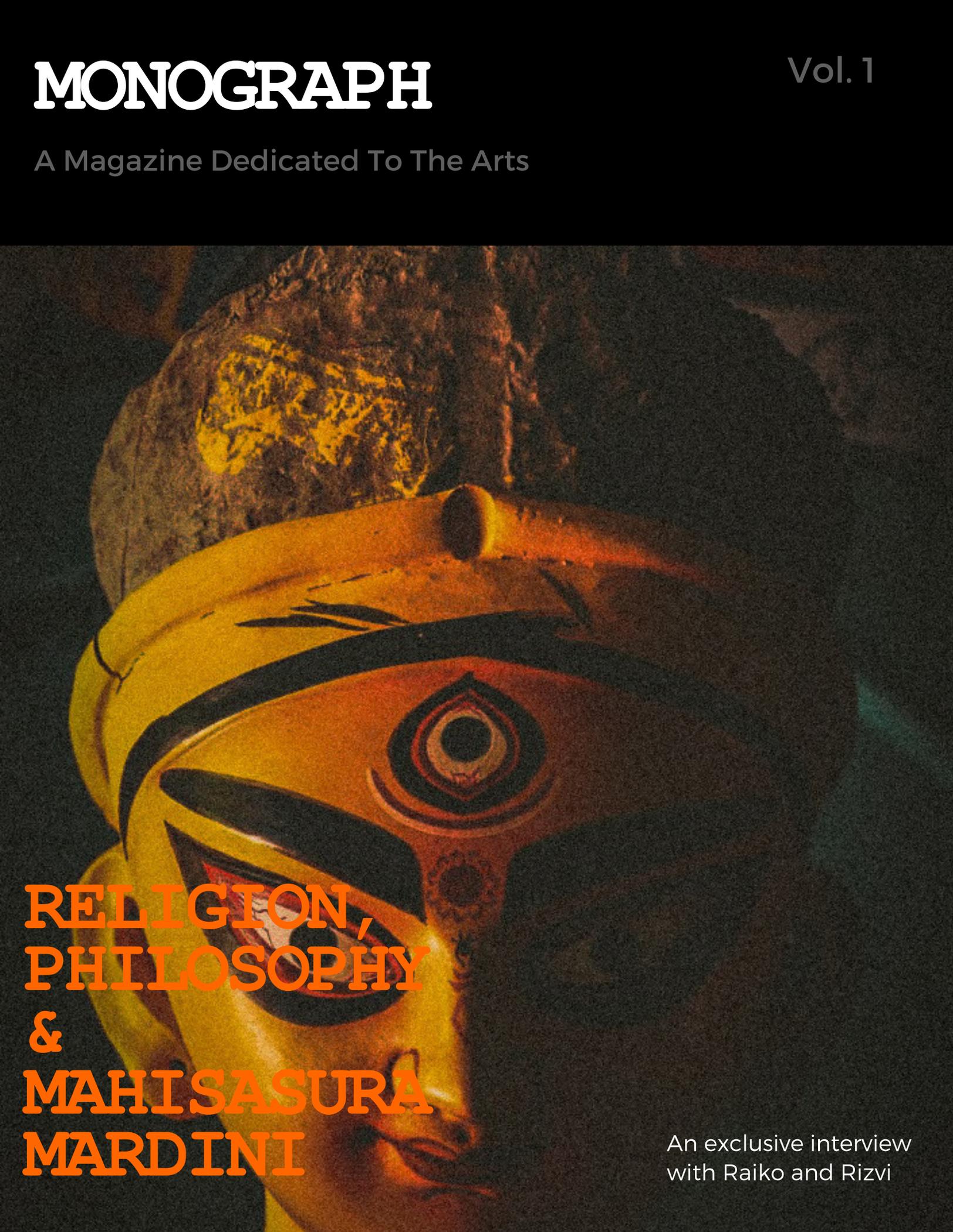


MONOGRAPH

Vol. 1

A Magazine Dedicated To The Arts



RELIGION,
PHILOSOPHY
&
MAHISASURA
MARDINI

An exclusive interview
with Raiko and Rizvi

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Editor's Note:

Indrayani Bhadra

Friedrich Nietzsche once lovingly held, “We have art in order not to die from the truth”. In an almost post-apocalyptic, pandemic ridden world, as the Monograph team whiled away the precious days of what should have been their adventurous and boisterous teenage in lockdown, we came to but one conclusion. Over these saddening, underwhelming days, there has remained one constant- Art has been our soul saviour, our Hail Mary.

We'd turn to languid philosophy at 3 a.m. on sleepless nights, for the sake of believing in something- or perhaps we'd deconstruct paintings with the keen analytical eye of a Parisian critic, or maybe, just maybe, we'd find ourselves holding on tight to the dog-eared pages of our favourite classical novels, in a futile attempt to believe in the notion of goodness, beauty, tranquillity and all things magical. Monograph, therefore, aims to be a humble representation of everything that art stands for- a voice for the poets, the writers, the artists, perhaps even the occasional fiery politics aficionado (turns to stare in the mirror for a fleeting second). But if you want us to put it in less pretentious ways, much to the chagrin of our dear Editor-in-Chief, all we want to do is provide a safe space for art.

Anything that you consider a masterpiece, that appeals to your soul, that you deem to be but an extension of yourself- I say we have room for it. And that is exactly what the first edition is all about. From interviews of some of the artists our team has fallen hopelessly in love with, to pieces that aim to tear you away from your subtle post-colonial hangover, to the sweetest of poems, interlaced with amber, and honey, and cherry blossoms on a spring morning, but most of all- love, just like every single work that has found its way into these pages. We would like to say that the tedious (and frankly way too many hours) that have been spent editing these pages, collating them and bringing them together into something that looks a lot like the dreams we dare to dream, and live for, has been entirely worth it. And as you embark upon that very same journey, we hope that you too find a piece of yourself, interspersed somewhere between these pages, bound by a hint of nostalgia, and reminiscent of home.

KASTURI MUKHERJEE



1. So, starting off with a generic question, how has the coronavirus pandemic affected you? Would you like to throw light on the positive and negative impact of the lockdown situation on you, both personally and professionally?

Covid 19 has had innumerable effects on me - both positive and negative. Hopefully, people will relate to what i am saying. Covid 19 put a pause on my life. And I have tried to accept this pause in a positive way. It made me realise that everything in life is uncertain and we often take things for granted.

[It] Gave me a new outlook on life, from a different perspective which promises to be better. I am slowly becoming more and more aware of what is important and what deserves my energy and what does not. I cannot say that it has been completely negative but yes, there were difficult times too. My friends and family have been very supportive throughout and my personal goal is to survive.

Professionally it does pose a certain amount of challenge. Working with limited crew members, maintaining social distancing, lesser outdoor shoots and proceeding with safety and sanitization are all tough to adapt to.

The challenge is to be more innovative about shoots and to keep an open mind for experimentation and upgradation. 2020 has been the most important year of my life.

2. We've gone through your work and we must tell you, it is absolutely brilliant. We'd like to know, when did you decide that you wanted to be a photographer? Is this something you've always wanted?

My grandmother and my father are both photography enthusiasts and naturally, as a child, I also found profound joy in this artform. Over the years, there was a distinct development of my passion for photography as a professional career.





3. Have you been influenced by other professional photographers' works? If yes, then whose and how do you try to incorporate their techniques into your work?

Cinema has been my foundational influence. Movies and films of Ritwik Ghatak, Satyajit Ray, Aparna Sen, Rituporno Ghosh, Nandita das, Mira Nair, Deepa Mehta, Konkona Sen Sharma, Meghna Gulzar, Celine Sciamma and many more. Among photographers, I have been highly influenced by the works of Homai Vyarawalla, Dayanita Singh, Indrani Pal-Chaudhuri, Annie Leibovitz, Prabudha Dasgupta, Peter Lindbergh, Richard Avedon and many more, and not just for artistic reasons but also because of how I can connect with them emotionally.

4. What equipment is a must-have for you, no matter where or when you are working? Do you have a favorite lens? What type of editing software do you like to use?

A camera is a must have equipment anywhere and anytime. I am recently using a vintage to shoot portraits called helios 44m-5 for M42 mount cameras and I love it!!!

I prefer using lightroom because it's very user friendly.

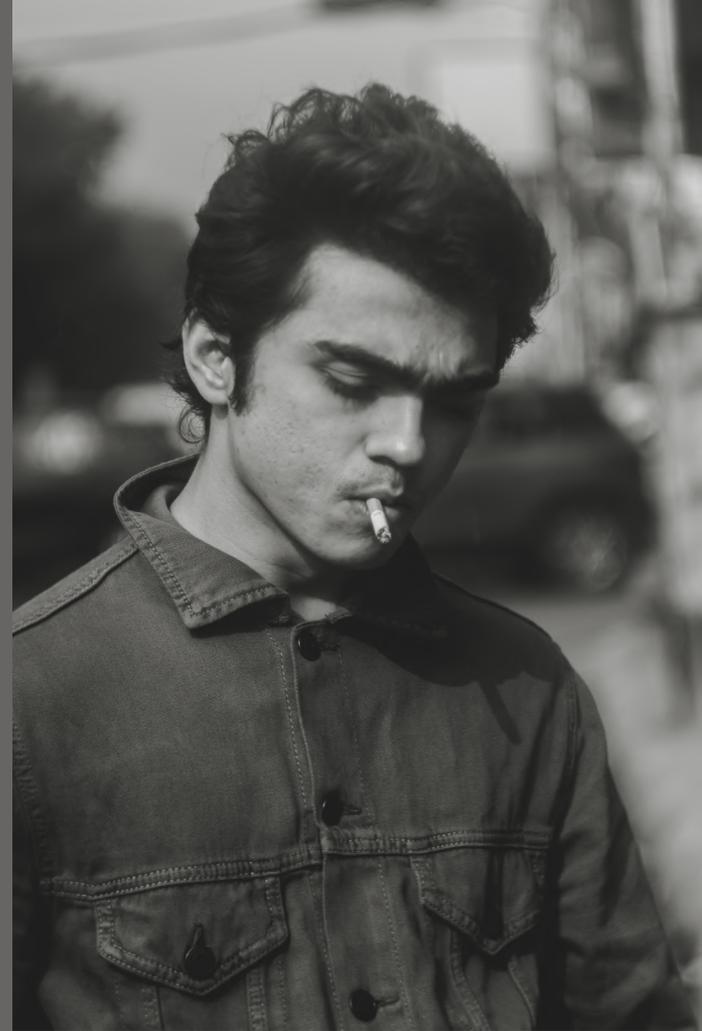
5. How do you make sure that the subject of your picture looks just the way you want to? While doing portraits, do you feel its essential to develop a comfort zone or a connection with the person being photographed?

Well, there is no fixed formula to that. Every person that I have photographed, has brought their own flavor to it. I allow them complete freedom to be themselves. I give them that space. It is essential for me to develop a connection with the person. Human connections and emotions make a photograph. Also patience, most definitely, is key.

6. You've worked with some of the big names of the film industry. Is there a specific photoshoot that you've particularly enjoyed? Any noteworthy anecdote or incident you would like to share?

They have all been extremely nice to me and I was stunned to see how humble they are. There are many! I remember sharing lunch with Wasim Akhram once while I was working for the Kolkata Knight Riders, I think that was pretty cool!





7. How would you describe your photography style and what do you think has led to its development?

With the passage of time, I found that both fashion and portrait photography have been highly objectifying the human body in various aspects. I have been trying to shift the gaze of my audience to the more humane side of photography. I have been studying and researching about the female gaze and my work is mostly about this. It is an evolving process always.

8. How do you distinguish between a good and a great photograph? What particular details do you think differentiates a masterpiece from an average picture?

From a personal perspective, I really enjoy simple photos that speak volumes. I love the photographs that I can connect with emotionally. A great photograph should have a story narrated in a very simple way. For me a masterpiece is something that is beyond time and space, something absolutely timeless.

9. Since you are a Kolkata-based photographer, do you think the city has an economic, political or emotional influence on your work?

I was not born and brought up in Kolkata. I moved here in the year 2009 from a very small town. Since then this city has embraced me. It has given me a lot of identity and I owe everything to Kolkata.

It has definitely impacted me and influenced me throughout both professionally and personally.



10. What do you think is the most difficult and the most rewarding part of your profession?

Every project, be it commercial or personal, comes with its own set of challenges. Overcoming them and being open to new perspectives and ideas is the most rewarding part of this profession. On a personal level, it helps me reinvent myself, always.

EVERY PROJECT, BE IT COMMERCIAL OR PERSONAL, COMES WITH IT'S OWN SET OF CHALLENGES.



11. We already know that you're a skateboarding enthusiast. Apart from that what else do you do in your free time?

I work-out, I am into fitness, it's a new found hobby and I like it. Right before lockdown I was very enthusiastic about golf and horse riding. I would really like to give it a try.

I read books and watch films. I'm not a social butterfly, but I have a handful of friends and I like hanging out with them.

12. Finally, is there anything that you would like to share with aspiring photographers, something you wish you knew before you started your career?

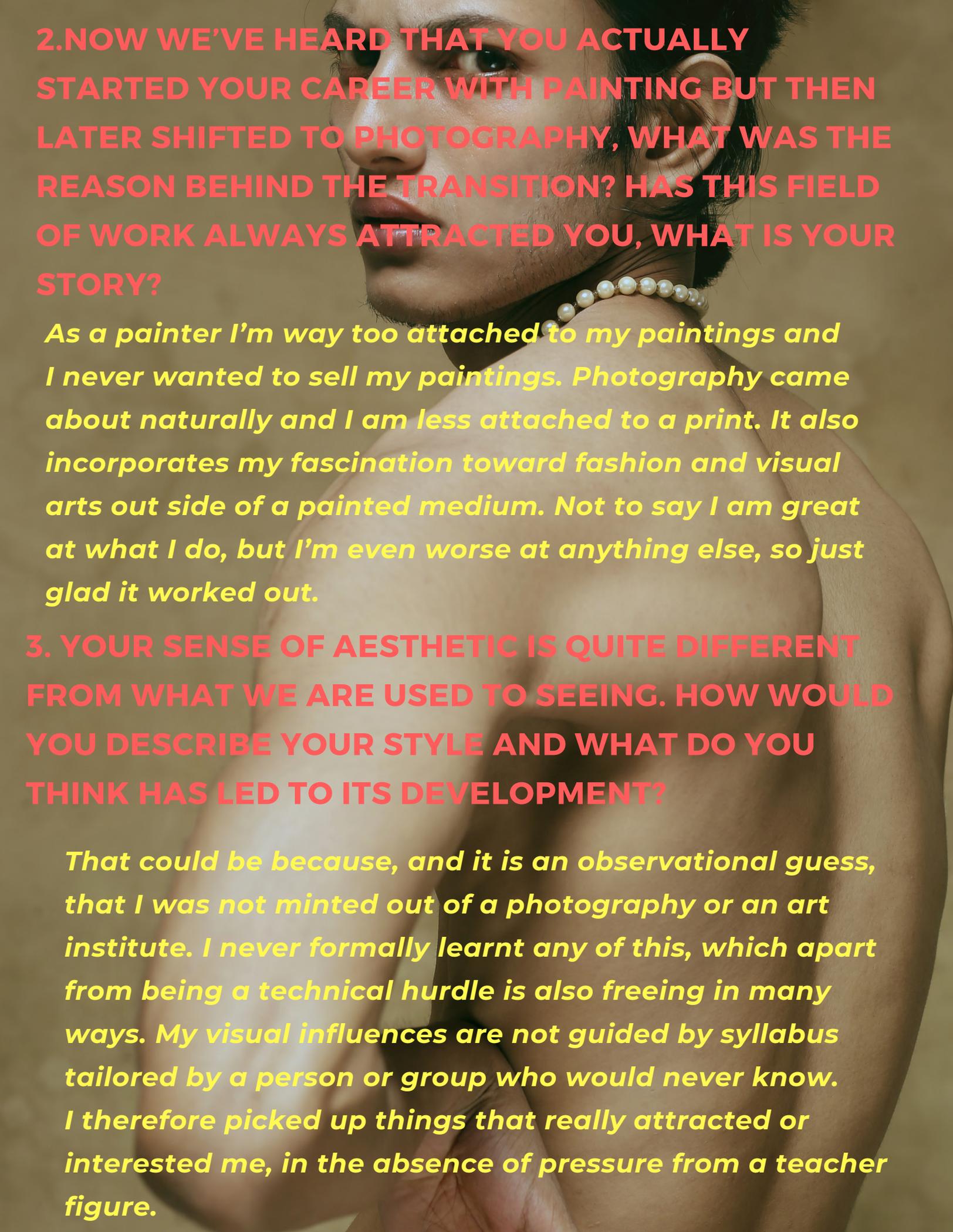
Everyone has their own way of finding their path in this field. Embrace it. It is not a competition. Have fun and enjoy it. Do not hesitate for once to experiment. Do not work for free. And have patience, practice everyday.

Photography is a baby nurture it everyday.

ARKA PATRA

1. Starting off with a generic question, how has the coronavirus pandemic affected you? What are the positive and negative impacts of the lockdown situation on you, both personally and professionally?

In my field of work, things are fast paced. There is also a lot of planning and preproduction in place. Initially we were all getting news from China and sharing memes about it. When it reached Italy and then in India everything came to a halt! Now with the easing of lockdown projects are picking up, but the paranoia still exists in many folds. Apart from the health concern there is also concern over the economy, given we are essentially a luxury industry. But I'm hopeful, as much as one can be this year!

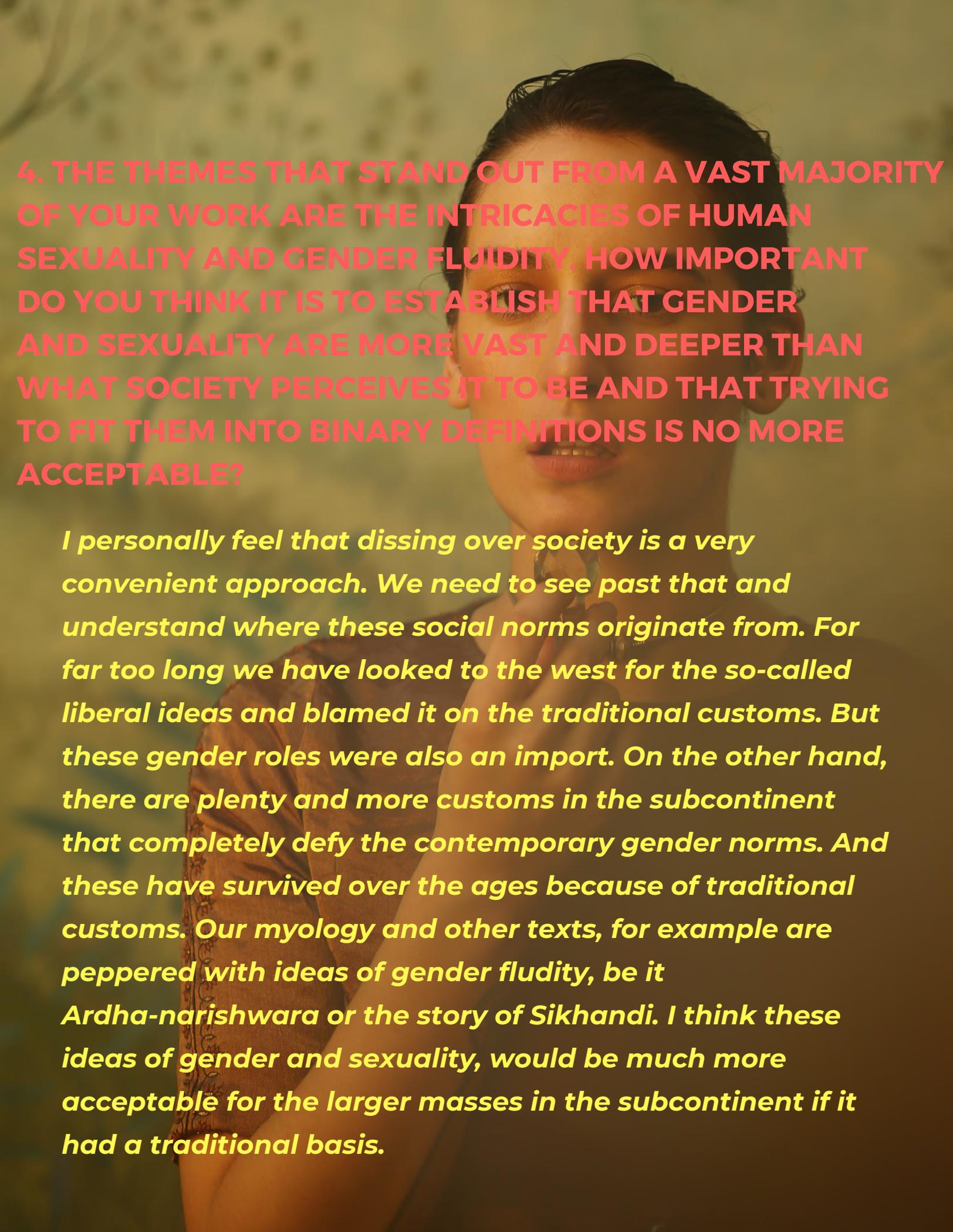


2. NOW WE'VE HEARD THAT YOU ACTUALLY STARTED YOUR CAREER WITH PAINTING BUT THEN LATER SHIFTED TO PHOTOGRAPHY, WHAT WAS THE REASON BEHIND THE TRANSITION? HAS THIS FIELD OF WORK ALWAYS ATTRACTED YOU, WHAT IS YOUR STORY?

As a painter I'm way too attached to my paintings and I never wanted to sell my paintings. Photography came about naturally and I am less attached to a print. It also incorporates my fascination toward fashion and visual arts out side of a painted medium. Not to say I am great at what I do, but I'm even worse at anything else, so just glad it worked out.

3. YOUR SENSE OF AESTHETIC IS QUITE DIFFERENT FROM WHAT WE ARE USED TO SEEING. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR STYLE AND WHAT DO YOU THINK HAS LED TO ITS DEVELOPMENT?

That could be because, and it is an observational guess, that I was not minted out of a photography or an art institute. I never formally learnt any of this, which apart from being a technical hurdle is also freeing in many ways. My visual influences are not guided by syllabus tailored by a person or group who would never know. I therefore picked up things that really attracted or interested me, in the absence of pressure from a teacher figure.



4. THE THEMES THAT STAND OUT FROM A VAST MAJORITY OF YOUR WORK ARE THE INTRICACIES OF HUMAN SEXUALITY AND GENDER FLUIDITY. HOW IMPORTANT DO YOU THINK IT IS TO ESTABLISH THAT GENDER AND SEXUALITY ARE MORE VAST AND DEEPER THAN WHAT SOCIETY PERCEIVES IT TO BE AND THAT TRYING TO FIT THEM INTO BINARY DEFINITIONS IS NO MORE ACCEPTABLE?

I personally feel that dissing over society is a very convenient approach. We need to see past that and understand where these social norms originate from. For far too long we have looked to the west for the so-called liberal ideas and blamed it on the traditional customs. But these gender roles were also an import. On the other hand, there are plenty and more customs in the subcontinent that completely defy the contemporary gender norms. And these have survived over the ages because of traditional customs. Our mythology and other texts, for example are peppered with ideas of gender fluidity, be it Ardha-narishwara or the story of Sikhandi. I think these ideas of gender and sexuality, would be much more acceptable for the larger masses in the subcontinent if it had a traditional basis.

5. ONE OF THE MAJOR COMPONENTS OF YOUR WORK SEEMS TO BE SURREALISM. DO YOU BELIEVE TAKING A SURREALIST APPROACH OVER CONVENTIONAL METHODS HAS HELPED YOU MAKE A STATEMENT FOR YOURSELF?

I am not interested in documenting subjects as they are when it comes to photography, given the act of taking a picture itself is always going to be subjective to the photographer. There is no pretense of realism in my pictures, it is always my point of view in a world created by me. It is surreal and for me that is much more honest.

7. WHICH ARTISTS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS' WORKS HAVE INSPIRED YOU THE MOST? HOW DO YOU INCORPORATE THEIR TECHNIQUES IN YOUR WORK? AMONG YOUR CONTEMPORARIES, WHOSE WORK DO YOU ADMIRE THE MOST?

There are too many, and I could not choose one even if I wanted to.

6. YOU'VE WORKED WITH SEVERAL BIG NAMES IN THE FASHION AND FILM INDUSTRY. IS THERE A PARTICULAR PHOTOSHOOT THAT YOU'VE ENJOYED MORE THAN THE OTHERS? ANY INTERESTING INCIDENT FROM THERE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE?

A number of painters from William Adolphe Bouguereau to Nandalal Bose and Hemen Mazumdar have one way or the other influenced my work. Among photographers of our times I really envy the body of work produced by Nick Knight.



8. AS A CONCEPTUAL PHOTOGRAPHER, DO YOU THINK IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE PERSON BEING PHOTOGRAPHED FULLY UNDERSTANDS THE CONCEPT THAT YOU'VE VISUALIZED FOR THE ACTUALIZATION OF THE IDEA? HOW DO YOU MAKE SURE YOUR SUBJECT RESONATES WITH WHAT YOU'VE VISUALIZED IN YOUR MIND?

I find it rather impossible explaining what I'm visualizing with words. And I do not think its necessary to explain an idea too much to the subject because that limits the flow. I tell them enough to give a direction and mood. I also do rough drawings and mood boards before my conceptual work, so that helps.

9.SINCE YOU'RE A CHANDERNAGORE-BASED ARTIST AND PHOTOGRAPHER, DO YOU THINK THE TOWN HAS A SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND EMOTIONAL INFLUENCE ON YOUR WORK?

Whatever social, political and emotional influences, if at all, you see in my images are derived from my growing up in this town. If I am to evaluate the influence, I think there is a sense of romance that is unique to living in this town, with the remnants of French architecture and little gardens. A sense of calm and uncluttered spaces that imprints in my images.

10. APART FROM PHOTOGRAPHY AND ART, WHAT OTHER THINGS DO YOU TAKE INTEREST IN? YOUR INSTAGRAM BIO MENTIONS THAT YOU'RE A SCULPTOR AS WELL, HOW DID YOU LEARN SCULPTING?

I learnt sculpting the same way I learnt photography and painting- by persistently doing it. I personally don't think I'm good at any of these above mentions, but I got to keep at it till I am. I also love cooking and learning about food.

11. FINALLY, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LOVE TO SHARE FOR YOUNG ARTISTS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS WHO ARE TRYING TO MAKE IT BIG IN THE INDUSTRY?

Keep at it! Practice and learn and shape your own style.

FOLLOW HIM ON INSTAGRAM @arka_patra

SHIRAZ ALI KHAN



© Debyeet Das photography

1. Starting off with a generic question, how has the coronavirus pandemic affected you? What are the positive and negative impacts of the lockdown on you, both personally and professionally?

The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly become a part of our lives and the sooner we accept the fact that we and the virus have to co-exist, the better off we will be. Of course, we are in The New Normal and it's wise to acknowledge this paradigm shift. Our regular activities need to be approached differently, but life must go on and we must find a way to step out and step up again to take back control of our lives and livelihood with safety and precautions.

We all know about the negative impacts that the virus has had on all our lives and livelihood and of course the Indian economy and the world. For Art and Culture, particularly for the fraternity I belong to, the change is enormous and quite challenging. Physical concerts have all but

ceased to be and the essence of audience-artist interaction has faded away. Audience response is very critical to us, it makes us enthusiastic to perform and to progress. This also holds true for the times when our supporting musicians collaborate on stage and enliven the quality of performance.

Nevertheless, I take this as a breathing space that gives us time to nurture our talents and naturally focuses our energy on Riyaz. As a result, the comeback will be powerful, but we will again emerge, gradually using the online medium.

Live concerts are also social events. I miss the illuminated stage, the sound checks, the filled auditoriums etc. I hope to be able to get back to auditoriums and shows soon. Optimistic as I am, or fellow musicians are, we are experimenting phenomenally and using the digital platforms available to us. The positive side is the power of resilience that we are all demonstrating and we will definitely get better and overcome this crisis. I think for now the motto has become "Be Safe - Be Healthy and Stay Virtually Connected!"



2. It is no secret that you belong to a family whose contribution to Indian music is immense and unparalleled. Has the responsibility of carrying forward the legacy of the legendary Baba Allaiddin Khan and Ustad Ali Akbar Khan been too daunting a task sometimes?

I strongly believe that it's your destiny that makes you a part of the legacy. So when your calling comes, you go with the flow and give it your best. Of course, it is a big responsibility, but more than that, I think of it as an honour. I consider it to be a privilege that I get to be a part of this legacy of my family and follow in the footsteps of Legends like my great-grandfather Baba Allaiddin Khan and my grandfather, Dr. Ali Akbar Khan. However, to even try to fit into their shoes is a mighty and almost impossible task. But I am honoured and very excited to be one of the next torch bearers of the Maihar Gharana and I am working hard with my taalim and regular practices with full determination to prove worthy of this honour.

On the flip side, the expectations are high if you belong to an exemplary lineage, and pondering on it, makes the journey all the more challenging. However, I take this as a responsibility and I work towards it. I hope and pray that I will be able to win the hearts of people with my family's music using the same discipline of Riyaz and dedication.

3. We know that you started learning the instrument at a very young age. Tell us a little bit about your early life, under whom did you receive your primary training?

I think my first pull towards Indian Classical Music was the Tabla. I was drawn to the rhythm of the tabla ever since I was a baby. I did not know the technique but the taals and layas came naturally to me. My father, Late Prof. Dhyanesht Khan introduced me to the Sarode when I was about 4 or 5 years old. It was sheer coincidence that my uncle Ustad Aashish Khan introduced the notes to me. I was naturally a left handed player for the instrument like my great grandfather. I am not a left-handed person. I just happen to play the Sarode with my left hand as lead. I cannot explain to you how it happened, but it just happened remarkably. I lost my father at a very young age and then continued my learning under my Aunt, Late Smt. Ameena Perera and thereafter with my grandfather, Late Ustad Ali Akbar Khan and I still continue to learn from my Uncle who is my God Father - Ustad Aashish Khan. I look up to him for guidance. The teachings/taalim don't just happen in the classroom.



They often carry on to live performances when I learn a new way of approaching the old traditions of our Gharana. It is a continuous learning process and this is just the beginning as I still have miles to go.

4. Your grandfather was a man of enormous talent. Growing up, how had his presence shaped and influenced your life, both in terms of personal growth and your perception of music? Are there any particular memories with him that you would like to share?

Yes, music for me comes from my great-grandfather Baba Allauddin Khan and then it naturally flowed down via my grandfather Ustad Ali Akbar Khan and my father Prof. Dhyanesht Khan. When my grandfather would be in the country, he would teach me as well. He was always a very quiet person, and he spoke through his music. He taught me many compositions in several ragas, and he always said that feeling and approach is most important. Since we belong to the Maihar Senia Gharana where the Gayaki method is applied for tutelage, my grandfather used the same technique. He would sing and teach us the basics and then take over the instrument to demonstrate. I still remember, that we started out singing the Saraswati Bandana and I remember learning Raagini Raga Durga as one of our firsts. I used to be a very naughty kid and it was very difficult to make me sit down for a long time but Dadu would be very patient and often would let me play around and come back to learn some more. We brothers and sisters all sat together with Dadu to learn from him so it was a great and fun experience. I wish I had gotten a chance to learn more from him but I still refer back to his recordings from time to time and study his different variations, improvisations and renditions and each time I find something new to learn from him. There is no end to learning and I am still at it everyday.

5. You were also a student of the late Pt. Shankar Ghosh. Although you later devoted yourself to the sarod, do you think your experience and learning of 'tabla taleem' from the maestro has enhanced your musical understanding and performance? Apart from sarod and tabla, what other instruments attract you the most?

Since I had an inherent love for the Tabla, my father sent me to the Late Pandit Shankar Ghosh to learn it. He was an amazing teacher and I learnt a lot from him regarding the nuances, styles, taals and so much more. He has been a huge inspiration in my life. He was a very loving and simple human being and we all miss him deeply. Learning the Tabla has helped me enhance my ability to play Sarode and make improvisations in different taals. I love all forms of music and instruments but I still think I love Sarode and Tabla the best. As a heartfelt guru, the emphasis was on discipline, regularity and focus. It goes in our gharana, that the knowledge of rhythm is indispensable for the ear to develop towards the right music. And, knowledge did not deviate.

6. What was the inspiration behind forming Indian Blues? The band mostly deals with semi-classical vocals, and we've often seen a fusion of traditional Hindustani sangeet with Western Classical, Retro, Blues and Soft Rock, do you think cross-genre experimentation is the way ahead for today's music?

Indian Blues has been our approach to connect with Millennials and younger generations and to grow their love for Indian Classical Music through experimentation and an approach that mixes various genres of music. We still have Indian Blues concerts with huge attendance. Men and women belonging to different age groups come to watch us play and we are happy that in some way we are able to reach the hearts of music lovers through our approaches. Many of the compositions are of my grandfather and some involve various Indian folk tunes.



Cross genre experimentation is not a phenomenon of today, it has been there for centuries. When Gayaki form of Instrumental music were first being created on the instruments and renditions were being done, don't you think that was cross genre experimentation? So this is an age old practice of innovation and creativity and the whole art and culture industry will keep evolving with time and practice. It is actually quite exciting to even think 100 years from now, how music will evolve with change in our approaches of consuming music.

7. Our readers would love to know about the origin and the characteristic features of the Seniya Beenkar and Seniya Rababiya gharana. How has it evolved with time?

As far as my understanding goes, the word Senia came from Tansen, who is considered to be one of the most prominent figures of Hindustani Classical Music. The descendants of Tansen, started calling themselves Seniyas and that is how the 'Senia Gharana' came into being. The Senia Gharana became the precursor to all Gharanas - vocal or instrumental. After Tansen's death it formed three branches - Senia Gharana (specializing in Dhrupad), The Senia Beenkar Gharana and the Senia Rababiya Gharana. The focus was three instruments - the Been, the Rabab and the Sursringar. The rest is all history as music evolved in various styles.

8. It is a common belief that the newer generations fail to comprehend and appreciate the depth of Indian classical music, and there's a sharp decline in the number of people who genuinely take interest in this subject anymore. People are often of the opinion that traditional Indian music is more appreciated outside the country than by its own people. What is your take on it?

I have a simple example to explain this. When you get good home cooked food, why do you still go to restaurants to eat various forms of food? It's the curiosity and excitement that new tastes and other country cuisines bring in. But as you keep growing older, you realise that nothing comes close to your home cooked food and you realise that your roots pull you back or remind you of who you are. Similarly, the young generation's fondness to western forms of music is something you cannot change. Many are not aware of the rich culture that their own country has and it will take them years and a lot of maturity to love and accept Indian music and once that happens they will realise where their heart belongs. The same concept works for Westerners loving Indian music. People always like and crave for what they don't have and forget to appreciate the things they already do, till they realise the worth. I am sure Indian Classical Music will live on for generations to come and more people will keep coming back to their roots because at the end of the day one wants peace and Indian Classical Music has the ability to give you that peace, calmness, healing and soul enrichment which people will never forget and always yearn for.



9. Ustad Ali Akbar Khan has worked with Satyajit Ray in his film 'Devi' and also in the Ismail Merchant-James Ivory production 'The Householder'. Do you have any plans or do you ever intend to work as a music composer in films?

I cannot compare myself with my grandfather at all. My grandfather and my great grandfather were legends and I am just the new kid on the block. I have miles to go before I reach that stage. I just love our music and am passionate about reaching audiences and touching their hearts in whatever little way possible. Honestly I do not have any plans as of now to get into music composition for films but I do hope and request for everyone's blessings that I can get to that point in my life when I can compose music for films. I hope that someday I can reach that level of visionary showcase, all while following in my family's footsteps.

10. Being a Bengal-based artist, do you think Kolkata provides the suitable cultural environment for the development of an artist in terms of scope and exposure?

Bengal has always provided a nurturing environment for culture and tradition. Kolkata is known as the cultural capital of our country and is known to all as the "City of Joy". I think people born of Bengali origin have music, culture and tradition imbibed in their genetics and it is probably a matter of time and the right environment that this love for culture shows up in various forms. We still have renowned artists of various forms of art who are driving this space in Bengal and so there is great hope for the future to churn out more artists.

I still see little boys and girls being brought up by their parents to learn Indian Classical music and that makes me more hopeful that the Art and Culture is still very much a part of the learning ecosystem in this part of the country and we will continue this practice generations hereafter.

11. Since you're a teacher as well, our final question to you would be how do you help young musicians imbibe the nuances of Hindustani sangeet?

I remember the way I started my practices and the way my grandfather taught me the basics. He always told me that the basics always matter the most, especially to achieve greater levels and so while teaching, I always stress on the basics and lots of practice. What is important for youngsters is to get the perfect tone of every Svaras, to get the perfect Sur and to understand the Taals. If you are confident on your Sur and Taal and have the practice, the next steps flow easily. I also stress on the love and passion that one must feel to be able to pursue music because there can be nothing more pure to the heart and one must pursue this Sadhana of Music with utmost devotion and passion.

BLUE NEIGHBOURHOOD

BY AHANA MITRA

I am moving, like so many others.

Cold hard treacle flowing down the streets.

Pinpricks of blotted lights and unmannerly
splotches of tainted colours.

Hushes spiralling to a blabbering crescendo and I
remain silent.

The popcorn stalls lie vacant at the side- traffic
on the lanes and the by lanes are where I try to
lose myself.

There are so many.

The bus is moving.

When I turn in my seat, there's a quivering sea of
happiness and beside me, the window is pushed
up.

(Cold evening wind in my eyes while dark masses
rush past.) The city settles down to the
inevitability of the night.

Lights widen to streaks and the highway dusts
swirl in a kaleidoscopic vision.

A jazz of lightened colours.

Heightened senses shiver in an ecstasy of
anonymous emotions.

(There's) plush red of the seats; the hard wood
brown of the piano.

Clink of cutlery on glass tops.



An Ocean In My Mind

By Nimrat Kaur

My mind is an ocean
My values are the coral reefs
My rich friends are the cruise ships
My poor friends are the fishing boats
My loyal friends are the rescue boats
Pulling out those,
Who are threatened by me.
When the reefs are torn apart,
My fears escape,
They are the fishes and sea creatures
They swim across currents
They are lured by fat worms
And then they meet their ends,
Dangling from silver and iron hooks
My soulmates are the ship-wrecks
Embedded in the hard sea bed
Adorned by sea shells
Occasionally, my mind wants new love,
And it opens its gates
Letting the explorers enter.
But they seek not my company,
But the treasures my soulmates hold:
Centuries old gold.
They pour over texts, maps and atlases
And not once look inside me
So my mind shuts them out.
Those who never make it up to the surface
Are fed to my insecurities:
The various species of sharks.
Perhaps, that is why it's better,
To love the worthless
The old and discarded
You will at least know
That new love will not die like infatuation
For once in your soul,
Embedded in the seabed
Adorned by seashells,
They shall not be robbed.





A Letter To The Little One:

BY INDRAKSHI ROY

"Will you walk a little faster?"

Said a Whiting to a snail

"There's a porpoise close behind us,

And he's treading on my tail."

Fluorescent realization struck me today— I wish to learn from you; you, who with clarity of vision and purity of thought wrote whatever coloured her mind first. You smell of warm magic, of blurry ends of the imaginable, of the rocky strand where the sea and sky meet and kiss.

Well, your stories do.

Even as I'm writing this, the image of Miss Honey from 'Matilda' shines in front, leading the little girl you want to befriend through gold-draped paths of the woods to her little cottage. I can still feel what she must have felt, that the afternoon silence made the trees and birds and animals come alive, more than usual — the forest's beating heart a dim warmth at the base of your ribs.

You are adventurous, reckless, impatient, impossible. I know you will never finish this letter, it isn't pretty enough (beyond what you think you heard was a snail of some sort..?). I do not envy you, but I respect you. I want to sit at your side all day writing down whatever you babble out, because I'm too cowardly to find out on my own. I need your courage, little one, the way you often make older, more placid people fidgety with your bird-like movements and intense curiosity.

I can use big words now, but my stories will never be as sparkly as yours.



Your silhouette
was still
against the
twilight sky.

I love you for who you are. A snail cannot turn into a butterfly; neither can the leopard alter its spots. If someone tried to scrub them off, I might add, he'd be a mighty unhappy, neurotic leopard.

I met you last Summer Sunday, and I must apologize. The trees, all prickly and azure, felt suspicious, but the leaves giggled as I thudded past them. Something was familiar, like a dream I could reach but not quite hold. You were putting your fingers into everything – gooey pies, shaving cream, the mud you were chasing fireflies around on.

I chased you from behind, until we reached the brim of the water-body. I exploded then, exasperated-

"Why must you rush around so? What in the world are you searching for?"

I confess to you, little one, that I only did that because you are so dearly beloved, and I was glad to see you making a lively mess instead of discovering your lifeless body under the tree, surrounded by the creatures you lived for and one with the earth you lived in.

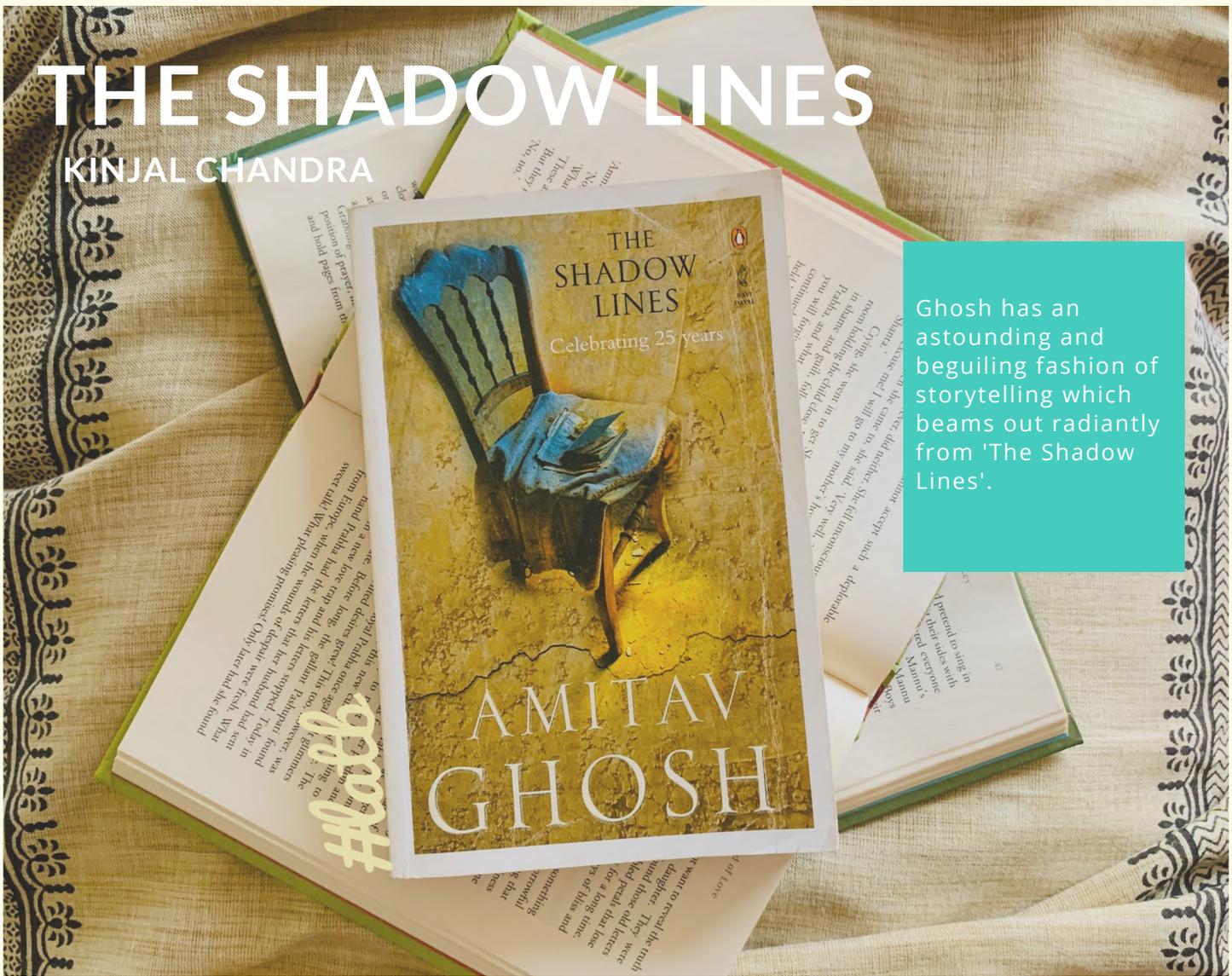
I remember wet, disgusting mud on my knees and elbows. I think I was weeping.

Your silhouette was still against the twilight sky.

"I don't know," you whispered, lispng , "but I'll find it."

THE SHADOW LINES

KINJAL CHANDRA



Ghosh has an astounding and beguiling fashion of storytelling which beams out radiantly from 'The Shadow Lines'.

Ghosh has an astounding and beguiling fashion of storytelling which beams out radiantly from 'The Shadow Lines'. To beginners, it might seem unmanageable, knotty and labyrinthine, but once you get the hang of his writing, he just draws you in and you have no other choice besides savouring it.

'The Shadow Lines' unfurls various subliminal yet disquieting themes that wallow into your mind and force you to just sit and think. This is perhaps the very reason why I took a long time with this book. It is demanding as it requires your complete concentration and attention in order to catch the underlying tones of sorrow, belonging, emancipation, freedom and longing.

The narrator is nameless, which adds to the universality of the piece. The characters have their own quirks - Tridib's rationalism, Ila's spirit, Thamma's stringency. Ghosh assembles these characters scrupulously and almost breathes life into them. I would love to sit with these characters over a cup of tea.

What reverberates the most from this book is the theme of freedom, violence, division and most importantly, the structure. The book is structured as disjointed and cluttered because it's completely from the narrator's memory. Memory, as we all know, is a strange business. This structure causes the narrative to jump to a different era, to a different location across the globe and shifting the spotlight to a different character within a few lines (sometimes causing wild confusion). It highlights the potential and capacity of time, which can disrupt lives, leave dreams unfulfilled and dissipate emotions.

What Ghosh wants to question is the purpose of partition, design of freedom and the significance of homogeneity . Liberty is viewed from different vantages by different people and the borders between countries do not appear as starkly gory and barb-wired. Ghosh highlights the futility of hatred , bloodshed, violence, segregation and the artificiality of borders and that is precisely what makes this book a masterpiece .

Thanks to the contrastingly simplistic ending , the book somewhat pointed out to me what it wanted to convey. It really left me tongue-tied, I had the most amount of difficulty to put together what I felt about this book.



Religion, Philosophy & Mahisasuramardini

Anuraag Das Sarma

Even before the sun graced the sky and turned a light red, a million little (and big) radios, in the state of West Bengal, were taken down from the mantelpieces they resided on and placed next to beds. The million or so men and women, and many more choosing instead to use their phones, tuned their radios to Akashbani Bhawan's Mahisasuramardini and listened to the mostly-Sanskrit songs and archaic Bengali narration with rapt attention. The verdict was clear. Covid-19 had failed to diminish the pujo spirit in the bustling state of West Bengal.

Every year, I've either heard or seen the programmes offered to us in the early hours of the Mahalaya morning. But what is it about the Mahisasuramardini that draws me, or rather us, towards it? When I talk of us, I refer not to the cult of history fanatics, interested in all the classical literature that the world has to offer in the form of myths, legends and epics, but rather of a collective Bengali populace. The Sanskrit verse-songs, interspersed with narration that'd make Bankim Chandra insecure, Mahisasuramardini has a very distinct cultural gravity. One could argue that the reason behind many people still listening to it is because of a mutual respect and love for all things old. However, while that might be a contributing factor, I'd like to counter by stating a different reason.

I believe it was Monobina Gupta, who while conducting an interview for The Wire, stated that Ramakrishna and Karl Marx co-existed in Bengal. This statement is quite absurd yes, and like all other absurdities, carries a lot of weight and conveys the unflinching truth. The "Bhadralok Marxists", as Monobina put it, of the 1970s, spoke of the upliftment of the Lower Classes through Marxist means on one hand, and visited the Dakshineswar Temple on the other. Even under the communists, Bengal remained religious and while it never devoted herself entirely to one God or Goddess, none of the other 33 crore deities of the Hindu religion can claim the clout exercised by Durga this side of the Hooghly.





The reason behind millions of people listening to Mahisasuramardini only becomes clear when one considers the cultural impact it has had since its inception in 1931. Listening to it is a ritual in and of itself - no different from the Anjali we offer on Ashtami or the Sanskrit chants uttered by the priests in saffron. I'll be honest, I did not mean to wake up early to listen to Mahalaya this year. But, I did end waking up exactly at 4, and I did end up listening to quite a bit of it. Nothing really changed in me, not physically, not mentally - but I did feel at peace, knowing that a little tradition, going back 89 years, was not lost: neither in time, nor in translation.

Doubt not the myth-spouting ability of the Ancient Indians. The Iliad was simply narrated by Homer before someone decided to write it down. If the same were to happen to a lot of Indian Myths, we'd have too many epics to handle. The Mahabharata itself is 12 times the size of the Iliad and is much more complex and I'd argue, more philosophical than both the Greek epics put together. For years, man has turned to religion to find answers to philosophical questions - leading not only to different philosophical schools of thought, but also to different religions.

One can again argue that Theology and Philosophy are two different subjects all together and while I might disagree with them, I can see where they come from. Modern philosophy has managed to reject God every step of the way and even kill him more than once. But while Marx might call it the Opium of the people and Nietzsche might write obituaries for the omnipotent deities, one must realise that God was the brainchild of philosophy.

Philosophy is the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality and existence and in a rapidly scientific age, philosophy has lost its footing. Philosophy was meant to answer the big questions of life - Why are we here? Why do we do what we do? And so on.

Both science and religion, however, answer philosophical questions with varying degrees of success and while we have technology at our disposal now, we had no such thing in the past. Everything was, for the lack of a better term, more human. And humans, in their ever-lasting lust for power, decided to use religion to exercise control (á-lá-Henry VIII, á-lá-Charlemagne and so on). However, religion was founded as an answer to philosophical questions. For example, the Ontological Argument supplied by St. Anselm, while flawed, was meant to answer the questions behind our Origin. Or, even if we do consider Occam's razor, the idea of a benevolent deity, is inherently, a simple one and hence true.

Much like Classical Western Philosophy, Indian philosophy is closely tied to religion. We can broadly divide it into two schools of thought - the Aasthik(One's who accept the Vedas) and the Naasthik (One's who don't accept the Vedas). However, all was not based on religion. Charvaka (Materialism), Samkhya(Dualism), Vaisheshika (Perception and Inferential philosophy) and Nyaya (Logic) are the atheistic schools of thought in Indian philosophy. However, these are all mostly theoretical (except for Charvaka) and have a certain counterpart on the Theistic side of things which are comparatively more practical, namely - Yoga, Mimansa and Vedanta. The ancient philosophers believed that the practical and theoretical aspects of these different schools of thought need to work in tandem to help mankind better understand the world.

Indian philosophy itself is credited to the Brahmans and saints - which makes complete sense when one realises that the Ancient Indian Education System catered specifically to the upper-castes. The Brahman's hence, were highly educated and went on to lead the field of Indian Philosophy. This further explains why Indian philosophy is so interconnected with the concepts of Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism. If we look at the Bhagavad Gita the way we look at Plato's Republic or Sun Tzu's Art of War, I believe that we'll learn more from it than if we treat it as a holy book.

And it is with this very concept in our minds that we return back to Mahisasuramardini. One of the main reasons behind Bengal's love for this seemingly-inconsequential radio programme, is because of it's affinity towards intellectualism. And while religion might seem to be on it's way out, it will always have a place in Bengal - simply because it was crafted over centuries to answer questions that mankind was too young to answer. Now that mankind is on the cusp of Adulthood, and God, as Nietzsche so eloquently put it, is dead - let us take a moment to thank it for trying to help us understand this complex world. However, take the words of Religion with a grain of salt (or in some cases a pound), for mixing myth with truth, in my personal experience, has always led to less-than-ideal scenarios.





DECOLONIZATION OF THE BENGALI PSYCHE

Anuraag Das Sarma

I must begin this essay by evoking Dostoevsky's underground man for I am as much at fault as anybody else clinging on to the past. I live in a house built during the colonial era; I still use a typewriter; I have not one but two vintage lamps on my table, and my photo gallery is filled with sepia-tinted photographs of Victorian Calcutta. And yes, I refer to my city as Calcutta, not Kolkata.

"I am a colonized man; a sick man; a timid man. My identity is diseased."

-Notes from Calcutta

(A crude attempt at a joke)

I have read Bankim Chandra and Sarat Chandra. I've read Manik Bandopadhyay and Sunil Gangopadhyay. I've read Jibananda Das and Buddhadev Basu. I've even read about Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna. But is that enough? Can I call myself a Bengali Intellectual just because I can quote Anandamath and Dhanshiritir Tir from memory? Does my affinity towards Mohiner Ghoraguli negate my colonial viewpoints?

I have read Bankim Chandra and Sarat Chandra. I've read Manik Bandopadhyay and Sunil Gangopadhyay. I've read Jibananda Das and Buddhadev Basu. I've even read about Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna. But is that enough? Can I call myself a Bengali Intellectual just because I can quote Anandamath and Dhanshiritir Tir from memory? Does my affinity towards Mohiner Ghoraguli negate my colonial viewpoints?

Earlier, it was considered impossible for someone to give a rousing speech in Bengali. All the congress leaders, including the Grand Old Man of Calcutta, spoke exclusively in the tongue of their colonisers. Not much has changed. I am writing this in english and you're reading this in english. Could I have written this article in Bengali? Being completely honest, no. Atleast not an article with literary merit. My skills in my own mother tongue are heavily limited. I can speak Bengali. I can read Bengali. I can even write amateurish poems in Bengali. However, while I might talk of Pramathanath Bishi's allusions to religion and Bankim Chandra's vivid imagery, I'm afraid I'll never be able to replicate them. My hold on my own mother tongue is so weak that I can hardly form a sentence worthy of praise.

If I were to live in a modest flat instead of this colonial abode, would I be any different? Would I still cling on to my false and archaic visions of grandeur? In short, would I still be an insufferable little faux-intellectual? Most probably.

Through extensive research and experimentation, I've come to the conclusion that the average colonised Bengali Intellectual goes through three stages in their life cycle:

(i) **The First Stage** : The little precocious toddlers, well on their way to becoming colonised Bengali Intellectuals, begin their "holier-than-thou-esque" journey of life by going to sleep only when their parents sing Tagore. They grow up listening to Tagore, maybe even learning his songs. Now, at this point, you might ask, "Well Anuraag, what's wrong with loving Tagore?"

Well, there is nothing wrong with loving Tagore. These children however consider him to be the only Bengali academic. They read exclusively english (they read Tagore's stories in english too) and they look down upon anyone who can't communicate in their coloniser's tongue.



(ii) **The Second Stage**: The second stage in the life cycle of the colonised Bengali, begins when the once-precious little toddler turns into an angsty 15-year old. These children, all of a sudden, develop an interest in the films of Satyajit Ray. After watching Aranyer Din Raatri, they decide to read the book it was based on. They end up loving the book and thus begins their fascination for Calcutta. They read up on the Bengal Renaissance, they start listening to Baul music and they start watching Ray-Sen-Ghatak films religiously.

This stage is also the most dangerous. This is when the snobbishness, characteristic to the colonised Bengali Intellectual, pops up. Their research is limited and they pretend to know more than they do (Case in point: This Article). They also believe that the Bengal Renaissance was a reaction to the company rule rather than against it. They are so blinded by the rose-red glare of the past that they do not realize that our colonisers were the ones who prevented the Bengal Renaissance from being a truly enlightening period of time.

(iii) **The Third Stage**: This is it. The final stage in the life cycle of the colonised Bengali Intellectual. This is when they either reject the Bengal Renaissance or double down on the views they held in stage two. But what is common across the board is their love/hate relationship with Calcutta. They love the city's past and hate its present state. But why do they hate the present condition of the city? Is it because of financial or political reasons? No.

It is because of their belief that the "once-oh-so-glorious" city of Calcutta is artistically dead.

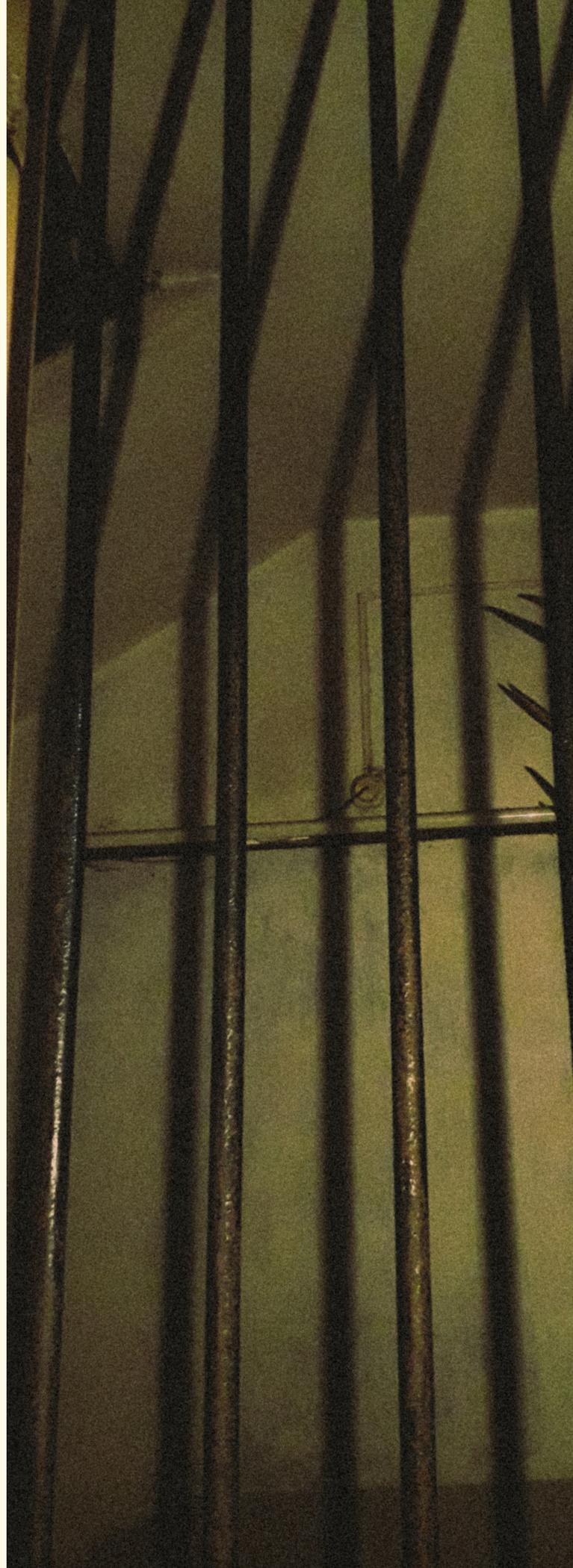
The city is, in all honesty, neither creatively, nor artistically dead. Neither is it going through a period of stagnation. These colonised pseudo-intellectuals, however, are blind to anything that happens in the present. They are busy looking into the past with their rose-tinted contact lenses, to notice the current scene of budding local artists, writers and musicians.

But how does this connect to our colonised psyche? Well, it is our very belief that the 'good-old-days' were in-fact, well, good. Sure, the Brahmo Samaj Movement was a groundbreaking initiative but it was still limited to the über-rich upper-caste zamindars and nobles. Manik Bandopadhyay died without a paisa to his name and so did the hundreds of other writers and artists these intellectuals keep droning on and on about. Take into account the numerous famines that plagued Bengal and you will realise that the past is not as amazing as it is often made out to be.

How are we supposed to shed our colonial shackles if we keep fantasising about colonial times? The key, to these handcuffs that bind us, ladies and gentlemen, lies in the present.

So, repeat after me:

**ভূতে থাকলে,
ঘাড়ে চাপে
রিপন সাহেবের ভূত।।**





THE TOP FIVE VINCENT CASSEL FILMS

Aniruddha Guha

Cassel has a strange fancy for playing gripping characters driven by deeper desires or a sense of understanding. He's been one of France's most acclaimed actors since his performance in Kassowitz's *La Haine*.

Here are my favourite performances of his:

5. OUR DAY WILL COME

I believe this to be one of his most overlooked and under-appreciated performances. The motivations of his character are left unclear throughout the film yet they are very hard hitting. The film, however is not for everyone, meaning that either you're gonna love it or hate it violently but its definitely worth watching.

4. MESRINE: KILLER INSTINCT

Cassel plays the titular character of Jacques Mesrine, a brutal real-life killer and escaped convict, charged with committing an astounding amount of crimes. Very few actors could sustain the spirit of the character portrayed here and Cassel does so beautifully.

3. EASTERN PROMISES

This film focuses on the Russian mobsters, and depicts brutal violence and is held up by a very genuine performance from the entire cast. Cassel's role here is relatively small but its very impactful and he brings certain aspects of the character alive in a very original and genuine way.

2. IRREVERSIBLE

Gasper Noe's *Irreversible* is one the most disturbing and immersive films that I have ever seen. While the three lead actors are magnificent, Cassel stands out. The way he blends into the character and transforms himself through the course of the film is very impressive.

1. LA HAINE

This film paints a very real and striking image of Parisian society through the eyes of three young men struggling their way through life. Cassel capably traverses the range of emotions felt by the character from his indifferent attitude at the beginning of the film to the grim realisation that even the most heinous living being is worth preserving.

BAUMBACH & HIS SOCIOPATHS

BY RUDRAYAN GOOPTU



If you were to go up to a cinephile right now and utter just the first few syllables of Baumbach's name, you'd immediately be sworn into the very secretive cult that is the Intellectual Cinephiles Association (maybe even get invited to an Eyes Wide Shut-esque party. I have it on good authority that the ICA loves such parties). Baumbach is known as one of the central figures in the 90s and 00s indie scene in the States and continues to make deeply personal and character-driven comedy-dramas which draw comparison to the works of Woody Allen and Jim Jarmusch. One of the central devices linking all his films together is the immensely talented but sociopathic protagonist who in turn, provides for a deep-dive character study as well as an immensely entertaining cinematic experience.

Beginning with his debut, the indie darling *Kicking and Screaming* (which, by the way, is my favourite film of all time) back in 1995, he's continued to fill his stories with writers, filmmakers and musicians, all of whom are intensely perceptive of the world around them but are unable to deal with their own emotions and personalities, or the effect they have on others. The writer-graduates of *Kicking And Screaming* still kick around their college campus, afraid to embark upon their real lives and unable to see the meaningful relationships right in front of them. In *Mr. Jealousy*, Eric Stoltz's writer lies his way into group therapy to spy on his girlfriend's ex (also a self-indulgent writer) with no concept of how untrusting he's being. *The Squid And The Whale* and *Margot At The Wedding* both feature mighty authors at their centre whose toxic narcissism wreaks havoc on the psyche of their young children.

By the inherent nature of the characters, they are constantly in search of the capital T-Truth that eludes them, only to be confronted by it later in their own art. In his second film, *Mr. Jealousy*, Lester Grimm is so invested in infiltrating his love rival's therapy session that he does not realize a genuine friendship developing, disguised as conversational sparring, thus creating fiction as a means to live and discover himself.

After a directorial hiatus when he showed his writing skills working with regular collaborator Wes Anderson, he burst out of the hardcore indie bubble with *The Squid and the Whale* (2005). The characters here are not the 90s pyjama top-and-tie pseudo-intellectuals but are more sophisticated and mature. Our protagonist, Bernard Berkman, played by Jeff Daniels, is his clearest vision of the kind of toxicity that empty intellectualism can generate. In middle age he has seen his creative ambitions curdle into raging pretension and unforgivable misogyny, alienating his wife when she becomes more successful than him and driving his youngest son to behavioural deviancy at an early age. His only ally is his eldest son Walt who becomes the most affected by Bernard: his father's opinions on art and literature are so dominating that Walt mistakes them for his own, failing to develop his own critical eye in lieu of his dad's and eroding his own self-image in lieu of one his father would approve of. His deception in claiming Pink Floyd's "Hey You" as his own at a talent show, is an arrogance that he's learnt from a father who cannot separate his own image of himself as a "voice of a generation" from his reality as a vulnerable, flawed human being.

After the detailed character studies of *Squid...* and *Margot at the Wedding*, we find another shift in tone in *Greenberg* (2010), marked by the entrance of his greatest influence, actress and co-writer, Greta Gerwig (now an acclaimed director in her own right). His earlier films have a tighter and denser aesthetic whereas the ones with Gerwig have a lighter and more airy vibe, similar to that of the mumblecore movement which she originally belonged to. Moreover, Gerwig's characters, in stark contrast to the authors, are not artists in their minds, but in their bodies: they are dancers, singers and socialites. While his characters are unable to express themselves, hers are able to physically portray their thoughts and ideas. While his characters are locked away under layers of artifice, hers are overtly involved with the world. While his characters think, hers just simply exist. His characters are defined by their ironic detachment and cynicism whereas hers are overtly sincere. Frances Halloway (from *Frances Ha* (2013)) has no idea how to behave around others unlike her, finding it easier to hide in the worlds she creates with her friends where she has no responsibility and can express herself freely and without barriers. The film's central conflict arises when her best friend



"By the inherent nature of the characters, they are constantly in search of the capital T-Truth that eludes them, only to be confronted by it later in their own art."

In *Mistress America* (2015), freshman Tracy writes a short story about her soon-to-be-stepsister, Brooke, played by Gerwig, in order to get into an elite literary society at her college. She is enamored with her new big sister from the get go, drawn to her extroversion and the way she doesn't care what others think of her, but she also sees straight through her, to the oblivious, doomed-to-fail and terminally insecure person beneath, pegging her as a woman who "sees the world in all its accuracy, but cannot see herself." But in observing her muse, she develops a horribly self-serving relationship with her.

His last 2 films, *Meyerowitz Stories* (2017) and *Marriage Story* (2019) are more standard family dramas but they too feature strong headed artists at their center: Harold Meyerowitz, a 70-year-old retired professor of sculpture and Charlie Barber a theater director. Harold's jealousy for his contemporary artists who achieved more success than him and his obvious dissatisfaction with his children's careers (wealth manager and piano teacher) cause all his relationships to grow sour while Charlie's sometimes overbearing and controlling nature lead to the divorce and a painful custody case with his actress wife Nicole.

From the vindictive Bernard to the opportunistic Tracy, it's these pillars of ego which come to mind when one thinks of a Baumbach picture. The main criticism against him is that his characters are almost always white, wealthy, middle-class New Yorkers; their so-called "White People Problems" is so unimportant that it makes one ask the question, "Why should we care?" But the issues faced by his characters don't only befall the privileged: Emotional insecurity, creative atrophy, being unable to express emotions or to follow our dreams, these are not small issues, especially for artists. Baumbach's ability to engage with these issues with such honesty and critical vision, without dismissing them as unimportant, is what makes these themes resonate with people all across the board. Most artists are content with categorising these issues as "inevitable products of a morally compromised age", but there's a certain *je ne sais quoi* which Baumbach achieves while balancing biting satire and loving portraits, which makes him a very desirable anomaly.





GODARD OR GO HOME

BY ATRI DEB CHOWDHURY

If you're high brow and you know it, clap your hands.

If you're high brow and you know it, clap your hands.

If you're high brow and you know it, and you really wanna show it

If you're high brow and you know it, read this piece.

Let's set the scene.

Paris, 1968. The global wave of student revolutions hits post-war France. The radical leftist movement gains traction among the students of Sorbonne and Nanterre who hit the streets protesting against widespread consumerism, American imperialism, exploitative capitalism, or more specifically, the authoritarian rule of the conservative quasi-dictator de Gaulle and his head of government, Pompidou. Cars overturned, public property set on fire, blood-red flags swarming the city, streets ringing with slogans (you'd think there'd be flying baguettes as well, but apparently not). Yep, the City of Lights at its finest- the kind which attracted Fitzgerald, Hemingway and the others. Here, amidst scores of angry young faces is our guy, Godard, hurling insults (and maybe a couple of stones) at the government. Well above 30, Godard was then a man of inordinate fame with a great deal of history behind the disastrous hairline and the pair of dark glasses.

Jean-Luc Godard



Jean-Luc Godard, like many others, started out as a film critic for the Cahiers du Cinema – a French periodical which cradled the eventual birth of the art-house film movement - La Nouvelle Vague, or for folks who don't much care for Google Translate, the French New Wave. This movement prided itself on having names like Chabrol, Varda, Rivette, Truffaut and Godard at its helm, and hence was an absolute haven for alternate cinema and edgy 18-year olds (including yours truly). These critics accused mainstream cinema of not being able to represent life and reality appropriately (Plato says hi).

The movement in its essence was a postmodernist one, seeking an exit from the conventional film narrative and cinematic form. Godard, along with Truffaut, became the face of the movement and quite rightly so. Godard represented each tenet the movement personified.

His films embodied a sense of intense and radical freedom like no other. While some may find this very sense of freedom quite unsettling (subtle Sartrean wink), it fits neatly with the existentialist themes these works explored (highlighted by the portrayal of "free" characters interacting with their environment without an obvious force of desire or motivation, reminiscent of real life) as well as the separatist spirit and deep-seated disdain for conventional rubrics used to determine what a piece of art is worth. This very urge to break free also resonated within linguistic and socio-political spheres what with anti-authoritarian protests breaking out all over Europe and post-structuralism claiming firm ground.

Now, Godard's oeuvre may be broadly categorized into two periods – the apolitical new wave period (1960-1967) and the revolutionary period (1968-1979). It was the former, spanning from his first feature *Breathless* through to *Weekend*, which saw Godard's rise as a celebrated director of the New Wave. His work during this period focused on relatively conventional films that often refer to different aspects of film history. Although Godard's work during this time is considered groundbreaking in its own right, the period stands in contrast to that which immediately followed it, during which Godard ideologically denounced much of cinema's history as "bourgeois", and therefore without merit.

However, even his apolitical films were created from a fabric which was fundamentally political in its form, owing to Godard's stylistic borrowings from Brecht. Bertolt Brecht, a German playwright and theatre practitioner employed the *Verfremdungseffekt* (try and say that out loud) or V-effect to introduce a sense of alienation among the audience, aligning with the Marxist rhetoric of alienating the worker from his work.



What Godard does effortlessly, is the translation of the Brechtian aesthetic onto a piece of celluloid. Godard uses jump cuts or long unedited takes, elliptical editing, minimal added lighting, casual breaking of the fourth wall (even turning the camera on the audience once), unstable shots from a lightweight handheld camera and a deliberate denial of a fluid central narrative, building on individual thoughts and ideas instead. What Joyce did with the pen, Godard did with a camera. Hence, reigneth the “radically free”. That being said, Godard is arguably the most radical auteur (a term coined by his work-pal Truffaut) in the history of world cinema. He was also an “autobiographical” auteur, if you will, for his early work is “littered with references to films, books, compositions and paintings, as well as the people, places and political ideals that have shaped his personality and psyche” as noted by film critic David Parkinson. These references share a spectrum ranging from *Les Fleurs du Mal*, through to Mozart’s *Sonata 19 in D-Major*. That’s impressive, but did he know the lyrics to *Wonderwall*?

Then came the release of *La Chinoise*, a take on Maoism in Paris, which seemingly anticipated and fuelled the protests which followed. However, the film fell short of the Chairman’s expectations and wasn’t received well. After this, things started heading downhill. Godard renounced the “bourgeois” commercial film and took to making increasingly esoteric Maoist-collectivist didactic films with Jean-Pierre Gorin- a Maoist student of Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Lacan, with a passion for cinema that attracted Godard’s attention. This sudden political puberty governing his craft, proved to be awful for Godard as he eventually slid into irrelevance.

At the end of the day, Godard remains one of the few who truly remade cinema and influenced many filmmakers after him including the likes of Malick, Scorsese and Tarantino (whose production company is named ‘A Band Apart’ after Godard’s seminal work *Bande à part*). Thus, Godard still is a relevant figure and must remain that way for cinema’s sake. Diminishing the element of niche that surrounds the man and his works is what this article attempted to do. Should this essay fail to make an impression, it’s been fulfilling enough, patronizing people with Wikipedia knowledge, and I’ll take it.

CINEMA AND THE NAXALITE MOVEMENT

Anuraag Das Sarma

চৈত্রের কাফন (The Shroud of Spring) by মহীনের ঘোড়াগুলি (Moheener Ghoraguli) was first heard by just a handful of Bengalis in 1979. It wasn't a commercial success by any means. However, what really mattered was not how successful the song was but rather what influenced it. It was a callback to 1971, when political turmoil and the "want" for revolution controlled the streets of Calcutta.

Several people claim that the Naxalbari Uprising was an unplanned one. Perhaps so, but the signs of an impending student-led revolution was clearly visible in the cracks of the ineffective state Government. West Bengal was placed under President's Rule four times in a period of 10 years (1961 to 1971). Another sign was the influx of Russian literature, translated to Bengali. I myself, have a copy of Leo Tolstoy's Short Stories in Bengali, from that era. Stories by Dostoevsky, Turgenev and Chekov were commonplace in the bookshelves of the intellectual Bengali.

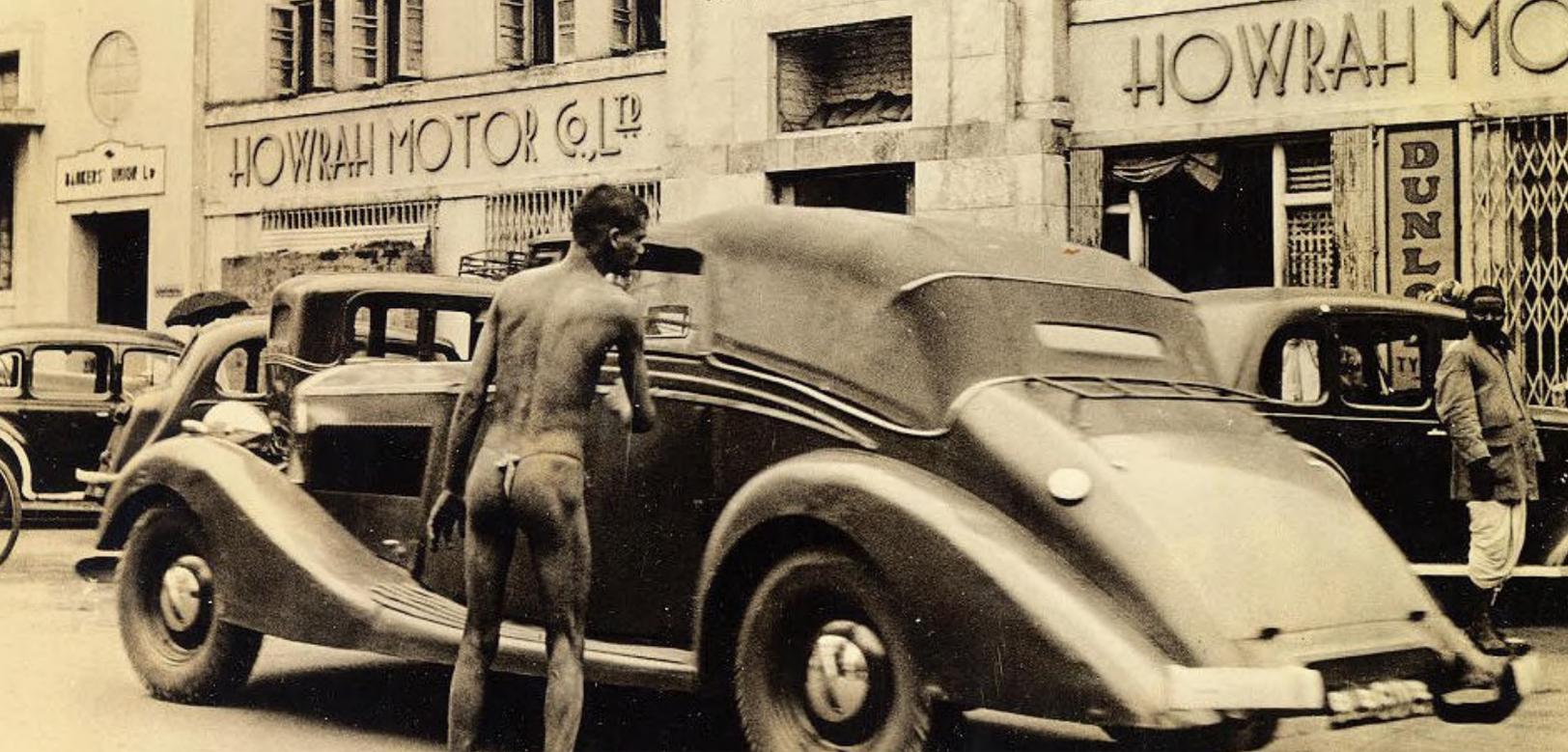
Personally, I believe that the Best Selling Author in West Bengal during the 1970s was not Shankar or Sunil Gangopadhyay but rather Lenin. The CPI(ML), led by Charu Mazumder was formed on April 22, 1969. Mazumder had already published the Historic Eight Documents, which went on to form and influence the Marxist-Leninist Ideology. This movement was gaining traction among the intelligentsia and college-going students. These students belonged to esteemed colleges and were all considered to be the *crème de la crème*.

Then what was it that drew them to the Naxalite movement?

Was it their want for a fair and equal society where the working class were not reduced to glorified slaves of the Bourgeoisie? No. The students were smart enough to realise the flaws inherent in the Marxist-Leninist ideology. A lot of them were vocal about it and a lot of them even started questioning the movement. Rather, this movement was never meant to last - it was meant to be a temporary measure; to bring about something resembling modern-day Socialist Democracy than Communism.

Bernard Mandeville, in his book, *The Fable Of The Bees: Private Vices, Public Benefits*, cleverly pointed out how selfish needs of individuals benefit the masses.





Mandeville believed that "contemporary society is an aggregation of self-interested individuals necessarily bound to one another neither by their shared civic commitments nor their moral rectitude, but, paradoxically, by the tenuous bonds of envy, competition and exploitation". In the book, Mandeville described a bee community that thrived until the bees decided to live by following a strict moral code of honesty and virtue. After abandoning their desire for personal gain their economy collapsed, as people no longer wished to pursue their vices -instead choosing to live simple, virtuous lives in a hollow tree. In other words, in the absence of selfish gains, the community lost it's will to work.

Bare Virtue can't make Nations live
In Splendor; they, that would revive
A Golden Age, must be as free,
For Acorns, as for Honesty.

The Fable influenced ideas about the division of labour and the free market (laissez-faire), and also inspired noted Economist Adam Smith, David Hume and John Maynard Keynes.

A Communist environment cannot last indefinitely on it's own because people will always selfishly chase personal gains. Hence a communist utopia, the likes of which Marx dreamt of, will forever remain a dream.

It needs to adapt to changing times which, I believe, was known to the numerous party workers and officials. The naxal movement was not supposed to be the change, it was supposed to bring about the changes required in society. However, political and personal ambitions soon undermined the movement and disenfranchised a lot of supporters. Anyone who questioned the movement was harshly prosecuted and exiled from the party. For an increasingly atheistic movement, the parallels drawn between the act of Holy War and People's war are stark and eye-opening. The State's brutal use of force failed at suppressing the movement - rather it further glorified it. The people who lost their lives were seen as martyrs.

The reason that the naxalite movement exists to this day and is labelled as the biggest threat to Indian Internal security, is a discredit to the government rather than a credit to the movement. The Government failed to understand the cause and the mentality of the people behind the movement and their use of force just strengthened the Marxist Leninist Ideology.

Bengal was undergoing a cinematic renaissance during this time. The three stalwarts of not only Indian but rather international cinema, namely Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen and Ritwik Ghatak, all hailed from Bengal. Sen and Ray both had their personal Calcutta trilogies. Satyajit Ray's Calcutta trilogy included the films Pratidwandi (The Adversary), Seemabaddha (Company Limited) and Jana Aranya (The Middleman). Mrinal Sen's trilogy included the films Interview, Calcutta '71 and Padatik (The Guerilla Fighter).



Satyajit Ray

While Ray's films focused on middle class people dealing with social unrest and economic difficulties, Sen's films focused heavily on student revolutionaries coming from the lower-middle classes and the problems faced by them.

If we take the example of Calcutta '71, Sen's Marxist leanings become immediately clear. The movie begins with a poem:

A young man, eternally 20,
Walks through history, through poverty, squalor and death.

Eternally 20 and killed so many times -- Killed because he has been protesting
And has remained an agent-provocateur.

The film comprises of four short stories.

The first story is about a lower-middle-class family staying in a cottage in a slum area.

The second story is about another middle-class family of mother & two mature daughters who were unable to cope with the starvation & poverty and succumbed to prostitution.

The third story is of a rural middle-class family where the elder son of a family is involved in smuggling rice to the city forsaking his school & education.

The fourth story is about the Kolkata's upper class society gossiping and listening to a music concert over drinking cocktails without any exposure to the common people.

The first story, about the lower-middle class family, was originally written by Manik Bandopadhyay who is considered to be one of the most important figures in 20th century Bengali Literature. Bandopadhyay was an ardent Marxist but what separated him from the other Marxist authors of the era was his habit of mixing his Marxist beliefs with Freudian themes. While his contemporaries like Tarashankar Bandopadhyay and Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhyay focused on the beauty and simplicity of rural Bengal, Manik Bandopadhyay focused on the pseudo-conservativeness of the villagers. He focused more on the dark alleyways in the minds of the seemingly simple villagers and by doing this, he managed to distinguish himself from the sea of writers who flooded World literature.

Thus, from the very beginning of the film, Sen establishes his political beliefs and the rest of the film holds up to these ideals. The fourth and final film of the story is Sen's harshest critique of Bengali society in which a man belonging to the upper class claims to be very disappointed about the condition of the poor in India.

However, it soon turns out that he is nothing but a hypocrite, who exploits the poor employees of his factory and makes money by torturing them.



The film ends with a student revolutionary being gunned down by a police officer on the streets of Calcutta and the poem is repeated again.

Ritwik Ghatak too considered himself to be a communist even though he got exiled from the Communist Party of India in 1955. His films were not based on the naxalite movement but rather on the 1947 Partition of Bengal (Partition was something which he could never quite accept). Nevertheless, his films were political to say the least and all of them had heavy communist undertones. He achieved this feat by holding up the problems of the lower classes in front of the cinema-going intellectual.

Thus, The New Wave of Indian Cinema, had a huge part to play in the movement. Cinema influenced several young men and women to participate in the Revolutionary uprising.

In Sen's *Padatik*, there is a scene where the protagonist argues with his father who was a freedom fighter during the Independence Movement. The protagonist, a naxal, truly believed that he was helping the country while his father, who'd actually helped the country gain independence, claimed that all his son had managed to do was waste his life. The surviving members of the Naxal Movement, now believe that they wasted their lives and no amount of policy statements could change this belief of theirs. Thus, in an increasingly meta moment, Sen established that fact that the Movement was led mostly by students who hadn't quite faced the problems they wished to sort.

The Naxal Movement however did not go gently into the good night - it still continues to plague the red corridor, but it now lacks the sense of righteousness that it once possessed. It has now been reduced to an increasingly militaristic movement that has more in common with religious fanaticism than the tenets of class equality that it set out to achieve. Thus, it has lost its footing in the state of West Bengal, but the Naxalbari uprising still remains etched in the minds and hearts of Bengalis everywhere.



PAINTING THE WAR

Rushali Mukherjee

As World War raged on throughout the globe in the 1930s and 40s, the artists found themselves in the most difficult conditions, thus compelling them to create exceptional pieces as an expression of self preservation. Here are a few of the many who left a profound impact with their work:

Guernica- Pablo Picasso (1937)

Guernica is considered to be one of Picasso's most famous pieces, bringing out a powerful political statement in reaction to the Nazi's casual bombing practices to the town of Basque in Guernica during the Spanish Civil War. Spain being his birthplace, he was driven by his sense of patriotism and justice to paint this masterpiece which symbolizes the tragedies of war and how it inflicts suffering upon individuals, especially innocent civilians.

In his piece, Picasso made sure to use the shades of grey, white and blue-black to express the bleakness as an aftermath of the bombing and it is also said that he specially ordered house paint that had the minimum amount of gloss to create more impact.

There is a wide range of interpretations of this painting which often contradict each other. The focus mostly revolves around the depiction of the horse and the bull by Picasso. According to art historian Patricia Falling:

"The bull and the horse are important characters in Spanish culture. Picasso himself certainly used these characters to play many different roles over time. This has made the task of interpreting the specific meaning of the bull and the horse very tough. Their relationship is a kind of ballet that was conceived in a variety of ways throughout Picasso's career".

Some critics rule out the possibility of the painting being a political message for Guernica. For example, the rampaging bull which is a motif of destruction here could be a projection of his ego. However the bull could also represent the onslaught of Fascism and as Picasso had said, the bull was a symbol of brutality and darkness while the horse represented the people of Guernica.

On completion, Guernica was displayed around the world in a brief tour, causing it to gain popularity, along with helping the Spanish Civil War to gain global attention. This painting is currently displayed in the Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid.



2. Woman in an Underground Shelter Feeding a Child Henry Moore (1941)

This painting is a part of Moore's most celebrated series of 'Shelter Drawings', being inspired by the sight of Londoners seeking the refuge from the bombs of the Blitz in the tunnels of the Tube network during the Second World War. He seemed to be especially captivated by the scene of a mother and child reclining against the wall.



Moore has used his signature style in this painting, by giving a wash of watercolour on a water-resistant surface, overlapping it with strokes of wax crayons and delicate lines of pen and black ink which accurately ring out the woman's facial features and helps define the mass of the bodies. The use of colour creates an effect of classic drapery which covers the mother and the child and also goes on to highlight the curves in the tunnel walls and figures lined up against them.

What makes the painting exceptionally beautiful is the fact that it perfectly captures the visual harmony between the main subjects of the piece, mother and child, as well as clustered figures sitting together in the tunnel. Moore successfully encapsulates the intense monumentality of the huddled shelter-ers and remarkably adds a poetic timelessness and stillness to the figure of the mother protecting and feeding her child during the raging storm of conflict.

This painting continues to be one of the finest examples of the suffering of the human spirit in a situation of adversity and is an authentic expression of the tragedy of war and its direct impact on the ordinary mass.

3. L'air bleu- Marc Chagall (1937)

Chagall was undoubtedly one of the most brilliant Cubist painters of his time, and L'air bleu still stands as one of his best works. Even though the piece portrays a scene of purity and hope, it is believed that this painting was a symbol of foreshadowing of his turbulent future in the war.

Chagall has portrayed himself and his wife Bella, lying down on scattered blossoms of purple lilac while floating over a small town which resembled a shteti in the Jewish Pale of Settlement in Western Russia, which he must have imagined from his memories of Vitebsk, his birthplace. The night sky is a deep shade of blue, which adds to the atmosphere of innocence, purity and hope in the piece. We can also observe a cock serenading the lovers with a melody on its violin instead of crowing and a goat reading from a book that lies open in front of it.

He has splendidly merged the symbols of everyday life with a folk tale or a myth, thus giving the painting a dreamy appearance of a fairy tale, something which was very typical of Chagall.

However, this peaceful setting comes along with a sense of foreboding, like the calm before a storm, to signify his struggles as a Jew in France during the onset of the Second World War. He was aware of the dangers that lay ahead of him due to his faith, and he knew that he had to become a French citizen to avoid any trouble. Even though he managed to acquire the citizenship with the help of Jean Paulhan, an editor of the Nouvelle Revue Francaise, he had to flee when France ceased to be a sovereign nation, to escape to the fate of the other refugees.

Chagall described the scenery of his painting with a few lines in his autobiographical poem 'My Distant Home':

"It rings in me-

The distant city,

The white churches,

The synagogues, The door

Is open. The sky blooms.

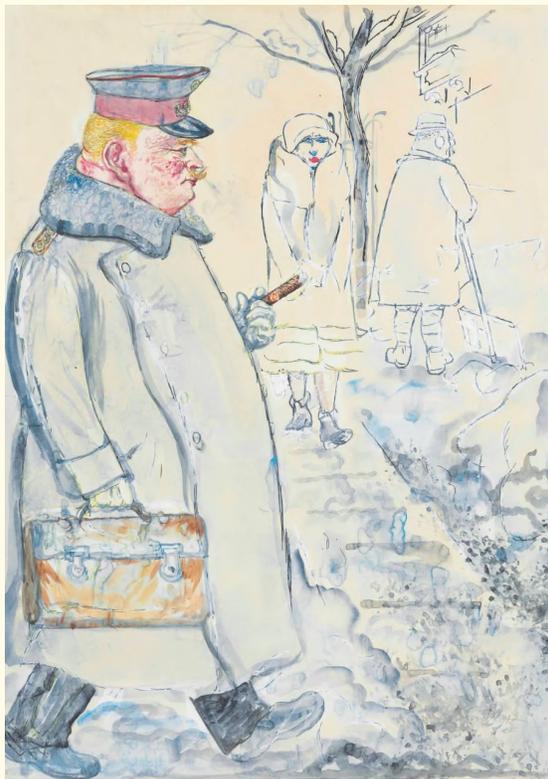
Life flies on and on."

4. Verwaltungsoffizier(Unsere Zukunft liegt in der Aktenmappe)- George Grosz (1929)

This painting was made when Grosz left Germany for the United States, and depicts a scene of a variety of different people on a street of Berlin.

Grosz has used watercolour along with striations of black ink on paper, and with the extensive use of the pale blue colour, he has successfully created the atmosphere of a chilly winter morning.

In the piece we can see a portly bureaucrat who is smoking cigar, while crossing the street with a briefcase in his hand, a woman who is huddling in her coat to escape the cold and a blind man in the distance who seems to have lost his way.



It is easy to notice that Grosz intended it to be a deeply cynical scene as the officer is carrying documents in his briefcase which are vital in determining the future of the people he is walking past. People like these are the ones who allowed the Nazis to rule Germany, by being loyal to the Third Reich since the beginning. The blind man in the background is symbolic of the officer, who is blind to the consequences of his actions. As Ralph Jentsch put it:

"Nazi power would not have been possible without millions of willing helpers from all classes, like this Verwaltungsoffizier, only carrying documents from one office to another."

5. Visions of the Atomic Age- Salvador Dali (1948)

The catastrophic explosion of the atom bomb at Hiroshima in August 1945 had left a huge impact on Salvador Dali, which compelled him to paint this piece. Soon after the bombing he devoted himself to painting many pieces on the devastation, or in other words, 'his threefold synthesis of classicism, the spiritual and concern with nuclear'. He wrote:

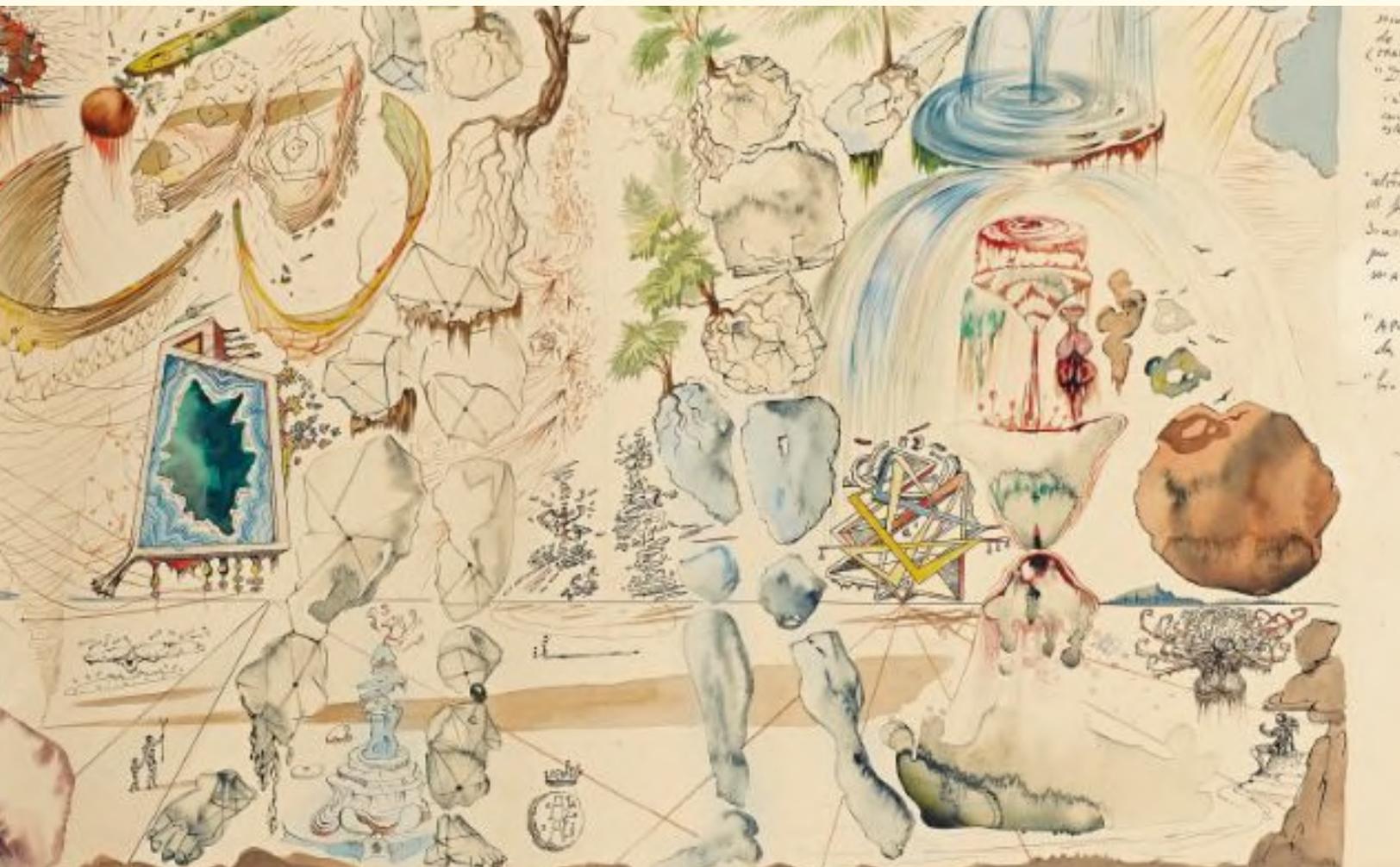
"Since then, the atom has been central to my thinking. Many scenes I have painted in this period express the immense fear that took hold of me when I heard about the explosion of the bomb"

In this piece we see a post-nuclear landscape where we see breaking up of particles as well as objects. We see how Dali has shifted his focus from making objects appear as if they are melting to bring out a sense of unconsciousness to his work, to disintegrating the objects instead. It was, according to him, "the pictorial solution of quantum theory."

Dali's use of watercolour in the upper right hand corner of the sketch captures the remnants of the mushroom cloud, and symbolizes the root of the destruction in a creative manner. The most highlighted section of the painting seems to morph into disjointed organic forms, thus embodying the magnitude of the destruction.

There are heavy geometric shapes suspended throughout the painting, while there is an omnipresence of fragments of rocks and particles in the supposed imaginary space of the piece.

This painting is the epitome of contradiction, exploring the themes of both coherence and disintegration at the same time, along with representation of his fascination with technology: thus making it one of his best works.





EXPLORING THE INNOVATION OF THE BEATLES

Mukund Daga & Aishik Roy

The story of how the Beatles took the world by storm is one which continues to intrigue millions, even today. In the insanely short span of eight years, they managed to define the zeitgeist of their generation.

If we are to take a look at the popular bands in England before The Beatles exploded onto the scene, we find several bands which were influenced by the American rock-and-rollers like Chuck Berry and Elvis. The influence, however, did not extend both ways across the pond. While early British beat groups like Gerry and The Pacemakers, Bill Fury and the Tornadoes, etc. enjoyed great fame and success in the UK, they remained virtually unknown in America. On the off chance that a British band did get to tour the US, they were not usually well received. The Beatles were the band that changed this stereotype forever.

On their first tour of the US in 1964, the Beatles were greeted at JFK Airport by a crowd of three thousand screaming fans, fighting and scrambling to get a look at them. Their new single, "Love Me Do" had been doing exceptionally well in the US charts, and word had spread.

The Beatles were swarmed by such crowds of hysterical fans wherever they performed on their US circuit.

It was absolutely unheard of for a British group to spark such excitement in the US. Baffled American journalists dubbed this phenomenon as "Beatlemania."

Such was the frenzy generated by this band that when the Beatles first appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show, they drew the largest viewing audience in US television history. An estimated 73 million households had tuned into their performance – or about thirty percent of the American population!

This wild and unprecedented success of the Beatles in America opened the floodgates to a cultural upheaval which is now referred to as "The British Invasion".

All of a sudden, British rock bands like the Dave Clark Five, The Rolling Stones, etc. were enjoying mainstream popularity in American pop culture.

The Rolling Stones frontman Mick Jagger had this to say about the influence of the Beatles:

"Their success in America broke down a lot of doors that helped everyone else from England that followed. And I thank them very much for all those things."

In 1963, The Rolling Stones were not quite as famous as The Beatles, and were still struggling for a commercial breakthrough. Believe it or not, it was Lennon and McCartney who gave the Stones an original song of theirs which went on to become their first big hit, I Wanna Be Your Man.

The Beatles came up with their own style quite literally too what with their distinct hairstyle and pristine suits that marked the swinging sixties. Their originality was no less than a brand of its own that completely revolutionised the lifestyle of youths.

The vast musical knowledge shared by the four band members George Harrison, John Lennon, Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr, resulted in them experimenting with various instruments and genres, often in unconventional and previously unthought of ways. For instance, they became the first ever Western rock band to use the sitar on a commercial record, with the release of Norwegian Wood, following which Harrison took personal sitar lessons from none other than the maestro Ravi Shankar himself.





The Beatles were also pioneers in the studio. They were always open to experimenting with novel concepts, such as on the track "Tomorrow Never Knows". This enchanting song, featured at the end of their album Revolver, was one of the first rock songs to use tape loop "samples" for a psychedelic effect. John Lennon was also keen on experimenting with vocal effects on this song. According to EMI sound engineer Geoff Emerick, Lennon asked him to make his voice "sound like a thousand Tibetan monks, chanting from the mountains". Faced with this abstract request, Emerick improvised. He had the idea of trying to re-record the vocals through a spinning Leslie speaker cabinet instead, which resulted in the haunting, swirling vocal effect we hear in the song. This was the kind of quirky innovation that the Beatles loved.

According to Paul McCartney:

"We would say, try it. Just try it for us. If it sounds crappy, okay, we'll lose it. But it might just sound good. We were always pushing ahead: Louder, further, longer, more, different."

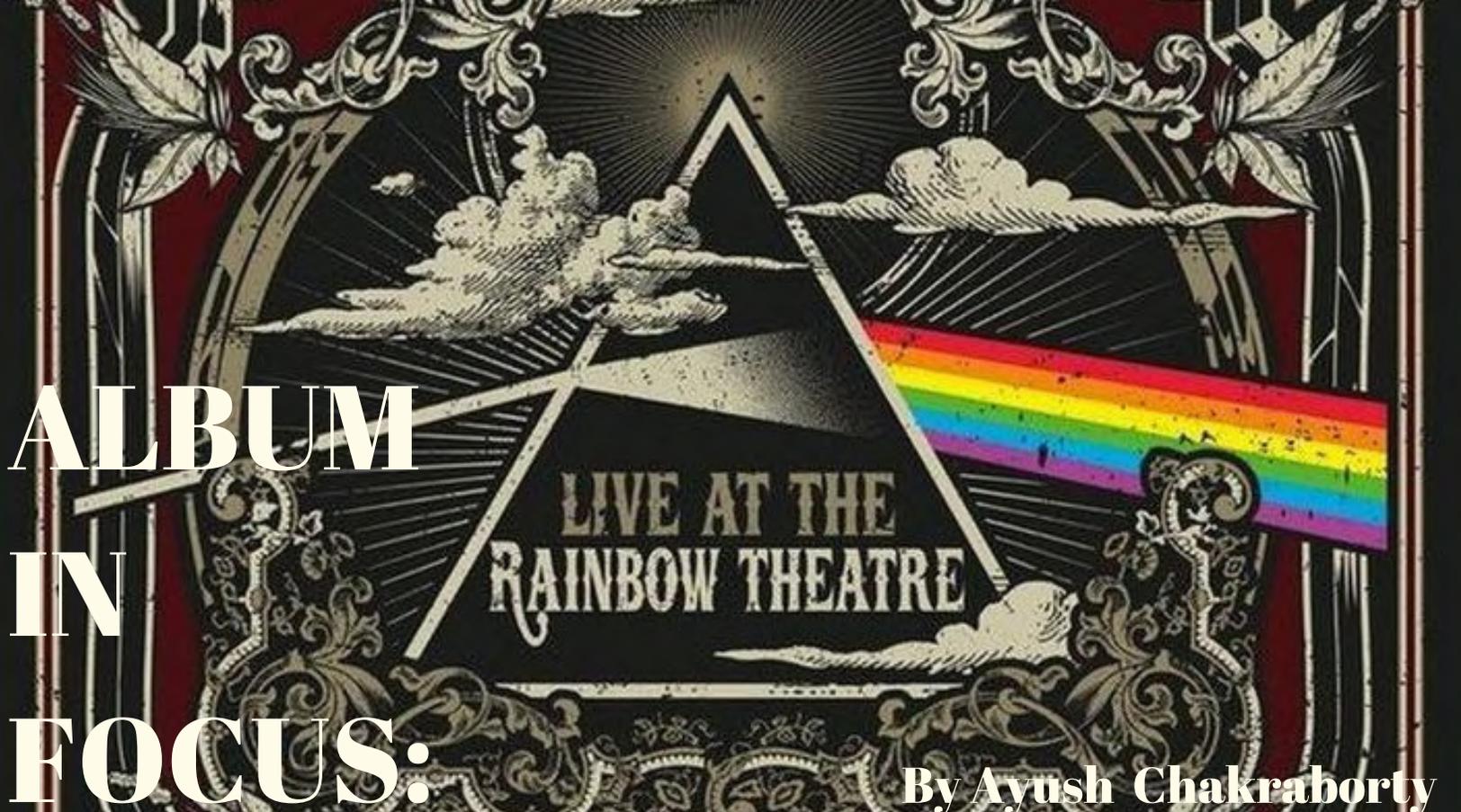
In many ways, the Beatles refused to be constrained by the technology of their time, and were constantly looking for ways to work around the limitations they faced. For example, The Beatles only ever had access to four-track recording machines throughout their career (with the exception of their Abbey Road album, which was recorded on a new eight-track machine.)

To fit all the tracks for different instruments on Sgt. Pepper onto a four-track machine, the Beatles producer George Martin manually synchronised multiple four-track machines, daisy-chaining them together to one master four-track recorder. This method, although now obsolete, was a cutting-edge technique at the time. It allowed the Beatles to use a larger number of tracks in the studio, nearly a decade before timecode-synchronised tape machines were invented.

It is next to impossible to talk about the history of music without mentioning The Beatles.

Although Lennon and Harrison have passed on, Starr and McCartney continue to make appearances even today. Their legacy has stood the test of time like no other band, even after half a century, for there are few who have revolutionised music as we know it today.





ALBUM IN FOCUS:

By Ayush Chakraborty

The Dark Side Of The Moon

It started with a heartbeat.

In 1971, as Pink Floyd assembled their tour for Britain, Japan and The United States, bassist Roger Waters proposed to incorporate a new album into the tour. An album that dealt with what made people mad. They were always a band fascinated with mental illness throughout their career. A big reason for that was Syd Barret, the one who started the band itself alongside Waters. Syd had himself struggled with mental illness throughout his life, leading him to LSD and being urged to leave the band. Although one could find themes of madness throughout their previous catalogue, everyone agreed that the lyrics in the past were too indirect.

They started recording in 1972, when the most iconic line up of Roger Waters, David Gilmour, Nick Mason and Richard Wright were at their most productive. They were pushing boundaries and experimenting with the use of the technology regarded as “cutting-edge” at the time. They used synthesisers, tape loops and multi-track recordings with Alan Parsons as the sound engineer. The album artwork was done by the guys at Hypnosis, who had also designed most of their previous album covers. For this one, Richard Wright told them to keep it “smarter, neater - more classy”. Thus, the iconic prism was conceived.

So it started. A lyrical masterpiece about everything that makes up our lives. An album about modern life and it’s effects on the mind. An album about humanity. An album filled with beautiful melodies, entrancing solos, and heart-wrenching lyrics. And it all starts on a heartbeat.

Speak To Me

It may be very simple, but it gets us to the absolute humanity at the core of Dark Side of The Moon. It provides us with a starting point, and it comes full circle in the end. The heartbeat gives rise to Speak to Me, an overture, foretelling of the journey that we're about to take. DSOTM is in essence, an album about life. It is about the struggles that make human existence what it is. And it all starts with a heartbeat and a breath. Speak to Me symbolises birth in the form of a sound collage. It's made up of pieces from the rest of the songs in the album. Within one-minute, Pink Floyd tells us about what's to come. The musical journey that they are going to take us through. It's made up of the ticking clocks of Time, the cash registers in Money, Clare Torrey's vocals in The Great Gig in The Sky, the helicopter in One the Run, and the laughing madman in Brain Damage.

Speak to Me also consists of a few vocal lines. These lines are by members of the studio staff and other members in the band's entourage. While the rest of the band was working, Waters would interview these people and record them in a darkened room with "flash cards". The questions would start out easy but then would gravitate towards deeper questions about the subject's life for example -

"when was the last time you were violent?" and "were you in the right?"

Speak to Me offers a glance into everything we are going to experience and it erupts with grandeur into Breathe(In the Air).



Breathe

Out of the chaos of *Speak to Me*, emerges the calm, mellow tune of *Breathe*. The opening lyrics tells us everything we need to know about it .

“Breathe, breathe in the air”

Roger Waters had previously used the same line in an anatomy documentary. But here the meaning is not quite the same. The song speaks to a child, telling it to breathe in the world around him, to explore. It follows the perspective of a caring parent who tells his/her child to look around and to choose his “own ground”. The parent tells the child not to shy away from showing emotion, to leave but to not stray away from the parent.

“And all you touch and all you see is all your life will ever be.”

Breathe tells us how we are the sum of our experiences, an understanding we will come to in the last track of the album. The smiles we give and the tears we cry, all that we give and receive, it all makes us who we are. It defines us and our existence. For what are we without the impact we have upon others?

The second verse explores one of the broadest themes of *Dark Side of The Moon*: modern life.

“Run, rabbit, run

Dig that hole, forget the sun

And when at last the work is done

Don’t sit down, it’s time to dig another one”



You live life toiling away. Sweating till you go to bed, only to wake up and do it all over again. But this doesn't have to be true. As Gilmour says if you ride the tide, i.e. follow the safe path then you'll live a long life. But if you chase the biggest wave and you live on the edge, all you get is an early grave. The song serves as an introduction, but it already dives into the difficult choices that you have to make. It speaks of the wonders that can come through the detours you take in life, but doing so is risky.

The chord progression of Breathe was written by pianist Richard Wright, very much inspired by Miles Davis, the King of Cool, meanwhile Gilmour's guitar parts seem to soar over the changes, creating an entrancing but sombre mood. He uses a lap steel guitar and a uni-vibe foot pedal to create those subtle phasing effects. Embracing new music technology was a significant part of DSOTM and it is quite fitting to have the tech play such an important role in the opening tracks.

The lyrical, musical and philosophical concepts that we are introduced to in Breathe, play out in the course of the next 38 minutes. Each track of The Dark Side of the Moon stands out as a song, but also fits together as tiny pieces in a giant puzzle. Although Pink Floyd aren't the only ones who've did it this way, very few bands have managed to captivate us as much as they did with DSOTM.



On The Run

Dark Side of the Moon wasn't recorded as any other album. Pink Floyd wrote out a general outline of the album a few weeks before they took it out on tour. The album was far from completion then. As the tour progressed, the band worked it through, developing and fine-tuning it. On the "Saucerful of Secrets: The Pink Floyd Odyssey" Nick Mason said in an interview: "It was a hell of a good way to develop a record. You get familiar with it; you learn the pieces you like and what you don't like. And its quite interesting for the audience to hear a piece developed. If people saw it four times, it would have been very different each time."

During the tour, the minutes in the album which is now occupied by On the Run was previously filled with a guitar-based jam session recording called "The Travel Sequence". Later on, in the tour, the band had gotten a Synthi AKS synthesiser. Into it they put an 8-note sequencer and modulated filters throughout the song, passing it left and right, creating something frantic and chaotic.

' "On the Run," (was) a different thing, which is on a live one if you've heard one of those bootlegs, you might have heard a different version of it than is on Dark Side of the Moon. We had a sort of guitar passage, but it wasn't very good. We'd just got this new synthesizer, a briefcase model EMS-1 [Synthi AKS], and in the lid there was a little sequencer thing. I was playing with the sequencer device attachment, and came up with this sound, which is the basic sound of it. Roger sort of heard it, came over and started playing with it, too. Then he actually put in the notes that we made...it was his sequence, that "de-di-doo-de-di-dil"- - whatever it was. He made that little sequence up, but I had got the actual original sound and I actually was the one doing the controlling on the take that we used. Then we chucked all sorts of things over the top of it afterwards.'

-David Gilmour



The sequence became a good representation of the uncertainty of modern transport. One of the samples that Pink Floyd uses in the track comes from an airport's PA system. It places us right in the middle of all the ruckus. An airport is a good setting for stress. From the moment you step into an airport, you are no longer in control of your destination. You're putting your life in the hands of strangers. On top of the samples, the music itself creates a sense of movement with the use of The Doppler Effect which is the change in frequency of sound. The music creates a sense of vehicles passing us by. But its more than just traffic; it's a meditation on modern life, how technology and urbanisation has created a noisy world. This message only grows in relevance as we go deeper into the digital age.

On the Run lets us experience anxiety, not through lyrics, but through sound. Pink Floyd use numerous harsh samples, growing in intensity, to represent the noise-polluted cities. On top of that, Alan Parsons, the sound engineer recorded the assistant engineer running around the studio to produce the footsteps you hear on the track. This song rattles you; it makes your heart beat faster and takes you to a state of fear, the very fear that Richard Wright himself would experience whilst travelling. As the pressure builds, the band drops another vocal sample from the interviews conducted by Waters.

“Here for today, gone tomorrow”

With this we switch from the fear of travelling to the fear of mortality. A single comment brings so much to light. With a blink of an eye, everything can change. Your life can pass you by in days of lost time. This one line reminds us of the impermanence of life. And with this in mind, the song ends on a rather morose note of a plane crashing in a loud explosion. This brings us to the middle section of The Dark Side of the Moon where we dive deeper into lost time and mortality.



Time



We live our entire lives ignoring the fact that as each minute passes by, our time on earth gets shorter. We are all headed towards the same destination no matter how much we disagree with it. Rich or poor, young or old, there is no denying that time is inevitable. We often go to great lengths to avoid this, but in the fourth track of *The Dark Side of the Moon*, Pink Floyd approaches this head-on.

We can never truly preserve the beautiful moments of time, for no matter what we do, the clock will keep on ticking. But we can cherish the moments in time. We can make the best of what we're given before they're all washed away to nothingness. Waters says in an interview:

"The year that we made that record was the year that I had a sudden revelation personally - which was that this was it. I had the strangest feeling growing up - and I know that a lot of people share this - that childhood and adolescence and one's adult life are preparing for something that's about to happen later. I suddenly thought at 29: Hang on, it's happening, it has been right from the beginning and there isn't suddenly a line when the training stops and life begins"

This is what Pink Floyd sing about in the song *Time*. But before we get to the matter, we come across the most jarring moment in the entire album. The cacophony of ringing clocks. Alan Parsons, the sound engineer on the album, had previously went to a watchmaker's shop and recorded the clocks. He originally had intended them for a presentation of quadrophonic sound. But when he heard about the intended title of the song, he showed it to the band who said "Great! Stick it on!"

The shock from the chiming clocks pulls you out of the dazed, catatonic state from On the Run, and also lays out the main theme of the song. As the clocks die out, we are propelled into a spaced-out intro with Nick Mason playing the rototoms and Wright accompanying him, playing subtle phrases on the synth, almost as if he was simply breathing onto the keys, giving Mason all the space he needed. Because of this solo, this song features all four bandmembers as song-writers.

With the first verse, we see something most of us are all too familiar with. Youth and wasting time. When you're young, you think that you have all the time in the world; you lie around wasting time, filling your days with nothingness, waiting for real life to begin:

“And you are young And life is long,

And there is time to kill today”

But then everything changes, and they change fast. Wright sings that feeling in a painfully human way:

“And the one day you find ten years have got behind you,

No one told you when to run,

You missed the starting gun”

From here we go into a passionate solo by Gilmour. Usually guitar solos form the bridge of the song, building momentum for the finale. But here, the solo cuts straight through the middle of the song. The solo comes at you sooner than expected, just like life. Gilmour's solo is absolutely brilliant. The first section (3:30-4:46) is often described as the desperate section where Gilmour captures the pain and anxiety of watching your life pass you by. Then we meet a warm chorus of backup singers. Musically it is similar to Wright's vocal passages in the song, it is the musical acceptance of the inevitability of time. Then we head back into desperation.





This verse is one of the many parallels you'll come across in the album. Gilmour singing the second verse echoes the ending of the first verse which was sung by Wright. Both feature sunrises and the metaphor of life being a race. But here in the second verse, the race has already begun and you're trying desperately to catch up with your life.

**"The sun is the same in a relative way but you're older
Shorter of breath and one day closer to death"**

It is the same sunrise under which you wiled away your days in the past, but it's very different in its meaning. With every sunset, a day of your life passes you by, and you grow older with each new sunrise.

Wrights part of the second verse is the complete opposite of Gilmour's first verse. Gilmour sang about wasting time, whilst Wright sings about not having time and being unable to find it.

"Hanging on in quiet desperation is the English way"

He sings about how everyone is in the same boat, trying desperately to cling onto their lives, trying to catch up to time. The song ends with a fourth wall break where Wright announces that the song is over. But there is no explanation, no resolution. It reflects the anxieties present in the lyrics. We don't get any answers to the questions we have. It is the same when we reach the end of our lives. We thought we would have more to say. We all want to be a part of something big, but most of us spend our time wasting it.

"The time is gone, the song is over, thought I'd something more to say"

Though the song ends on this thought, there is another piece of music attached to the end and that is the reprise of Breathe. We meet a familiar bouncy rhythm and open, spaced out phrasings on the synth and the guitar. Two tracks ago, we witnessed a birth. This verse of Breathe talks about ageing and returning home, a place of safety and comfort:

“Home, home again,

I like to be here when I can”

It brings peace after a period of tension spanning two tracks. But its not all comfort as it brings forth the tolling of the bell .

“Tolling on the iron bell

Calls the faithful to their knees”

The bell suggests a funeral, it’s the hint of mortality that hangs over the entirety of The Dark Side of the Moon and death comes hand in hand with discussion of spirituality, religion and the afterlife. All of which will come in the next track.



The Great Gig In The Sky



Waters: “Are you afraid of dying? The fear of death is a major part of many lives, and as the record was at least partially about that, that question was asked, but not specifically to fit into this song”

Through the ages the fear of death has been the sole ruler of all fears in the heart of humanity. It has been the biggest cause of anxiety, and the case is very much so today, if not more. Pink Floyd’s Dark Side of the Moon explores the theme of death throughout its length. Speak to Me/Breathe talks about an early grave, in On the Run we get the statement “Here today, gone tomorrow”, and in Time, we learn about the inevitability of it. And now as we come to The Great Gig In The Sky, Pink Floyd takes the subject head on and asks one of the great questions of humanity: “What happens next?”

The early titles of the song as it stands now, were “The Mortality Sequence” and “The Religious Sequence”. The band first incorporated church organs and taped Bible readings which were scrapped later for NASA intercom recordings. But the actual problem was the chord progression that Wright wrote for the piece. Wright didn’t have anything in mind while writing it. He was just playing around with chords he liked. The progression was sombre and serene, it started on the B minor that the reprise of Breathe ended with and took off from there. The band loved it but didn’t know how to fit the song into the philosophical aspect of Dark Side of the Moon. So they took the songs through the aforementioned iterations. But neither of those worked. Words didn’t seem cut it, but they still needed something human to keep it grounded. The idea of a person railing over the measures as Wright played on sounded like a good idea and that’s where Clare Torrey came in.

Alan Parsons had heard her previously in a “Top of the Pops” cover session and had worked with her once. So he booked her for the session. Initially she improvised vocal lines over Wright’s piano passage with words like “oh” and “baby”. But Gilmour stopped her saying they didn’t want any words. So she decided to make herself an instrument and what was recorded next went on to become one of the greatest vocal performances the world would ever see.

The song is divided into two parts, the first section sounding loud. In pain. Torrey’s vocals sounded like someone was tearing out her soul, and it became a representation of the resistance against mortality. The second section is soft. It is a morose acceptance of one’s fate. Passion and pain followed by calmness and acceptance. The title relates to the band’s own life and anxieties as touring musicians. They were always travelling, on planes, cars and trains, always surrounded by people, wondering what’s next. Always on the run, chasing time without being able to take a breath. So naturally, their take on the track is a continuation of their lives. Touring is just one gig after another, so what comes after death is simply another gig, the last gig. The Great Gig In The Sky.

Religion in the albums context reflected their own views. Religion is greatly tied to death in The Dark Side of the Moon, but at the same time it lies alongside its criticisms of greed and war. Both Gilmour and Waters have been vocal about their atheism. Gilmour once said:

“I’m an atheist, and I don’t have any belief in the afterlife. You could say that I’m resigned to the fact that this wonderful life that we get here is it”

Thus, the name The Great Gig In The Sky carries a bit of irony with it. For Pink Floyd there is no real great gig in the sky. The only thing that comes next for them is the grave. This idea makes death more terrifying, but makes life more meaningful. They lean into this irony with the vocal samples they use in the song, recorded from an interview with the doorman of the famous studio at Abbey Road, one of the many people Waters interviewed: “And I am not frightened of dying



Any time will do, I don't mind

Why should I be frightened of dying?

I see no reason for it, you gotta go sometime"

The Great Gig In The Sky is a song about the fear of death, placed in the middle of an album about what makes people mad, about the stresses and terror of humanity. Yet, the only words in it are about how you should not be afraid to die.

Death doesn't care. It will come whether we're frightened or not. The Great Gig In The Sky may not be the first song about death, but it is certainly one of the finest and its place in the album is carefully chosen. It ends the first side of The Dark Side of the Moon, which means when you listen to it on vinyl as was originally intended, you meet a moment of silence after the song ends. A moment to reflect, to take in the emotion you just heard, to prepare you for the next side, the next turn of life.



Money



No amount of introspection on modern life would be complete without the grand force that drives it all. Money. And that's why the band opens the second side to their album with the track Money. They start the song quite literally, with the sound of money. It starts on a sound collage of cash registers, coins and paper. Unlike the other sound collages, this one was done by Waters himself. He took his wife's food mixer, threw in some coins and paper and recorded with a Revox. After adding some cash registers to the mix, he recorded a series of tapes which he cut up and spliced together by hand to make sure they were in 7/4 time. Today one could do that in no time on a Digital Audio Workstation. But Waters wasn't doing it on a workstation. In the end he came up with a tape which, by some accounts, was as long as 20ft. To feed the entire thing into the recorder, they had to run it around a microphone stand.

This kind of recording innovation and ingenuity was met with musical prowess and creativity. One of the aspects of Money is the 7/4 time signature and the jaunty bass riff which gives the song a certain lush-life swagger.

"I was fiddling around on the bass at Broadhurst Gardens and I came up with that riff, seven beats long. The rest of the song developed after I thought, Lets make a record about the pressures that impinge upon young people in pop groups, one of which is money"

-Waters

The bassline complements the lyrics perfectly, the latter being written from the perspective of someone with exorbitant amounts of wealth. The lyrics are sardonic and represents the greed-is-good mentality which has come to prevail in the years after DSOTMs release.

After the feel-good things we tell ourselves about money, Pink Floyd comes to the core of why we chase money in the first place. Money lets us buy things that we want, it makes us feel powerful and different. Gilmour sings in a sarcastic, Donald Faegan tone, playing his Black Strat an octave apart from Waters' P bass, accompanied by Mason on the tom-toms and Wright on the Wurlitzer and the money tape loops keeping the band in time.

As we come to the middle section, we are taken on a ride through a series of solos. The first is a whaling solo by Dick Parry, one of Gilmour's friends from Cambridge pub jazz days. Gilmour says that he gave Parry the daunting instruction to play like the sax man in a cartoon band who did the theme music for Pearl K Dean's ad sequence at the cinema in those days. Then the song shifts to 4/4 and Gilmour brings out a heavy solo, one of the most iconic in his career. Gilmour's solo goes through three sections, one of each brings out a different feel.

"The arrangements were all worked out before except the dynamics of the long solo before it breaks down to nothing. The solo came together in the studio, but once he had it he always replicated it note for note in concert"

-Parsons

The solos were divided into "wet" and "dry" sections. Gilmour called the first section as "wet", soaking it in reverb and effects. The first solo was automatically doubled in the mix, after being passed through a Hi-watt amp. Gilmour drenched the guitar sound in reverb and delay that had become so characteristic of The Dark Side of the Moon. Then came in the "dry" section. In contrast to the space of the first solo, the second is more compact. Gilmour ditches the reverb and the band transitions into a simpler setup, ditching the spacey sound of Pink Floyd for the laughs and smiles of four men jamming around in a basement. Gilmour plays tight, short phrases as Mason highlights triplets on the drums in 4/4. Waters keeps the groove flowing with the bass line and Wright accompanies with subtle phrases on the synth.



In the third section, the effects come back in dramatic fashion as Gilmour switches to a Lewis guitar with a two-octave neck, making it easier to pull out those roaring high notes. The solos ring out Gilmour's prowess and the vision of the band. In just two minutes, they take you through a ride of different emotions before ending on a walk back to the original 7/4 groove.

As we come to the third verse, the lyrics are no longer sarcastic. They turn into an explicit condemnation of the ills brought on by greed and the hypocrisy embedded into our own thoughts on money. The hypocrisy is present in people on both parallels: those who celebrate money as well as those who condemn it. Including Roger Waters himself. He addressed this saying:

"Money interested me enormously. I remember thinking, 'Well this is it and I have to decide whether I'm really a socialist or not.' I'm still keen on a general welfare society but I became a capitalist. You have to accept it. I remember coveting a Bentley like crazy" Many want to free from the hold of money, to be able to tell themselves that money isn't the only thing you need to build a happy life. But its hard to trully stand by these in a society which is driven by money, and in which we are told since our birth, to organise our identities around the pursuit of it.



Us & Them

We are always at war with one another, from both individual and societal standpoints. To talk about the history of humanity, one would have to talk about the history of conflict. We are always in conflict. With other people and with ourselves. Conflict and its means may change, but conflict always remains, in and of itself. When Pink Floyd approached this topic, they did so with a leftover piano piece which resulted in Us and Them.

Richard Wright wrote the piano piece which is at the core of the song. It was originally intended for Michaelangelo Antonioni's film about the hippie revolution, "Zabriskie Point". Wright had dubbed the piece as "The Violent Sequence" originally, but in the end the band re-recorded "Careful With That Axe, Eugene" for the movie. Wright, unlike most of his bandmates, was a student of jazz, especially Miles Davis. He was drawn to the way Davis would slowly draw out the emotion from each note. This inspiration is quite imminent in the beginning, as Wright composes the song, not with straightforward rock and roll chords, but with more mystifying and obscure ones. It resulted in a piece which was calm, yet dark. But it was rejected by Antonioni for it wasn't like Careful With That Axe, Eugene. The piece was put on the shelf and not used until the band started to work on The Dark Side of the Moon, and Waters devised some lyrics to go along with the piano.

Waters says in an interview: "The first verse is about going to war, how in the front line we don't get much chance to communicate with one another, because someone else has decided that we shouldn't. I was always taken by those stories of "The First Christmas" in 1914, when they all wandered out into no-man's land, had a cigarette, shook hands and carried on the next. The second verse is about civil liberties, racism and colour prejudice. The last verse is about passing a tramp in the street and not helping."

Waters highlights how we are impacted by the broader systems around us and by doing so with sparse words, he allows Wright's piano and Parry's sax to breathe over the changes. Waters tried to keep his lyrics simple and straightforward. Gilmour says on this:



“Roger tried, definitely, in his lyrics, to make them very simple. Partly because people read things into other lyrics that weren’t there”

The first verse is relatively straightforward. It’s a look at war from the perspective of reluctant soldiers:

“God only knows it’s not what we would choose to do”

In reality, no one wants to fight. Neither side wants to watch their brothers, from across a pond, die. But it’s the generals who sit far from the battlefield, who control the men and send them off to die.

This point is underscored by an absolutely brilliant choral arrangement:

**““Forward” he cried from the rear
And the front rank died”**

The vocal harmony between each bandmember and the backup singers results in one of the greatest chorus lines of all time. What sounds like an effect is actually their own vibrato. Gilmour says: “I did I don’t know how many harmony vocals, then the girls on top. It’s really great, really uplifting. You can move one element a fraction and the whole thing falls to pieces”

The end result is almost religious. And just like people devote themselves to religion, many people devote themselves to the perceived binaries of life. We form groups and our identities around who we perceive to be like “us” and who we perceive to be like “them”. In the end, it doesn’t really matter for “...who knows which is which and who is who”.

In the latter half of the second verse, Waters reflects on the military once more, this time talking about propaganda, how the military encouraged the people to kill their fellow men:

**““Listen son”, said the man with the gun
“There’s room for you inside””**



Pink Floyd is able to approach the concepts from a broader perspective, but then also pulls in close and explores them at an individual level. They are able to do this using Waters' interview tapes. These tapes reflect on our own realities. The bridge of Us and Them uses a tape from "Roger The Hat", the band's road manager, who talks about a personal scuffle he's had with a cab driver. These interpersonal scuffles are born out of the broader societal conflicts, they're born out of splitting people into groups, designing one "us" and one "them". What results is endless suffering and alienation. These emotions are reflected in Dick Parry's saxophone solo. It starts out as a dirge of sorts, but then dramatically breaks out into a heart-wrenching wail about the conflicts in our society.

The final verse pulls Us and Them back to the previous track Money, talking about how greed drives class. Waters writes about what's to come after all the modern alienation and division.

**"Out of the way, it's a busy day
I've got things on my mind
For want of the price of tea and a slice
The old man died"**

Rich, busy men and women move some documents around and sign some papers, but they don't think about all the wreck they may have caused by such simple actions. Countries wage war against each other to secure the price of goods like tea or spices etc.

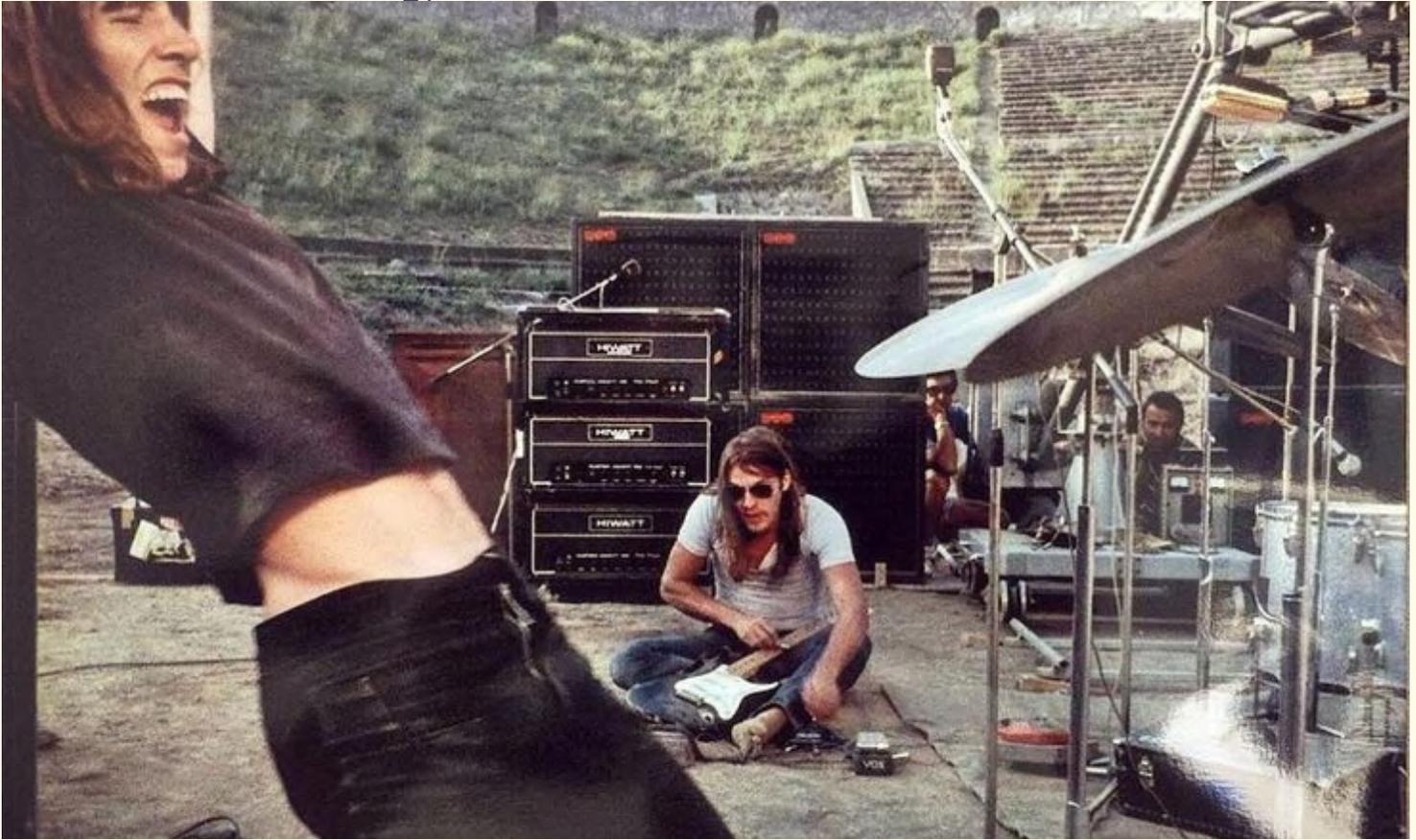
Countless wars killing millions, just to satisfy the greed of a fistful.

The weight of the modern society makes it hard for us to focus on the individual human beings around us. Modernity has brought us wondrous inventions. Things we wouldn't be able to dream of, even as magic back in old times. But here lies the paradox of our modern life. We have everything we could ever dream of. Yet we're still alienated from humanity itself. We still find ourselves tied to the issues that have plagued humanity throughout history: war, racism and class. We have everything at the touch of a screen, but all of it is paid for with the price of our mental health.

Us and Them goes on towards the dark reality of the modern world. Dark Side of the Moon has taken a look at all the stresses of modern life and now the band progresses to explore the cost of modernity.



Any Colour You Like



You can have it all, everything, any colour you like, its all blue. The title of this spacey, instrumental groove refers to the illusion of choice. You can choose what you want to do. In the end everyone meets the same fate, death.

Roger Waters first encounters this phrase in Cambridge. He hears it from the mouth of a merchant who was selling chinaware from the back of his van saying “You can have them all, any colour you like, they’re all blue”. Waters says in an interview:

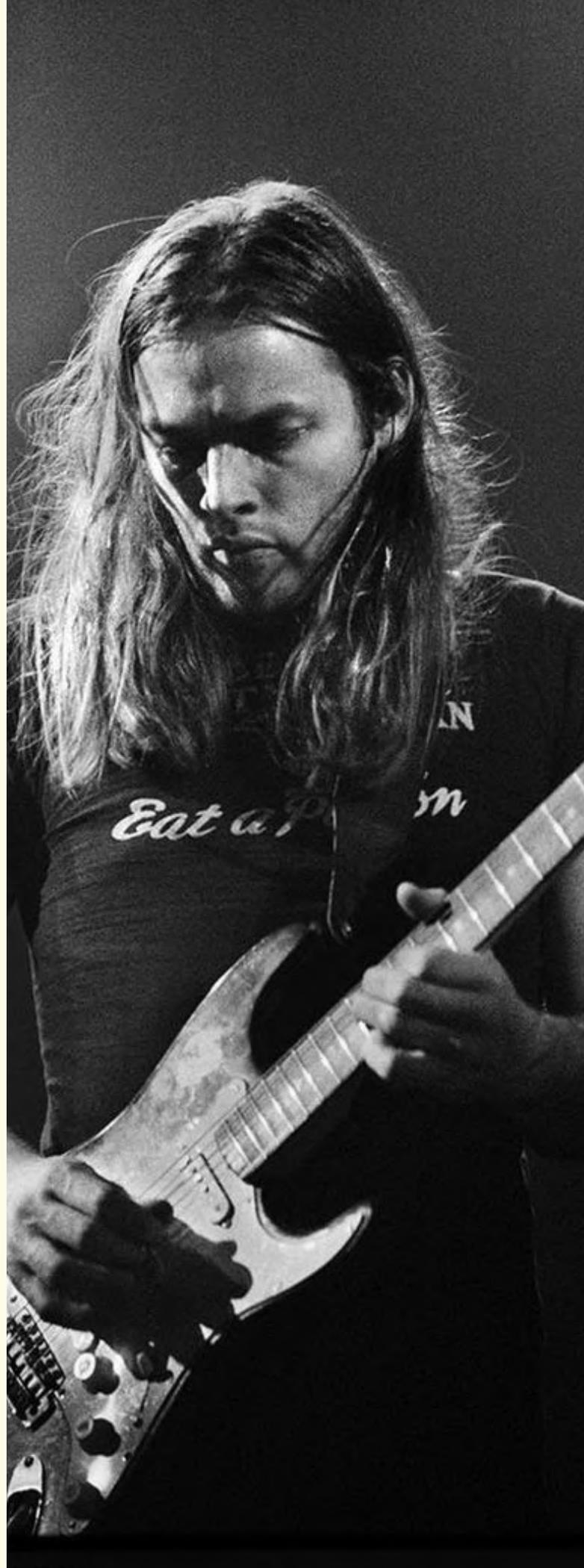
“It denotes offering a choice where there is none. And it's also interesting that in the phrase, 'Any colour you like, they're all blue', I don't know why, but in my mind it's always 'they're all blue', which, if you think about it, relates very much to the light and dark, sun and moon, good and evil. You make your choice but it's always blue”

Today in the modern age, more people than ever before have a choice in how they live their lives, where they want to live and who they want to be. But still, so much of our lives are out of our control. We have no say in where we are born, to whom we are born. We have no choice in the colour of our skin or the class we are born into. We have no say in everything that goes around us. Wars, pandemics and natural disasters can wreak havoc in our lives in a split second. So, it might seem that we have a whole spectrum of colours to choose from, in the end it’s all blue. We might get a myriad of options to choose from, in the end its all a part of the same light.

Gilmour said that Any Colour You Like has little effect on the wider aspect of the entire narrative. But it plays an important part nevertheless. It helps to know the sequence of The Dark Side of the Moon for this. The album isn't a mere collection of songs, but it's arranged as one cohesive unit. Once viewed from this perspective, one can understand the role of the song. It serves to transition us smoothly from discussions of modern life, to the effects of modernity on the human mind.

Even as it prepares us for the end of the album, Any Colour You Like also looks back at where we started from. The song is built around the rhythm of Breathe. It can be look at as the second reprise of Breathe. We meet this rhythm in the beginning and then again at the end of Time, or the reprise of Breathe. And now once again in Any Colour You Like, but in a different tempo and key, carrying more groove this time around. Whenever we stray too far away, this rhythm pulls us back to the core of the album. In an album so meticulously planned, it's refreshing to hear Pink Floyd let loose in an impulsive jam.

The cover of The Dark Side of the Moon, its iconic prism, the artworks in the album itself, all play out in Any Colour You Like. For life gives us numerous choices to choose from, but in the end, we are all headed towards the same destination. In the end, all colours are a part of the same light.



Brain Damage



From having a word on the illusion of choice, we are now brought to a track incredibly personal to Pink Floyd. They were always fascinated by mental illness, as previously stated, a big reason for that is Syd Barrett, their former frontman. Waters said: “The lunatic was Syd, really. He was obviously in my mind. It was very Cambridge-based that whole song”

The band had never shied away from controversial topics. But although themes of mental illness could be found throughout their previous albums, the band agreed that those were all too indirect. So, when it came to The Dark Side of the Moon, the band decided to put in an explicit song about madness. A song about the cost of modernity and identity. A song about a long, lost friend.

Brain Damage was previously called “The Lunatic Song”, and later it was supposed to be the title track before they changed it to what it is now, a better suited name. But first, what is the significance of the dark side of the moon?

In the 70s, during space travel, to be on the “dark side” of the Moon, meant to be cut off from the Earth. Since radio waves couldn’t reach you through the Moon, you were figuratively, in the dark.

The phrase “The Dark Side of the Moon” meant that you were out of touch. You can’t be reached. It meant that by “rational” or “societal” thought, you were mad. And this is what Pink Floyd talks about in The Dark Side of the Moon. The modernity we treasure, comes at the cost of our mental health. It comes at the price of our sanity. Of losing our identity. The stresses of life force us towards the dark side of the Moon, one of those stresses being the fear of going mad. Fear of losing our sanity pushes us to the brink of our sanity.

“The lunatic is on the grass”

Waters refers to the patch of turf where one could see display signs saying “Please keep off the grass”.

“The grass was always the square in between the River Cam and King’s College Chapel. I don’t know why, but when I was young, that was always the piece of grass, more than any other piece of grass, that I felt I was constrained to ‘keep off’. I don’t know why, but that song still makes me think of that grass”

The signs exaggerate that disobeying such instructions would implicate that the disobeyer was mad. But not letting people on the beautiful grass was the insanity.

The word “lunatic” comes from the Latin word “lunaticus” which means that a person who admires the moon, or metaphorically lives on the moon, and is therefore crazy. It’s also a very good reference to the title of the album. It also means that any step out of regular order and habit is viewed as lunacy.

“Got to keep the loonies on the path”

Man is constantly steered by people in the higher ups of society. They keep us under control to make sure no one stirs up order. They call you a lunatic when you disagree with them, rebel against them. Yet the lunatics are the ones who are far saner than most of the regular people in society. We’re not always the masters of our own lives. We’ve been ruled by kings, queens, emperors and politicians throughout our human existence.

**“The paper holds their folded faces to the floor
And every day, the paper boy brings more”**



It's the politicians on the newspapers who lead us to suffering. They are the real lunatics who start wars just for "the price of tea and a slice". Brain Damage takes a look behind at Us and Them in this line. Talking about how the generals and the politicians control the population by their whims. From here we move to the chorus, introduced by Wright's Hammond Organ and Mason's drum fill.

Gilmour does harmony vocals along with the backup singers, accompanying Waters as he sings along

"And if the dam breaks open many years too soon

And if there is no room upon the hill

And if your head explodes with dark forebodings too

I'll see you on the Dark Side of the Moon"

If nothing turns towards the right side, if there is no room for you amongst the crowd, if you feel out cast-out from the mainstream hill, then be assured you won't be alone on the dark side of the moon. This is the message Waters conveys to the listener. You are not alone in your faults and idiosyncrasies. There are others who can relate with you and connect with you. You're never alone.

"The lunatic is in my head"

It's the human's nature to be mad. He is the lunatic for he deviates from natural order imposed by society. He is a lunatic for he is different. The society changes him, shapes him to what they want him to be. They want him to be "sane". They "raise the blade" and they "make the change" and they "rearrange" him till he's sane. The point is about who decides whether he is sane or not. Anyone with a different mentality is a lunatic to the society. They put him behind locked doors in an asylum to change him, to shape him to their mentality. They place a different person in his head to replace his natural original self.



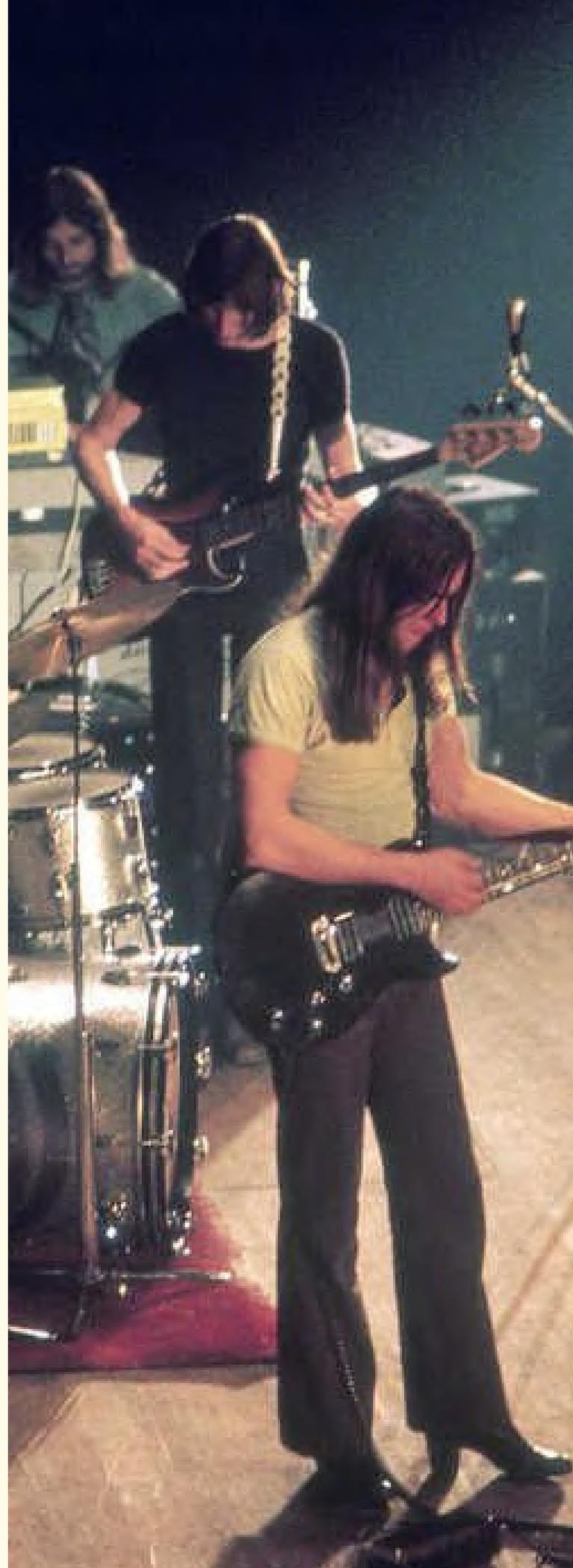
“There’s someone in my head but it’s not me”

And now we go on to the second chorus. Nothing has changed except the lyrics. It is more emotional. A call to a dear childhood friend of Waters.

**“And if the cloud bursts, thunder in your ear
You shout and no one seems to hear
And if the band you’re in starts playing different tunes
I’ll see you on the Dark Side of the Moon”**

Waters talks explicitly about Syd Barrett’s behavior at the end of his time in Pink Floyd. Syd had been suffering from schizophrenia and was obsessed with LSD. His mental state grew so bad that they brought in David Gilmour to replace him on stage, though Syd would remain as a songwriter. He had numerous antics that resulted in this. For instance, he would, at times, play a different song than what the band was playing, in the middle of a concert. He would also detune his guitar in the middle of a performance. One day he brought in a new song he had dubbed “Have You Got It Yet?”. The song seemed to be simple enough when he presented it to his bandmates, but soon it became impossible to learn it for they realised that Syd kept changing the arrangement all the time. He would play it with arbitrary changes and sing “have you got it yet?” They realised they were being the butt of some idiosyncratic joke, but Waters called it “a real act of mad genius”.

The song doesn’t really end. It transitions into the tenth and final track of The Dark Side of the Moon. The journey we had begun a while back is near the end.



Eclipse

You are the sum of your experiences. The line from Breathe echoes in as we transition from Brain Damage to Eclipse. “All you touch and all you feel, is all your life will ever be”. All that we do, all that we say, it makes us who we are. We are nothing without our experiences. They define our existence. All that we feel, physically and emotionally. All the memories we keep, the religion we follow, whether we follow one at all. And all the things we preserve, gifts to open again, letters to read again, pictures to remember someone or something again. All of it adds up. The sensory experiences, the emotional response to those experiences; experiences with social relations and the things we possess.

‘And all you create and all you destroy’

The melody and the harmonies move to a higher register. And the lyrics move as well, to fundamentally more abstract concepts of what we create. Here, “all that you create” isn’t limited to just physical objects but also emotions, thoughts, relationships. It refers to everything.

Everything that we are: all of our actions and reactions, all of what we “do” or “say”, all of our feelings and our relationships, our words and our deeds, are all included in the final point which is to be revealed in the end. And it’s not only us. It’s everyone in our lives: friend or foe, lovers or complete strangers – it’s about everyone.

**“And all that’s to come and everything under the Sun is in tune
But the Sun is eclipsed by the Moon”**



Waters explains these lines: “I don’t see it as a riddle. The album uses the sun and the moon as symbols; the light and the dark; the good and the bad; the life force as opposed to the death force. I think it’s a very simple statement saying that all the good things that life can offer is there for us to grasp, but the influence of some dark force in our natures prevents us from seizing them. The song addresses the listener and says that if you, the listener are affected by that force and if the force is a worry to you, well I feel exactly the same too.”

Everything under the sun is in tune. Everything is going well. Everything in your existence is interconnected with everything else on earth and is making sure that all the great things in life are there for us to grab. The reality is often veiled, as the sun itself is by the moon, as Waters says: the dark forces of nature prevents us from making good things happen to ourselves. But under that veil, under that eclipse, the sun is always shining.

The harmonies fade out, the drum beats slow down and transition into a familiar sound in 9/8 and we hear the voice tape of Gerry O’Driscoll, a doorman at Abbey Road Studios saying “There is no dark side of the moon really, matter of fact it’s all dark”. The voice echoes in our heads as The Dark Side of the Moon comes full circle, fading out with the familiar sound. The heartbeat.



THE MONOGRAPH PODCASTS

The following interview is an excerpt from a Podcast we conducted. Our very own Anuraag Das Sarma & Mukund Daga had a long conversation with the pop-rock Duo Raiko & Rizvi.

A link to the full podcast will be available on our website. We encourage you to check it out!



IN CONVERSATION

WITH:

RAIKO & RIZVI

Mukund- Welcome to the first podcast of Monograph Magazine. Today, we are joined by the immensely talented musical duo of Raiko and Rizvi. Their new single “Same Old Stories” is out now on all major streaming platforms like Spotify. The two members of this pop rock duo are Aamir Rizvi and Sushen Mitra.

Anuraag- So you guys were already in the school band. When did you decide to form Raiko and Rizvi?

Aamir- We had the same taste in music and kind of bonded over music. That’s when Sushen came to my bench and gave me some lines, asking if I was willing to sing over them. Yeah and they were pretty good. Much better than what I could write. So I was like sure let’s do it. It was quite an informal thing back then.

Anuraag- Walk me through your writing and recording process, since your latest song “Same Old Stories” just came out in the beginning of lockdown.

Aamir- So we had actually recorded both “Same Old Stories” and “Couldn’t You See” back in November but decided to release it later. Our first song “Couldn’t You See” came out around 20th of December, 2019. Then we decided to release the other one once ISC and all were done which happened to coincide with the lockdown.

Anuraag- Did you guys get a chance to meet during the pandemic?

Aamir- Well yeah once I think because we had to pay off a debt we owed to the studio. We've not met otherwise as such but have been working on new stuff. Writing new songs and hope to have an album out soon.

gasps

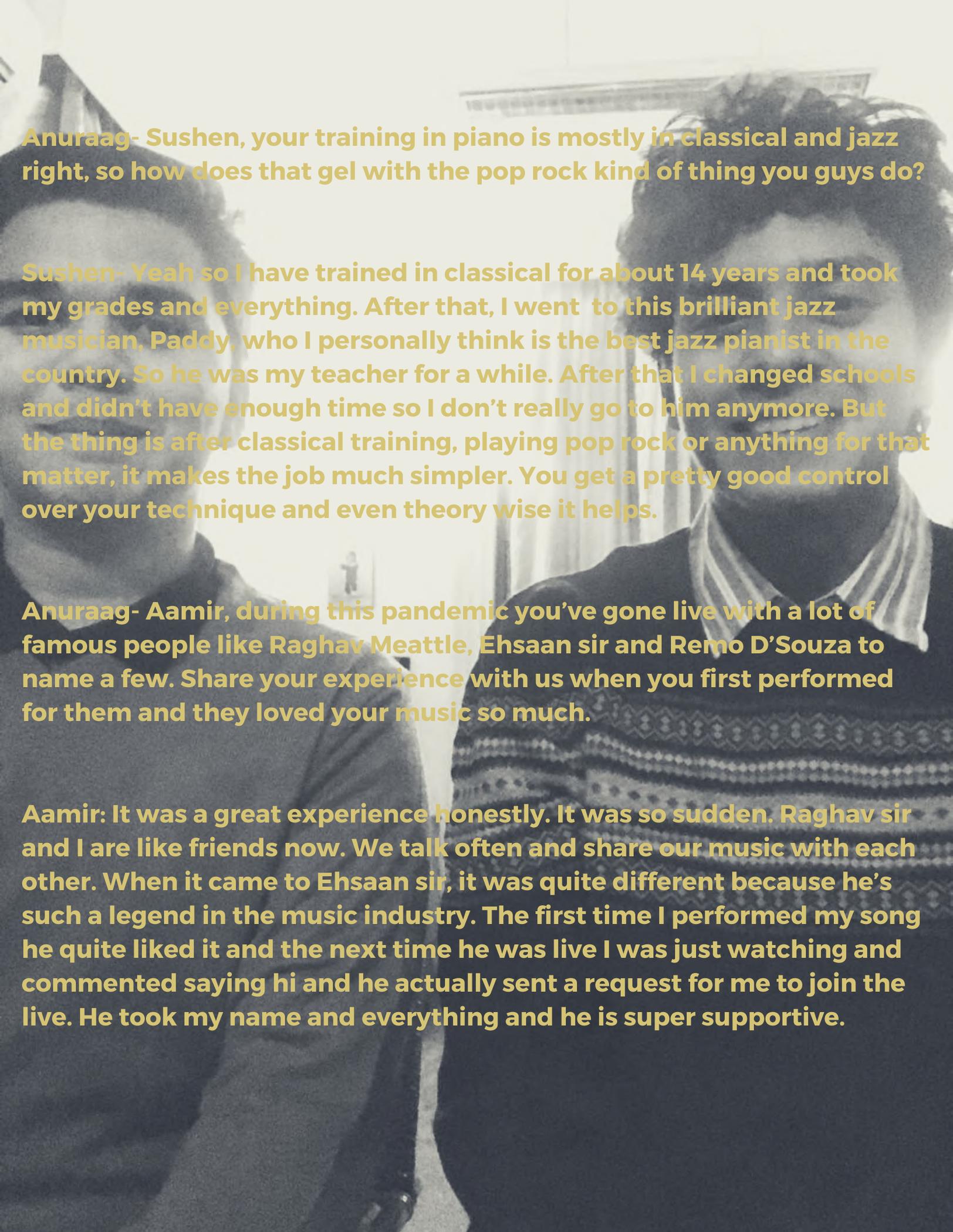
Mukund- How was the first time playing together like?

Aamir- I think it was back in 2018 August in the school assembly. We played "Don't Look Back In Anger" by Oasis. We were both in the school band and that's when you can say we first met properly and became friends. So we do go back a long way but Raiko and Rizvi is fairly recent.

There was this fest at Calcutta International and it was supposed to be a band performance but we hadn't practised and I didn't want to perform like that. But Sushen was there and I found it comfortable to just go on stage with him, just the two of us. But they needed us to get one more guy for the sake of it so I just called a friend of ours with a guitar (which wasn't plugged in) and then the two of us did what we do- ended up winning the competition.

Although in Youthopia, The Heritage School Fest, I messed up the chords on stage for "Cold/mess" by Prateek Kuhad. It is my go to song so it was quite embarrassing. Anuraag would know all about messing up chords on stage.

Anuraag coughs Moving along.



Anuraag- Sushen, your training in piano is mostly in classical and jazz right, so how does that gel with the pop rock kind of thing you guys do?

Sushen- Yeah so I have trained in classical for about 14 years and took my grades and everything. After that, I went to this brilliant jazz musician, Paddy, who I personally think is the best jazz pianist in the country. So he was my teacher for a while. After that I changed schools and didn't have enough time so I don't really go to him anymore. But the thing is after classical training, playing pop rock or anything for that matter, it makes the job much simpler. You get a pretty good control over your technique and even theory wise it helps.

Anuraag- Aamir, during this pandemic you've gone live with a lot of famous people like Raghav Meattle, Ehsaan sir and Remo D'Souza to name a few. Share your experience with us when you first performed for them and they loved your music so much.

Aamir: It was a great experience honestly. It was so sudden. Raghav sir and I are like friends now. We talk often and share our music with each other. When it came to Ehsaan sir, it was quite different because he's such a legend in the music industry. The first time I performed my song he quite liked it and the next time he was live I was just watching and commented saying hi and he actually sent a request for me to join the live. He took my name and everything and he is super supportive.

ARTISTS IN FOCUS:



Kritika Rana



Rushali Mukherjee



Vanshika Mukherjee

VM