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Muralidhar Girls' College

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Poetry. Essays. Stories

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EDITORIAL

— *Department of English*

It gives us immense pleasure to present the latest edition of our **Annual Departmental Magazine**, a humble yet vibrant reflection of the academic, creative, and cultural life of the **Department of English**. Each year, this publication becomes more than just a compilation of writings—it becomes a platform for voices, a mirror to our collective intellectual spirit, and a space for dialogue between tradition and innovation.

The study of literature and language, especially in a time marked by rapid technological change and socio-political upheaval, becomes more relevant than ever. Literature does not merely exist in books—it lives and breathes through perspectives, emotions, resistance, and hope. This year's issue bears testimony to the growing awareness among students and scholars alike that the role of the English Department is not confined to textual analysis but extends into cultural discourse, critical thinking, and creative expression.

The contributions in this edition reflect a rich tapestry of ideas. From critical essays that explore canonical texts through new theoretical lenses to poems and short stories that emerge from lived experiences, this magazine captures the diversity of thought that we encourage within our academic environment. We are proud to see our students engaging with themes as wide-ranging as postcolonial identity, eco-criticism, feminism, digital culture, and the politics of language—testament to their intellectual curiosity and academic rigour.

We must also acknowledge the contributions of our faculty members who, with dedication and inspiration, continue to guide students beyond the limits of the curriculum. Their mentorship helps foster a culture of questioning, exploration, and empathy—values that lie at the very heart of the humanities.

This magazine is the outcome of collaborative effort. We extend heartfelt gratitude to the editorial team—comprised of students and teachers—who have worked tirelessly to bring this issue to life. Their patience, vision, and commitment deserve special mention.

As we look ahead, we hope that this publication will inspire future generations of students to write, question, and express without hesitation. In a world that often privileges speed over reflection, let us remember that the written word still holds power—the power to connect, to challenge, and to change.

Let this magazine be not just a record of our year but a reminder that the Department of English is not merely a space for studying language, but a home for ideas, for imagination, and for voices yet to be heard.

Warm regards,
The Department of English

REPORT ON NAAC PEER TEAM VISIT TO MURALIDHAR GIRLS' COLLEGE

DATE: NOVEMBER 2023

BY RIMIKA BANERJEE (FACULTY)

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) Peer Team visited **Muralidhar Girls' College** for a comprehensive three-day assessment from **November 23 to November 25, 2023**. This visit marked a significant milestone in the college's journey toward ensuring continuous quality enhancement in higher education. The Peer Team consisted of three eminent academicians appointed by NAAC, each with expertise in various disciplines and experience in academic administration. The visit aimed to assess the college's performance across the seven NAAC criteria, including curricular aspects, teaching-learning and evaluation, research and innovations, infrastructure, student support, governance, and institutional values.

Day 1: Inauguration and Institutional Presentation

The first day began with a warm welcome extended to the Peer Team by the Principal, IQAC coordinator, faculty, and student representatives. The **Principal delivered an inaugural address**, highlighting the college's legacy, mission, vision, and recent developments. A detailed **PowerPoint presentation** was given by the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), summarizing academic achievements, outreach activities, infrastructure growth, and initiatives taken post the last NAAC cycle. This was followed by interactions with **Heads of Departments**, wherein they presented departmental profiles, innovative practices, student projects, and future goals. The Peer Team took note of the efforts made to enhance the curriculum through add-on courses and skill development programs.

Day 2: Campus Visit and Stakeholder Interactions

On the second day, the Peer Team conducted a **physical verification of facilities**. They visited classrooms, laboratories, the library, computer labs, common rooms, and other infrastructure. The team appreciated the efforts made in upgrading ICT-enabled teaching and learning resources. The Peer Team also held **interactive sessions** with various stakeholders, including students, alumni, parents, and non-teaching staff. Students shared their learning experiences, involvement in co-curricular activities, and support received from the faculty. Alumni spoke about their continued engagement with the college through mentorship and donations. Parents expressed satisfaction with the academic and personal development of their wards. The team also observed extension activities carried out under NSS, women empowerment cells, and eco-clubs. Special appreciation was given to the college's role in promoting **women's education and community service**.

Day 3: Documentation Review and Exit Meeting

The final day focused on **documentation and validation**. The Peer Team reviewed departmental files, academic audit reports, feedback mechanisms, and financial records. The team acknowledged the systematic record-keeping and data-driven decision-making practices. The visit concluded with an **exit meeting** attended by the Governing Body members, faculty, staff, and student representatives. The NAAC Peer Team shared their preliminary observations,

commending the college for its student-centric approach, inclusive practices, and sustained academic progress. They also provided **constructive suggestions** for further growth, such as strengthening research output, increasing industry collaborations, and enhancing placement services.

Conclusion

The three-day NAAC visit was an enriching and reflective experience for **Muralidhar Girls' College**. It provided valuable insights into institutional strengths and areas for improvement. The college community remains committed to implementing the recommendations and striving toward excellence in higher education. The NAAC visit served as a catalyst for introspection and growth at Muralidhar Girls' College. It offered an opportunity for the institution to reflect on its strengths, assess its progress, and identify areas for further development. The constructive feedback and commendations from the Peer Team have inspired the college community to reaffirm its commitment to academic excellence, inclusivity, and holistic student development. With a renewed sense of purpose and dedication, the college is determined to implement the recommendations provided and continue its journey towards quality enhancement and institutional excellence in the service of empowering women through education.

WHISPERS OF WISDOM

BY SUHANI PATRA (SEM 1)

In silence deep, where still minds go,
Beyond the noise, beyond the show,
There dwells a light, not loud nor grand,
But soft as dusk upon the land.

It speaks in echoes, slow and clear,
Not born of youth, but forged by year,

From trials faced and sorrows known,
From seeds of truth that time has sown.

It does not shout, it does not sway,
It walks with grace and keeps its way.
It knows when words are best unsaid,
And when to lead, and when to tread.

Wisdom is not the quest for more,
But knowing what is worth the war.
Not prideful books upon a shelf—
But understanding one's own self.

So seek not fast the clever line,
Nor chase the stars that falsely shine.
The wise will wait, the wise will see—
That wisdom grows in being free.

DREAMS IN MY POCKET

BY RUTH NILANJANA (SEM 3)

I keep my dreams in a pocket so small,
Folded like paper, not big, not tall.
But when I sleep, they fly so wide,
On moonbeam wings, they leap and glide.

One dream dances on a candy cloud,
Singing silly songs, laughing out loud.
Another dives in a jellybean sea,
Waving a rainbow just for me!

A dream rides stars like a silver train,
Zooming past planets and down again.
It whispers secrets to the night,
Sprinkling skies with twinkling light.

Some dreams wear boots and climb up trees,
Talking to owls and chasing the breeze.
Some ride dragons through skies so blue,
Or paint the sun a different hue!

A dream might build a castle of cheese,
With chocolate doors and marshmallow keys.
Or float on a boat with a cookie sail,
Telling stories to a giggling whale.

When morning peeks through my window bright,
The dreams tiptoe off with the fading night.
But they leave a sparkle, a tiny gleam—
A little reminder of every dream.

So if your eyes begin to close,
And nighttime air around you flows,
Tuck in tight, let wonder stream...
And take a ride on your sweetest dream.

NO ONE IS ALWAYS BUSY

BY MADHURA DHAR (SEM 3)

No one is always busy,
Though we say it all the time—
A message left unanswered,
A silence dressed in rhyme.

It takes a breath to type a word,
A moment just to call—
But hearts are often set aside
Like paintings on a wall.

We speak of crowded hours,
Of clocks that run too fast,
But time, if truly treasured,
Can stretch, and even last.

For when we care, we make it—
A minute, not a day.
Affection isn't scheduled,
It simply finds its way.

A cup of tea, a question asked,
A smile sent through the rain—
These little things are bridges
That mend the quiet pain.

No one is always busy,
We choose the things we do—
And in the end, our choices say
Who truly matters too.

So when replies grow distant,
And warmth begins to fade,
Remember—time's not lost at all,
It's just not being made.

SHE, LIKE INDIA

BY UPASANA SENGUPTA (SEM 1)

She walks with centuries in her stride,
A river of strength, a mountain of pride.
In every field, in every flame,
She carves her mark, she claims her name.

Wrapped in silks or standing tall,
In city streets or village hall—
She sings of freedom, bears the fight,
A silent fire, a voice of light.

Like India—ancient, bold, and free,
She holds a storm in dignity.
Not just a shadow, not just a part,
She is the nation's beating heart.

WHISPERS OF FEMININITY

BY SHRUTI BANERJEE (SEM 3)

She is softness wrapped in steel,
A quiet fire you cannot steal.
Grace in motion, calm in storm,
A thousand shapes, no single form.

She blooms in silence, roars in pain,
Carries oceans, dances rain.
Not just petals, not just lace—
But fierce and fearless, full of grace.

GEN Z CULTURE IN INDIA TODAY

BY SNIGDHA SAHA (SEM 5)

Generation Z, commonly referred to as Gen Z, includes individuals born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s. In India, this generation is coming of age in a rapidly transforming society, shaped by technological advancements, globalization, shifting cultural norms, and increasing socio-political awareness. With a population of over 1.4 billion, India's Gen Z comprises a significant and influential segment that is redefining the cultural landscape in unique and dynamic ways.

One of the defining traits of Indian Gen Z is their deep integration with technology. Unlike previous generations, Gen Z grew up with the internet, smartphones, and social media. Platforms like Instagram, YouTube, X (formerly Twitter), and more recently, Threads and Snapchat are not just for entertainment—they serve as tools for self-expression, activism, and identity formation. This constant connectivity has globalized Gen Z's tastes and preferences, bringing Korean pop culture, Western fashion trends, and global memes into small-town and rural India alike. In education and career, Gen Z Indians are also more tech-savvy, making use of online courses, freelancing platforms, and digital entrepreneurship. The gig economy, content creation, and coding startups are increasingly popular career paths, marking a shift from the conventional pursuit of engineering, medicine, or government jobs.

Gen Z in India displays a high degree of cultural fluidity. They are comfortable blending tradition with modernity—donning sarees with sneakers, performing classical dance to EDM beats, and celebrating Diwali while also participating in Halloween parties. They are not bound by rigid cultural binaries but instead embrace hybridity. This generation respects traditions, yet they are unafraid to question and redefine them. This fluidity also extends to gender and sexual identity. While India is still conservative in many aspects, Gen Z is more accepting of LGBTQ+ rights, mental health awareness, and diverse gender expressions. Online communities have offered safe spaces for individuals to express identities that are still taboo in many Indian households.

Indian Gen Z is more politically conscious than ever before. From climate change protests to student-led movements and digital activism, they are vocal about issues such as caste discrimination, gender equality, unemployment, and freedom of speech. Hashtag movements like #MeTooIndia and #DalitLivesMatter gained momentum largely due to Gen Z voices. They use social media as a platform to inform, influence, and challenge societal injustices. However, their political engagement is not monolithic. There is a wide spectrum of ideologies within this generation, and debates—sometimes intense—happen online and offline. The key difference is the access to information and a willingness to question authority, which is shaping a more engaged and informed youth population.

Gen Z's consumer behavior is driven by values rather than just brand names. They support sustainable fashion, cruelty-free beauty products, and local businesses. This generation cares about authenticity and transparency. They are less likely to be loyal to one brand and more inclined to explore new, niche, or indie options that align with their identity or values. Food habits are also evolving. Plant-based diets, artisanal cafes, and regional cuisines are gaining

popularity. Health and fitness, once limited to a niche audience, have become mainstream concerns among urban Gen Z.

Despite their promise, Indian Gen Z faces real challenges. Pressure from family expectations, the burden of academic performance, and high unemployment rates create stress and anxiety. Mental health, though more talked about, still lacks institutional support. The digital divide also means that many Gen Z individuals in rural or underprivileged areas do not enjoy the same access to resources as their urban counterparts. Gen Z in India is a generation of contrasts—rooted yet global, expressive yet anxious, connected yet fragmented. They are not just passive recipients of culture; they are active creators and critics, shaping India's future in real-time. As they mature, their choices, values, and voices will increasingly influence the country's social, cultural, and political trajectories.

THE VALUE OF DISCIPLINE IN A STUDENT'S LIFE

BY NIKITA DEBNATH (SEM 5)

In the journey of education, discipline is not merely a set of rules—it is a guiding principle that shapes a student's character, values, and purpose. In the context of Indian society, where learning is revered and students are seen as the torchbearers of national development, discipline holds a profound significance. From the ancient Gurukul system to today's digital classrooms, the expectation of discipline in students' lives has remained a constant, though its form and application have evolved. Discipline teaches self-restraint, responsibility, punctuality, and respect for others—qualities that are essential for personal success and societal harmony. As India strides toward modernity, balancing tradition with innovation, the role of discipline becomes more vital than ever, especially in the lives of young learners navigating a rapidly changing world.

In Indian tradition, education was never limited to academic learning; it was a holistic process of moral, spiritual, and intellectual development. The **Gurukul system**, dating back to Vedic times, exemplified this principle. Students (shishyas) lived under the guidance of a guru, following a strictly regulated life of humility, celibacy, service, meditation, and study. Discipline was intrinsic to this lifestyle—early rising, dedication to learning, respect for elders, and detachment from material comforts formed the core of their routine. Such discipline was not enforced, but rather embraced as a sacred duty (dharma). The value of **self-control (sanyam)** and **obedience (shraddha)** was emphasized in texts like the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Manusmriti*, which highlight the importance of character-building as the foundation of true knowledge.

In modern India, the student landscape has undergone radical transformation. The shift from teacher-centric learning to student-centered pedagogy, the explosion of technology, and the increasing individualism of youth have altered the traditional understanding of discipline. While access to education has broadened, the sense of **accountability and self-regulation** among students has often weakened in the face of distractions like social media, peer pressure, and material aspirations. This shift raises a crucial question: **Can discipline coexist with modern freedoms?** The answer lies not in rigid enforcement but in redefining discipline as **conscious responsibility**, rather than blind conformity. Discipline today must be internalized, not imposed.

Discipline helps students develop consistent study habits, manage time effectively, and meet deadlines. In India's competitive academic environment—especially with exams like **NEET**, **JEE**, and **UPSC**—students who demonstrate disciplined study routines often outperform more intelligent but less consistent peers. A disciplined student learns perseverance, honesty, humility, and resilience—traits that are valued in both traditional Indian culture and modern professional environments. These values ensure the development of responsible citizens, which is essential for a democratic and diverse country like India. In an era of constant digital bombardment, discipline helps students maintain focus and avoid burnout. Techniques like **yoga**, **meditation**, and **time-blocking**—rooted in Indian tradition but embraced globally—enhance mental discipline and emotional balance. India's cultural ethos emphasizes respect for elders, teachers, and differing viewpoints. A disciplined student is more likely to value inclusivity and non-violence (*ahimsa*), contributing to peaceful coexistence in a multicultural society. Discipline extends beyond the classroom. Students involved in community service, environmental

movements, and youth leadership learn that discipline includes fulfilling civic duties. Movements like **Swachh Bharat**, **Digital India**, and **Fit India** rely on the disciplined participation of youth. The dichotomy between tradition and modernity in India is often misunderstood. Tradition is seen as rigid and outdated, while modernity is equated with freedom and innovation. However, a disciplined life does not mean rejecting modernity; rather, it involves **harmonizing ancient wisdom with contemporary needs**. For example, ancient Indian practices like **Gurukul rituals** can inspire today's morning assemblies, group study habits, and teacher–student bonding. At the same time, digital tools like **AI-driven learning platforms**, **online time trackers**, and **habit-forming apps** can support disciplined behavior in students who are digital natives. Educational reforms like the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** also stress the development of 21st-century skills, creativity, and critical thinking, but place equal emphasis on **values, ethics, and discipline**. The vision is not to bind students with outdated rules, but to equip them with the **emotional intelligence and self-regulation** needed in an increasingly complex world.

In Indian culture, a student (*vidyarthi*) is not merely a learner but a seeker of wisdom. The student phase is seen as the **foundation of life**—a time to inculcate habits that shape future behavior. Students must take initiative in organizing their daily routines, minimizing distractions, and setting goals. Waking up on time, respecting class schedules, limiting screen time, and regular self-study are basic yet powerful steps toward self-discipline. Disciplined students can positively influence their peers, creating a culture of accountability. Group studies, peer mentoring, and team projects offer students the chance to practice **collaborative discipline**. India's youth constitute more than **50% of the population**. A disciplined student body means a responsible future workforce, ethical leadership, and an informed citizenry. Students involved in **NSS (National Service Scheme)**, **NCC (National Cadet Corps)**, or social entrepreneurship learn early that discipline is vital to nation-building. Discipline doesn't mean rigidity. Students must learn to be flexible yet focused. Balancing academics with co-curricular activities, managing failures, and adapting to diverse educational environments require mental discipline.

Despite its importance, several barriers hinder the cultivation of discipline in students today:

Parental Pressure: Excessive academic expectations can lead to stress, rebellion, or burnout.

Digital Addiction: Excessive use of smartphones and social media reduces attention spans and disturbs sleep cycles.

Lack of Role Models: Inconsistent behavior from elders or authority figures weakens moral instruction.

Educational Pressure: Overemphasis on rote learning rather than value-based education reduces intrinsic motivation for discipline.

To overcome these, schools must integrate **value education**, **life skills training**, and **mental health support** alongside academic instruction.

Discipline remains an indispensable value in a student's life, especially in a complex and evolving society like India's. Rooted in ancient traditions yet essential in modern times, discipline is the invisible thread that ties personal growth to national progress. It enables students not just to succeed academically, but to become morally upright, emotionally balanced, and

socially responsible individuals. As India strides toward becoming a knowledge economy and a global leader, the disciplined youth of today will determine the ethical compass of tomorrow. By choosing discipline not as a restriction but as a path to self-mastery, students can carve meaningful, impactful lives—upholding both their personal potential and the ideals of the nation.

THE LAST TELEGRAM

BY ARPITA MANDAL (SEM 5)

The year was 1971. The air in the border town of Amritsar was thick with tension, radio broadcasts, and the distant thunder of approaching war.

Captain Arjun Mehta stood at the railway station, his khaki uniform pressed crisp, the stars on his shoulders gleaming in the faint winter sun. He had two days of leave before being deployed to the eastern front in what the newspapers called “a necessary conflict” with Pakistan. His father called it “revenge for 1965.” His mother said nothing. She had wept quietly when he walked through the door the night before.

But Arjun hadn’t come to the station for duty. He was waiting for someone.

Anita.

She arrived in a blue salwar kameez, her face pale, her eyes hidden behind dark sunglasses, though the sun was gentle. He knew she had been crying. He had not seen her since the news broke: her brother, Major Rehan Ahmed of the Pakistani Army, had been declared a national enemy.

“What are we doing, Arjun?” she asked, not wasting a moment on greetings.

“We’re talking,” he said. “Before everything collapses.”

“It already has.”

They sat in silence on a rusted bench, the clamor of porters and departing trains echoing around them.

“I never lied to you,” Arjun finally said. “You knew who I was. You knew who I serve.”

“I also knew you loved me,” she whispered. “But now your country says my brother is the enemy.”

Arjun clenched his jaw. “He crossed the border, Anita. He led an incursion into Tripura. People died.”

“So did he,” she said. “I got the telegram last night.”

The weight of her words hit him harder than any battlefield wound ever could. “I’m sorry,” he murmured, meaning it.

She looked away. “Did you know? When we were together last month, did you already know what was coming?”

He hesitated.

That was all the answer she needed.

“You used me,” she said coldly. “To get to him. I defended you to my family, to Rehan. I told them you were different. That you didn’t see me as a traitor.”

“I didn’t,” he said quickly. “I don’t.”

“But you reported him.”

His silence this time was louder than the trains.

“I didn’t betray you, Anita. I chose my country. He was the one leading an assault—”

“He was my brother,” she snapped, standing up. “And you were supposed to be my future.”

The words hung between them like a noose.

“I’ll be posted in the East soon,” he said quietly. “They expect it to be quick.”

She looked at him with tired, ancient eyes. “Nothing about war is quick. Or clean. Or noble.”

He stood too. “If it means peace—”

“It never does,” she interrupted. “War ends on paper. But betrayal lingers in the blood.”

They stood at the platform’s edge, two lovers turned strangers by invisible borders, broken loyalties, and the merciless machinery of nationalism.

She took a crumpled piece of paper from her bag and handed it to him.

“What is this?”

“Rehan’s last telegram. Sent from a village outside Comilla. Read it when you’re alone.”

Without another word, she walked away.

Arjun watched her disappear into the crowd, then folded the note into his pocket like a wound he didn’t know how to heal.

When he read it later that night, it said:

“If I die here, tell Anita not to cry. And tell Arjun—I never hated him. Only wished we’d met in another life, wearing different uniforms.”

MEMORIES OF SCHOOL LIFE**BY PRITY MANDAL (SEM 3)**

School life is often described as the golden chapter of a person's journey — a time untouched by the complexities of adulthood, yet rich with experiences that shape who we become. For many, including myself, memories of school life are a bittersweet mosaic of laughter, lessons, friendships, failures, and triumphs. As the years pass and the burdens of life grow heavier, it is to these memories that we return — a silent refuge where time stands still.

The first memory that flashes before me is the morning rush: the ringing of the alarm clock, the struggle to wear the uniform neatly, the weight of the school bag, and the comforting sight of the school gate slowly filling with familiar faces. Those first few minutes, spent huddled with friends before the bell, set the tone for the day — filled with gossip, laughter, and the occasional panic over unfinished homework. Classrooms were the heart of our school lives — spaces where knowledge was imparted, yes, but also where friendships deepened and identities formed. I remember the thrill of passing notes when the teacher's back was turned, the quiet pride of answering a difficult question correctly, and the collective groans that followed the announcement of surprise tests. Even punishments, like being asked to stand outside, became moments of humor and camaraderie. Teachers, too, are etched in memory — some feared, some adored, but all remembered. Their words, gestures, and guidance often stayed with us far beyond the textbooks. It was through them that we first learned discipline, curiosity, empathy, and resilience. Some inspired us to dream; others taught us to question the world around us. Equally unforgettable were the annual days, sports meets, excursions, and competitions — times when we stepped beyond the classroom to discover other facets of ourselves. Whether it was the nervous excitement of performing on stage or the joy of winning a race, these moments added color and confidence to our young lives. Yet, school life wasn't without its shadows. There were days of disappointment — a lost competition, a failed test, a broken friendship. But even these taught us valuable lessons in coping with failure and rebuilding ourselves. The school environment offered a safe place to fall and rise again.

Perhaps the most cherished part of school life is friendship — raw, loyal, and innocent. Unlike adult relationships, there were no masks, no pretenses. Whether it was sharing tiffin boxes, covering for each other in front of teachers, or celebrating small victories together, these friendships left indelible marks on our hearts. Now, as life grows busier and friends scatter across cities and continents, the memory of those school days glows ever brighter. Photographs, report cards, and old notebooks bring back echoes of a time when life was simpler, and joy was found in the smallest things — a half-day, a paper boat in the rain, a shared chocolate. In the end, school life is not just a phase — it is the foundation. It gives us not only knowledge but a sense of belonging, identity, and joy that we carry for life.

A VISIT TO CELLULAR JAIL**BY AYESHA KHATOON (SEM 5)**

Visiting the **Cellular Jail**, also known as **Kala Pani**, is not just a journey through the corridors of stone—it is a walk through the haunted silence of India's freedom struggle. Located in **Port Blair**, the capital of the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands**, the jail stands as a solemn reminder of the pain, sacrifice, and unyielding courage of those who gave their lives for India's independence. My visit to this historic site was both emotional and enlightening, as it brought me face to face with the invisible weight of history.

From a distance, the structure appears calm—almost serene against the backdrop of the blue sky and the distant sea. But as you approach, the heavy iron gates and looming colonial architecture begin to cast a different shadow. The building itself, constructed by the British in **1906**, was designed to isolate prisoners from one another. It had **seven wings** radiating from a central tower, each containing hundreds of solitary cells. Only three of these wings remain today, the rest damaged in later years. But even in ruins, the jail speaks volumes. The moment I stepped inside, I felt a hush fall over the group I was with. It wasn't fear, but reverence—a collective awareness that we were entering a space carved out of suffering. The narrow passageways, the cold stone floors, and the tiny, airless cells were enough to chill the spine. Each cell, just big enough for one person, had a small ventilator placed high on the wall, ensuring the prisoner could neither see nor communicate with anyone. Solitary confinement here was not just punishment—it was a method of psychological torture.

The Cellular Jail held many of India's greatest freedom fighters—**Veer Savarkar, Batukeshwar Dutt, Barindra Ghosh**, and countless others. Their names are carved into stone, but their stories are etched deeper—in the walls, in the tools of torture, and in the silence of the cells. One of the most moving moments of my visit was standing before the cell of Veer Savarkar. To imagine a brilliant mind, a poet and revolutionary, confined for years in isolation, was profoundly moving. A plaque outside his cell briefly details his time there, but no words can capture the psychological torment he must have endured. The jail also has a small museum, which includes artifacts, letters, old photographs, and handwritten notes from prisoners. What struck me most was the **cruelty of the punishments**. Prisoners were made to work in inhumane conditions, crushing coconuts for oil, often without proper food or rest. Any form of protest or non-compliance was met with brutal floggings or worse. Some never left the jail alive; many were hanged after mock trials. In the evening, I attended the **light and sound show**, a carefully curated performance that tells the story of the Cellular Jail using light projections, music, and narration. The show brings the jail to life—not in a sensational way, but in a deeply emotional one. As the narrator, voiced by a famous Indian actor, recounted the names and fates of the prisoners, I saw many in the audience wiping tears from their eyes.

It is one thing to read about history in books, but entirely another to feel it in your bones. The show reminded me that freedom is not an abstract idea—it is a gift earned by blood and sacrifice. The final scene, where the Indian flag is projected onto the central tower, was met with spontaneous applause. It was not just patriotic; it was a moment of collective mourning and gratitude. My visit to the Cellular Jail changed the way I understand freedom. As a student, I had read about colonial rule, oppression, and the independence movement. But standing within those

walls, touching the rusted iron chains, and seeing the remnants of a dark past brought the truth closer. Freedom was not granted—it was **snatched** from the hands of an empire, at great cost. The Cellular Jail is not just a tourist spot; it is a **national shrine**. It must be preserved not only for its architecture but for the **memory of resistance** it holds. In today's fast-paced world, where nationalism is often reduced to slogans, places like these remind us of the **real sacrifices** behind those words.

A visit to the Cellular Jail is a deeply moving experience—part history lesson, part spiritual pilgrimage. It teaches us that courage is often born in the darkest places, and that the price of liberty is never small. As I walked out of the gates, the sun was setting over the Andaman Sea. The air was quiet again, but inside me, something had changed. I had come as a tourist, but I left as a witness to the pain and pride that built a nation.

THE LAST BISCUIT

BY MOUSUMI BHUIYA (SEM 1)

Ramu, the old tea-seller, sat cross-legged under the banyan tree, as he had done every morning for the last thirty years. His rusted kettle hissed on the small stove beside him, and the scent of cardamom-laced chai floated through the sleepy village street.

By his side sat **Chotu**, a scruffy brown street dog with kind eyes and a wagging tail. He wasn't always called Chotu. When Ramu first found him, five years ago, the pup was little more than skin and bones, shivering beside a pile of garbage. Ramu gave him a biscuit, then another, and by the third day, Chotu had claimed a spot beside the tea stall.

Every day since, they had shared everything—biscuits, rain, sunshine, silence. While Ramu poured tea for the villagers, Chotu would chase away crows, bark at bicycles, and curl around the tea stall like a furry guardian.

But that morning, something was different.

Chotu didn't bark. He didn't wag. He just lay there, his head on Ramu's foot, eyes half-closed, breath slow.

Ramu looked down, concern knitting his wrinkled forehead. "Tired, are you, old boy?"

Chotu's tail thumped once, faintly.

Ramu reached into his tin and pulled out a biscuit. "Here," he said softly, "your favorite." Chotu tried to lift his head, but it wobbled and dropped again. So Ramu crumbled the biscuit into small pieces and fed them to him gently, one by one.

"Good boy," he whispered.

The sun climbed higher. Customers came and went, sipping tea, chatting, unaware of the quiet farewell taking place beneath the banyan tree. By afternoon, Chotu had stopped moving. Ramu sat beside him, still and silent, eyes filled with tears he did not wipe away. He didn't close the stall. He didn't make more tea.

That day, the village drank no chai.

THE BENEFITS OF OTT PLATFORMS OVER GOING TO MOVIE HALLS NOWADAYS
BY SAHELI MANDAL (SEM 5)

In recent years, **Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms** such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+ Hotstar, and others have transformed the way audiences consume entertainment in India and across the globe. These digital streaming services have not only challenged the traditional cinema hall experience but have also redefined the boundaries of storytelling, accessibility, and convenience. With the rise of technology and shifting viewer preferences, OTT platforms now offer a range of benefits that often surpass the conventional practice of going to movie theatres.

Perhaps the most obvious advantage of OTT platforms is **convenience**. Watching a movie or a web series no longer requires travel, long queues, or adhering to show timings. A smartphone, tablet, or smart TV gives access to thousands of titles with just a few taps. Viewers can watch at their own pace, pausing, rewinding, or resuming whenever they choose. This flexibility is particularly appealing to today's fast-paced generation, working professionals, and students who prefer content on demand rather than a rigid theatre schedule. Moreover, the comfort of one's own home — with no interruptions from noisy audiences or overpriced snacks — has made OTT a preferred choice for many. OTT subscriptions are significantly more **economical** in the long run than frequent visits to movie halls. A family outing to the cinema, especially in urban multiplexes, can be quite expensive when you add up ticket prices, food, parking, and transport. In contrast, most OTT platforms offer affordable monthly or yearly subscription plans. With a single subscription, entire households can access a vast library of content, making it a **cost-efficient** entertainment solution. Some platforms even provide mobile-only plans or free content supported by ads, ensuring wider accessibility to all economic groups.

Unlike movie halls that showcase only a few titles at a time, OTT platforms offer a **massive library** of movies, web series, documentaries, stand-up specials, and even live sports. From regional cinema in Tamil, Bengali, and Malayalam to Korean dramas and Spanish thrillers, OTT services cater to diverse tastes and cultures. This **global reach** enriches the viewer's experience, exposing them to different storytelling traditions, languages, and perspectives. Moreover, niche content — such as indie films, short films, and experimental cinema — which may never find a spot in mainstream theatres, thrives on OTT. This democratization of content benefits both **creators and audiences**. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift from theatres to OTT. With lockdowns and social distancing norms in place, theatres remained shut for extended periods, while OTT platforms surged in popularity. Several big-budget films like *Gulabo Sitabo*, *Shershaah*, and *Ludo* opted for digital releases, breaking the traditional hierarchy of theatrical-first launches. This change in release strategy has continued even after cinemas reopened. Many viewers, now accustomed to the comfort and safety of home viewing, are hesitant to return to crowded halls. OTT has become not just an **alternative** but a **mainstream** mode of consumption. OTT platforms use **algorithms and viewer data** to suggest content tailored to individual tastes. Unlike theatres that provide a one-size-fits-all approach, OTT services offer **customized recommendations**, creating a more engaging and personal experience. Additionally, the option of subtitles, multiple language dubs, and accessibility features like closed captions make content inclusive and easier to enjoy for people with hearing impairments or language barriers. The ability to control playback speed or skip intros enhances viewer autonomy.

One of the biggest draws of OTT platforms is their **original content**. Series like *Sacred Games*, *Mirzapur*, *Paatal Lok*, and *Delhi Crime* have redefined Indian digital entertainment, providing complex storytelling and character development that mainstream cinema rarely explores. These shows have large fan bases and global recognition. The rise of the “**binge-watching**” culture—watching multiple episodes or an entire season in one sitting—has also changed how stories are told. Writers and directors now explore layered narratives, social commentary, and character arcs without the time constraints of a traditional two-hour film. While not often considered, there is also an **environmental benefit** to OTT consumption. Reduced travel to theatres, less use of disposable packaging (such as paper tickets or single-use snacks), and lower electricity usage in comparison to large multiplexes contribute modestly to environmental sustainability.

Despite these advantages, it is worth acknowledging that cinema halls offer a unique, immersive experience — the large screen, surround sound, and communal reaction to major scenes can be thrilling. For many, especially fans of action, sci-fi, or epic drama genres, the grandeur of a theatre is irreplaceable. However, the **gap between the two experiences is narrowing**, especially as home entertainment systems become more sophisticated and affordable. With high-definition TVs, soundbars, and projectors, even the cinematic feel is being recreated in living rooms. OTT platforms have revolutionized the way we consume content by making it **more accessible, affordable, and diverse**. In today’s digital age, where time is precious and personalization is valued, OTT services offer unmatched convenience. While theatres will always have their charm, the rise of OTT reflects a deeper shift in **audience behavior, technological innovation, and storytelling freedom**. As India’s digital infrastructure continues to improve and content creators push boundaries, OTT platforms are not just here to stay—they are shaping the future of entertainment.

ON TRAVELLING THE WORLD: A JOURNEY THROUGH THE MIND AND BEYOND

BY PROF. IMAN GHOSH

In today's hyper-connected yet increasingly fragmented world, the act of travelling—once a luxury reserved for the elite—has become an essential experience for personal, educational, and psychological development. Travelling the world is no longer just about leisure or adventure; it is about transformation, awareness, and self-discovery. In an age where cultural clashes, identity crises, and mental health issues are rampant, stepping out of one's geographic and mental boundaries can be a remedy as much as a revelation. A globetrotter is more than a tourist; they are seekers of understanding, collectors of perspective, and students of life. Travelling influences not only how people see the world but also how they understand themselves within it. I would like to explore the **psychological makeup of a globetrotter**, the **educational value of global exposure**, and the **emotional and cognitive benefits** of travel—while also offering a critical view on the implications and responsibilities that come with being a traveller in the modern world.

A globetrotter often embodies specific psychological traits that shape and are shaped by the act of travelling. At the core is **openness to experience**, one of the Big Five personality traits. This refers to a willingness to embrace new ideas, cultures, people, and environments. Travelling, especially in unfamiliar or challenging settings, stretches this openness, encouraging growth through discomfort and novelty. Another defining trait is **curiosity**—a desire to understand the "why" behind customs, languages, and lifestyles. Globetrotters typically exhibit a high **tolerance for ambiguity**, a psychological capacity to deal with uncertain or unpredictable situations. This trait is especially relevant in cross-cultural encounters, where misunderstandings are common and adaptability is key. Lastly, globetrotters often develop high levels of **emotional resilience** and **self-efficacy**. When navigating foreign transportation systems, language barriers, or cultural faux pas, one must depend on intuition, problem-solving, and emotional control. In turn, this cultivates confidence, empathy, and independence. However, it is important to critically acknowledge that not all travellers approach the world with this mindset. Some may travel physically without ever stepping outside their mental boundaries. The psychology of meaningful travel involves intention, reflection, and humility—qualities not guaranteed by mere movement.

From an educational standpoint, travel can be a more powerful teacher than any classroom. It offers **experiential learning**—a method where individuals learn by doing, observing, and interacting rather than memorizing. For example, visiting Auschwitz in Poland brings history alive in a way no textbook on World War II ever could. Walking through the streets of Varanasi reveals layers of philosophy, culture, and social complexity that defy conventional curricula. Exposure to different cultures enhances cultural sensitivity and global awareness. In multicultural societies and workplaces, this is an invaluable asset. Learning how to respect, understand, and adapt to different cultural norms is essential in a globalized economy. Immersive travel accelerates language acquisition. Conversations with locals, deciphering signs, and negotiating in foreign markets improve listening, speaking, and comprehension far more effectively than classroom instruction. Encountering different worldviews encourages travellers to question their own biases, stereotypes, and assumptions. This promotes critical thinking and reflective judgment—skills increasingly needed in an age of misinformation and echo chambers. Travel fosters interdisciplinary learning. A single trip can teach geography, economics, religion,

art, and politics all at once. For example, a visit to Istanbul can become a lesson in Byzantine architecture, Ottoman history, and the geopolitics of East and West. Critically, however, the educational value of travel depends on engagement. Passive sightseeing or over-commercialized tourism often leads to superficial understanding. Meaningful learning requires immersion, dialogue, and reflection—qualities often missing in mass tourism.

The psychological advantages of travel are numerous and scientifically backed. Modern life, especially in urban settings, can be monotonous, stressful, and emotionally draining. Travelling offers a cognitive and emotional reset. Stepping away from routine environments reduces cortisol levels and combats burnout. Whether it's hiking in the Himalayas or relaxing on a beach in Goa, new environments stimulate dopamine and serotonin release, improving mood. According to a study in the *Academy of Management Journal*, international travel can boost creativity, especially when travellers deeply engage with local cultures. Exposure to diverse aesthetics, problem-solving methods, and social norms promotes cognitive flexibility. Travel demands attention to the present. Navigating a new place forces the brain to become more aware of surroundings, which naturally encourages mindfulness—a practice linked to reduced anxiety and depression. Travel often serves as a rite of passage. It challenges personal limits, promotes humility, and fosters emotional maturity. Solo travellers especially report significant growth in confidence, independence, and self-awareness. Yet these benefits are not guaranteed. For some, travel can also cause **culture shock**, loneliness, or anxiety. Mental preparation and emotional adaptability are essential, especially for those travelling to politically unstable or culturally rigid environments. Moreover, the mental benefits of travel are often short-lived unless experiences are internalized and translated into everyday behaviors.

While the benefits of travel are vast, it is also critical to address its **ethical and environmental costs**. Unchecked tourism can lead to cultural commodification, environmental degradation, and economic imbalances. Places like Venice, Machu Picchu, and Bali have suffered from **overtourism**, where the influx of travellers undermines local ecosystems and distorts local economies. The rise of "voluntourism"—where individuals travel under the guise of helping communities—can often do more harm than good by perpetuating dependency or disrespecting local agency. Similarly, "poverty tourism" and exploitative photography in underdeveloped regions reduce complex lives to mere spectacles. Travellers must, therefore, take responsibility for their footprint. **Ethical travel** involves supporting local businesses, respecting cultural norms, minimizing environmental impact, and approaching new cultures with empathy and humility—not entitlement.

Travelling the world is far more than a passport full of stamps; it is a journey of the mind, heart, and spirit. It builds cultural competence, nurtures empathy, fosters creativity, and enhances emotional well-being. A true globetrotter is not one who simply crosses borders, but one who breaks down mental and emotional barriers—someone who listens more than they speak, learns more than they teach, and gives more than they take. However, the value of travel lies not in the number of countries visited but in the depth of experience. Travel must be intentional, reflective, and responsible. In a time where the world faces divisions of race, class, nationality, and ideology, the conscious traveller can serve as a **bridge between cultures**, a **witness to truth**, and a **catalyst for change**. In embracing the world, we find pieces of ourselves. In understanding

others, we better understand who we are. And in travelling the world, we discover what it truly means to belong—not to a nation, but to humanity.

IMPACT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NEP 2020 IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM OF INDIA IN THE LAST 5 YEARS

BY PROF. RITUPARNA DAS

In July 2020, the Government of India launched the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**, the first major education reform in over three decades, replacing the National Policy on Education of 1986. Designed to create a more inclusive, flexible, and holistic educational ecosystem, NEP 2020 aims to align India's learning landscape with the demands of the 21st century. With a focus on **transformational changes across school and higher education**, the policy seeks to promote critical thinking, creativity, digital literacy, multilingualism, and vocational training—ensuring that learners are equipped not just with academic knowledge, but with the skills required for lifelong learning and global citizenship. One of the most groundbreaking features of NEP 2020 is the restructuring of the traditional **10+2 format** into a **5+3+3+4 framework**, emphasizing Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and foundational literacy and numeracy. Other significant reforms include **multidisciplinary and flexible curricula**, **multiple entry and exit points** in higher education, the introduction of **regional languages as mediums of instruction**, **integration of technology in classrooms**, and efforts to make education more inclusive and accessible through open and distance learning models. Since its launch, the policy has been in various stages of implementation across Indian states and Union Territories, with some institutions embracing reforms like **four-year undergraduate programs**, **academic credit banks**, and **international collaborations**, while others have faced logistical, infrastructural, and socio-political hurdles. This essay critically examines the **merits and demerits** of NEP 2020 over the **past five years** of implementation, highlighting both the **transformative potential** of the policy and the **challenges** that threaten to undermine its objectives. Using real-world examples, expert analyses, and feedback from stakeholders, the discussion aims to provide a balanced evaluation of the NEP's impact on India's education system.

MERITS:

NEP 2020 replaces the rigid 10+2 structure with a more flexible **5+3+3+4** design. This transition allows students to explore interdisciplinary subjects and flexible course combinations—Science, Arts, Commerce—based on interest. Additionally, the introduction of **multiple entry and exit points** in higher education provides flexibility in pursuing formal qualifications—such as truncated courses with certificates or diplomas. The **Gunotsav 2.0** initiative in Gujarat, which incorporates a **20% self-assessment** weight for government schools, saw a remarkable **180% increase** in A and A+ graded schools—suggesting improved quality of foundational education. This aligns with NEP's emphasis on formative, continuous assessments over rote memorization. NEP 2020 fosters the adoption of technology in teaching and learning: the creation of the **National Educational Technology Forum (NETF)**, collaborations like NITI Aayog's tie-up with Byju's, and encouragement of learning platforms, e-labs, and video-based modules. In parallel, two new mobile apps were launched for study and career guidance, and about ₹4,000 crores worth of educational projects have been initiated. Implementation has also paved the way for international institutions to open campuses in India. Notably, three Australian universities have received approval to establish campuses here, boosting global access and collaboration in higher education. Delhi University's **Competence Enhancement Scheme (CES)** allows learners of any age to enroll and earn certificates—a key pillar of NEP's vision of lifelong learning—and

grants up to 10% of seats in regular courses to CES learners. In line with NEP’s holistic focus, the **CBSE’s Hub-and-Spoke model** now connects well-equipped “Hub” schools with less-resourced “Spoke” schools to provide counseling, emotional literacy, and mental health support—an approach aligned with the policy’s broader well-being emphasis..At Maharaja Sayajirao University (MSU), a week-long conclave on “NEP-2020@5” highlighted concrete reforms such as four-year undergrad programs, interdisciplinary curricula, IKS (Indian Knowledge Systems) cells, outcome-based education, and digital learning integration.

DEMERITS:

Despite ambitious plans, **unequal infrastructure**—especially in rural areas—hinders NEP’s rollout: lack of digital access, shortage of trained teachers, and insufficient funding remain chronic issues. A **Reddit educator in Eastern India** noted that many teachers lacked internet access, had neither smartphones nor familiarity with technology, making access to the **Diksha platform** difficult. The digital emphasis risks further marginalizing socio-economically disadvantaged groups. Studies highlight a **caste-based digital divide**, where lower-income and historically oppressed castes have significantly less digital access and skills—impeding equitable benefits from EdTech initiatives. Critics argue NEP centralizes control over education, infringing on states’ autonomy. Opposition-ruled states have resisted implementation, the language policy especially viewed as ideologically driven—raising concerns about undermining federalism. The NEP’s **three-language formula**, with emphasis on mother tongue instruction, faces pushback: in many non-Hindi states, critics see this as a veiled move to promote Hindi and Sanskrit, potentially suppressing regional languages. Tamil Nadu’s Education Minister, Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozi, emphasised the effectiveness of the state’s two-language model and opposed NEP mandates. The preferencing of digital, infrastructure-heavy education may raise tuition costs, particularly in private institutions—potentially limiting access for economically weaker families. Buxar MP labeled NEP “anti-poor,” warning that schemes like HEFA, which drive costly infrastructure loans, may force institutions to increase fees. Student groups like AISA have conducted surveys in Jharkhand universities, highlighting **faculty shortages** for new NEP courses and arguing that **loan-based funding** via HEFA modalities can lead to fees hiking—raising equity issues. NEP mandates such as the four-year B.Ed degree, while well intentioned, pose challenges. Teachers and institutions may struggle to meet new qualifications and training requirements, adding workload and system complexity. One Redditor shared losing their job due to reduced undergraduate workload—citing NEP 2020 as a cause. Despite aiming to reduce exam-centric pressure, NEP’s creation of agencies like **PARAKH** and **NTA** may inadvertently increase testing. Public performance metrics may push schools to focus on scores rather than holistic learning.

CONCLUSION:

Over the last five years, NEP 2020 has charted a transformative vision—bold in its scope, emphasizing holistic learning, interdisciplinarity, digital integration, and inclusivity. Concrete achievements include expansion of EdTech infrastructure, global collaborations, improved primary school assessments, and institutional-level curricular experimentation. Yet, transformative change has been uneven. Deep-rooted systemic challenges—digital and infrastructure disparity, federal tensions, ideological resistance, equity concerns, and

implementation bottlenecks—remain significant obstacles. For NEP’s vision to materialize equitably, policymakers must invest more deeply in infrastructure and teacher training, empower states while respecting federalism, address digital inequality, design inclusive language policies, and ensure that marginalized learners benefit rather than being left behind. Only through such calibrated, context-sensitive execution can NEP 2020 fulfill its promise of an inclusive, future-ready Indian education system.

AWARENESS OF MENTAL HEALTH IN INDIA TODAY

BY PROF. BIDISHA BISWAS

Mental health is not merely an absence of disorder—it is foundational to wellbeing, productivity, and social harmony. In India, however, awareness remains disproportionately low despite a burgeoning mental health crisis. With approximately **150 million adults** living with mental disorders as per the National Mental Health Survey (NMHS) 2015–16, the landscape is alarming. Add in rising suicide rates—**171,000 deaths in 2022**, a 27% increase since 2018, with a record-high suicide rate of **12.4 per 100,000**—and the stakes for awareness couldn't be higher. Yet, less than one-fifth of those needing help access any treatment. This essay examines why mental health awareness is a pressing necessity in India, the systemic barriers at play, and real initiatives striving to bridge the gap.

The Scale and Cost of Invisibility

1. Prevalence of Mental Illness

- Around **10.6% of adults** suffer mental health issues, yet the treatment gap ranges from **70–92%** depending on the disorder.
- The burden, in terms of disability-adjusted life years (DALYs), is **2,443 per 100,000 population**, with a staggering estimated **economic loss of USD 1.03 trillion** between 2012–2030.

2. Provider Shortage

- India has a mere **0.75 psychiatrists per 100,000 people**, far below the WHO norm of 3 per 100,000.
- The 2023 Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health reported only about **9,000 psychiatrists** in total, with an annual entry of merely **1,000**—leaving India **27 years** away from meeting professional demand.

3. Cultural and Societal Stigma

- Mental health remains stigmatized, especially in rural and marginalized communities; India spends less than **0.1% of its GDP on mental health**, and less than **1.1% of its health budget**.
- The reluctance to acknowledge mental struggles means millions continue suffering in silence, unaware they can seek help.

Why Awareness Matters

1. Early Detection and Prevention

- Awareness encourages recognition of symptoms—stress, anxiety, depression—before they escalate.
- Example: Kerala's **Jeevani Mental Health Program** continues to support ~60,000 college students; between October 2019 and February 2020, over 2,300 reached out, mostly with anxiety or depression concerns.

2. Breaking Stigma and Changing Minds

- Increasing visibility of mental health through media and celebrity initiatives is slowly reshaping public narratives.

- The **Live Love Laugh Foundation**, founded by Deepika Padukone, has transformed the conversation around depression and anxiety, with the hashtag #NotAshamed spark widespread acceptance.
 - A survey from metropolitan centers shows positive shifts: willingness to seek help rose from **54% in 2018 to 92% in 2021**, and belief that persons with mental illness can lead normal lives surged from **32% to 65%**.
3. **Empowering Support Systems**
- Community and institutional initiatives are proving impactful. For instance:
 - **Support circles** in Delhi-NCR serve as moderated spaces where individuals share emotional struggles like anxiety or loneliness—fostering empathy and loosening stigma.
 - **IISER Kolkata** appointing a Dean of Wellness and Welfare to lead its Mind Care and Wellness Centre reflects growing institutional commitment to student mental health.
 - **Yoga and stress clinics** at RGUHS (Bengaluru) are being institutionalized to combat stress and substance abuse among healthcare students, including counseling and free therapies.
 - A national **task force outreach website** launched by the Supreme Court's mental health task force is targeting student suicides in higher education via data, surveys, and stakeholder engagement.
 - Programs like **Madurai's "Happy Schooling"** are spearheading early intervention among school children through wellness curricula and training educators in mental health literacy.

Gaps and Persistent Challenges

1. **Urban–Rural Divide**
 - Mental health literacy and services remain skewed toward urban centers. Rural communities face compounded barriers—limited providers, poor infrastructure, predominant stigma.
2. **Policy and Budget Constraints**
 - Despite efforts like the **Mental Healthcare Act of 2017**—which decriminalized suicide and enshrined mental health rights—implementation lags due to underfunded programs. NMHP's local execution and budget remain inadequate.
 - The annual mental health budget remains in the ₹1,000 crore range—far less than the estimated ₹93,000 crore needed for full coverage.
3. **Inadequate Infrastructure**
 - Short supply of professionals and the high cost of care—monthly treatment can be ₹2,115, nearly **25% of per capita monthly income**—make access prohibitive.
4. **Digital Initiatives and Youth Support**
 - India's growing youth cohort (many digital natives) show promise. Research shows adolescents prefer anonymous, culturally tailored tools like chatbots for emotional support, though such tools are scant.

Awareness of mental health in India is **no longer optional**—it's essential. Recognizing the mental health crisis is the first step toward healing. Comprehensive awareness enables early

recognition, strengthens community bonds, destigmatizes help-seeking, and pressures policymakers into action. While models like **Jeevani**, **IISER-Kolkata's wellness programs**, **support circles**, and **media-led campaigns** represent commendable progress, the broader agenda must scale. India needs systemic reform—robust budgets, decentralized mental health delivery, rural outreach, professional expansion, digital innovations tailored for local cultures, and relentless efforts to dismantle stigma. A mentally healthy society is a resilient society. Only when India champions awareness—paired with action—can we hope to stem the epidemic silently crippling thousands across social spectrums.

THE RELEVANCE OF STUDYING LITERATURE TODAY

BY PROF. ANWESHA MANDAL

In a world increasingly dominated by technology, science, and data, the place of literature in education and society is often questioned. With STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields being prioritized for their economic and practical utility, literature can seem like a romantic relic of the past—a discipline of fiction, metaphor, and imagination in a world driven by algorithms and analytics. Yet, literature remains not only relevant but essential in today’s complex global landscape. It teaches us how to think, feel, empathize, and question; it helps us understand the human condition across cultures, histories, and ideologies. Studying literature is more than the academic exercise of analyzing texts; it is a dynamic engagement with language, emotion, identity, and society. In a time marked by social polarization, mental health crises, cultural conflicts, and political manipulation, the skills and insights offered by literature are more important than ever. This essay explores the enduring relevance of literature today through its cognitive, emotional, cultural, and ethical dimensions.

Literature is, fundamentally, a **record of human experience**. Whether it is the anguish of Hamlet, the dreams of Raskolnikov, the loneliness of Holden Caulfield, or the resistance of Draupadi in Mahasweta Devi’s stories, literature captures the inner workings of the human soul. In doing so, it allows readers to see reflections of their own fears, struggles, hopes, and joys. This emotional resonance fosters **empathy**—a trait in deep decline in today’s polarized world. Reading diverse narratives allows us to step into other people’s shoes, to see life from unfamiliar perspectives. For instance, reading Toni Morrison helps readers understand the trauma of racial injustice in America, while Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* opens windows into caste, memory, and childhood in postcolonial India. In an age of misinformation, fake news, and media manipulation, the **ability to think critically** and interpret texts becomes invaluable. Literature trains the mind in **close reading**, **contextual thinking**, and **analytical reasoning**. A literary reader does not take words at face value—they examine nuance, subtext, symbolism, and authorial intent. This habit of critical interpretation translates directly into real life: interpreting political speeches, media narratives, and social messages with a questioning, discerning eye. Literature teaches us that words have power—and that power must be understood and wielded with care. For example, analyzing George Orwell’s *1984* or Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* is not just an academic task—it is an exercise in **political awareness** and media literacy. These dystopian texts warn us against authoritarianism, surveillance, and the erosion of truth—issues that are frighteningly relevant today.

Literature is a **repository of culture**, history, and tradition. Through it, we gain insights into how people thought, lived, loved, and rebelled in different eras and geographies. Studying texts from across time—Shakespearean tragedies, Romantic poetry, modernist novels, or postcolonial fiction—helps us trace the **evolution of human consciousness** and social values. It allows us to study the **intersections of literature with history, politics, gender, race, and class**. For example, reading Partition literature in India and Pakistan (like Saadat Hasan Manto’s *Toba Tek Singh*) offers powerful emotional and human perspectives on a historical event that official records and statistics cannot fully capture. In a rapidly globalizing world, literature enables **cross-cultural literacy**. Reading Japanese haiku, African folklore, Latin American magic realism, or South Asian diasporic poetry enriches our understanding of the diverse tapestries that

shape the global human narrative. Language is central to human civilization, and literature is the **highest form of language use**. Studying literature refines our capacity for **expression**—teaching us how to use language not only to communicate but to evoke, persuade, and move others. In professional settings, the ability to write well, speak persuasively, and think eloquently is increasingly valued. Literature, by exposing readers to varied narrative styles, rhetorical devices, and syntactic forms, enhances verbal intelligence and fluency. A well-read individual writes better emails, presents more effectively, and engages in richer dialogue. Moreover, for students, literature helps in **academic writing, public speaking, and debate**—skills transferable across disciplines and careers. From law and journalism to diplomacy and marketing, the ability to craft and analyze narratives is a key asset.

In today's world, where mental health issues like anxiety, depression, and alienation are on the rise, literature offers **solace and self-understanding**. The field of **bibliotherapy**—using literature for healing—demonstrates how reading can help individuals process emotions, confront trauma, and feel less alone. Characters who struggle with grief, confusion, or identity provide readers with emotional validation and catharsis. Poetry, especially, acts as an emotional outlet. For instance, Sylvia Plath's confessional verses or Rabindranath Tagore's spiritual poems connect deeply with readers in moments of personal turmoil. Thus, literature plays a **therapeutic role**, helping readers navigate the chaos of inner and outer worlds. Literature has always served as a platform for **the silenced, the marginalized, and the oppressed**. Writers from minority, colonized, queer, or feminist perspectives use literature to challenge dominant narratives and assert their identities. Contemporary literature by Dalit authors, Black feminist writers, or Indigenous poets brings attention to injustices that mainstream media often ignores. Works like Bama's *Karukku* or Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *We Should All Be Feminists* confront issues of caste, race, and gender with powerful urgency. Studying such literature is not only about understanding others—it is about **confronting societal structures**, questioning inherited norms, and advocating for justice.

Some critics argue that in the age of TikTok, AI, and short attention spans, literature is losing its relevance. But in reality, its relevance is being **redefined**, not diminished. Digital platforms now host thousands of literary blogs, podcasts, and spoken word performances. Literature is becoming more accessible through audiobooks, e-readers, and online courses. Even fan fiction and web novels represent new modes of literary expression. Furthermore, **literary thinking**—the capacity for storytelling, empathy, and nuanced understanding—is crucial even in tech fields. AI, for example, is learning to generate language, but it lacks the human depth of metaphor, irony, and emotional complexity that literature teaches. In a time of rapid change, moral ambiguity, and information overload, literature remains a **compass**—helping us navigate who we are, where we come from, and where we might go. It nurtures not only intellect but **imagination, morality, and emotional depth**. It teaches us how to think, feel, and connect across boundaries of time, place, and identity. Studying literature today is not a retreat into the past, but a **reaching into the soul of the present**. It is a powerful counterbalance to the mechanization of thought and the dehumanization of culture. It reminds us that while science teaches us how to build, and technology shows us how to connect, literature shows us **why it all matters**.

CINEMA AND LITERATURE: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION

BY DR. MADHUMANTI MAITRA

The intricate liaison between cinema and literature constitutes a perennial locus of cultural, aesthetic, and ontological discourse. Far from being merely intertextual siblings, the two media—rooted respectively in verbal and visual semiotics—engage in an ongoing dialectic that destabilizes the notion of medium-specificity. The praxis of adaptation, often reductively conceptualized as transposition or replication, is more accurately a site of translation, interpretation, and transmutation—a palimpsestic exercise in which the original text is neither preserved nor erased, but rather reinscribed within a new medial framework. This essay endeavors to deconstruct the ostensibly binary opposition between cinema and literature through a critical lens, deploying theoretical paradigms from intermediality studies, narratology, and film theory. In doing so, it interrogates the epistemic violence of fidelity criticism, examines the ontology of narrative transformation, and elucidates the ideological operations inherent in cinematic adaptations of literary texts.

At the ontological level, literature and cinema diverge in their phenomenological engagement with the reader or spectator. Literature, as Roland Barthes would suggest in *The Pleasure of the Text*, requires active participation from the reader, who co-authors the text in the act of interpretation. The literary text is polysemic, indeterminate, and temporally flexible—allowing recursive and fragmented readings. Cinema, in contrast, orchestrates a more linear temporal unfolding, with images, diegetic space, and montage regulating the spectator's perceptual experience. However, Gilles Deleuze's cinema theory—especially in *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*—challenges this rigid formalism by introducing the idea that cinema, like literature, can produce non-chronological, affect-driven, and philosophical thought. Thus, both media may converge in their capacity to enact *durée*, or lived time, thereby suggesting that their divergence is more phenomenological than essential.

Adaptation has traditionally been viewed through the prism of **fidelity discourse**, wherein the cinematic text is evaluated in terms of its loyalty to its literary source. This paradigm, however, is fundamentally flawed, as it presupposes an originary purity in the literary work and positions the film as a derivative artifact. Linda Hutcheon, in her seminal work *A Theory of Adaptation*, reframes adaptation as “a derivation that is not derivative”—a process of creative and ideological rewriting that resituates the narrative in a different semiotic and cultural register. Accordingly, cinematic adaptations are not inferior “copies” but are autonomous texts that engage dialogically with their literary antecedents. For instance, Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980) significantly deviates from Stephen King's novel, yet its hermeneutic richness lies precisely in this divergence. Kubrick transforms King's horror narrative into a metaphysical exploration of madness, time, and trauma—thereby producing a cinematic artifact that is intertextual yet ontologically distinct.

From a narratological perspective, the migration from literature to cinema entails profound recalibrations. Gérard Genette's theory of **focalization** elucidates the mechanics of narrative perspective in literature—distinguishing between who sees (focalizer) and who speaks (narrator). In literature, internal focalization allows access to a character's consciousness, while heterodiegetic narration enables an omniscient overview. Cinema, constrained by visibility, often

resorts to external focalization, though techniques such as voice-over narration, subjective camera angles, and dream sequences simulate literary introspection. Moreover, cinema's manipulation of temporality through editing and montage—what Andrei Tarkovsky termed “sculpting in time”—complicates the temporal linearity of narrative. Literary analepsis (flashbacks) and prolepsis (foreshadowing), while lexical in literature, become spatialized and rhythmized in film. The **diegetic time** in literature is constructed via syntactic progression; in cinema, it is orchestrated through mise-en-scène, rhythm, and sound design. This shift implicates not just formal difference but **epistemological reconfiguration**—what can be known, felt, or inferred in each medium.

Every adaptation is ideologically loaded, shaped by the socio-political context of its production and reception. Louis Althusser's notion of **ideological state apparatuses** (ISAs) helps us understand how literature and cinema both participate in the reproduction of dominant ideologies, albeit via different apparatuses—education for literature and mass media for film. Cinematic adaptations often sanitize, sensationalize, or politicize literary texts to suit commercial imperatives or cultural climates. Consider the filmic renditions of Shakespeare in Bollywood, such as Vishal Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* (Macbeth) and *Omkara* (Othello). These adaptations do not merely translate Shakespeare's tragedies into Hindi; they recontextualize them within the sociopolitical matrix of contemporary India, addressing caste, gender, and power with localized specificity. The cultural economy of film, governed by box office dynamics and audience reception, imposes limitations absent in literary production. Thus, adaptation is also an act of **cultural negotiation**, wherein the literary is rendered “marketable” without necessarily preserving its ideological or aesthetic complexity.

Poststructuralist thinkers like Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault deconstruct the myth of authorial intention. In *The Death of the Author*, Barthes contends that the meaning of a text is not fixed by its author but produced by the reader. This idea radically alters the stakes of adaptation. If the “author” is dead, the “faithful” adaptation becomes a misnomer; the adapter, like the reader, becomes a producer of meaning rather than a transmitter of it. Thus, when Jean-Luc Godard famously said, “It's not a matter of making political films, but of making films politically,” he underscored that the **form of adaptation**—its structure, pacing, visuality—can itself be a site of ideological resistance. Therefore, cinema's engagement with literature must be examined not just in terms of content but in terms of **discursive strategy**.

The contemporary era, marked by the dissolution of clear-cut medial boundaries, demands a turn toward **intermediality**—the study of how media interact, reference, and hybridize. Bolter and Grusin's theory of **remediation** posits that new media refashion older media forms. In this sense, cinema remediates literature, and increasingly, digital media remediate both. Consider how web series based on novels (*The Handmaid's Tale*, *Game of Thrones*) expand the narrative universe through transmedia storytelling—encompassing spin-offs, games, and social media discourse. In such instances, literature is not merely adapted; it is **dispersed, fragmented, and reassembled** across platforms, rendering traditional notions of authorship, adaptation, and fidelity obsolete. Moreover, literature itself becomes cinematic in form: novels are now written with a “screenplay consciousness”—fast pacing, visual detail, and dialogue-driven scenes—underscoring the bidirectional influence between the two media.

The relationship between cinema and literature cannot be circumscribed within the simplistic taxonomy of source and adaptation. It is a **fluid intermedial dialogue**, shaped by ideology, aesthetics, technology, and cultural politics. As this essay has sought to demonstrate, cinema does not merely “translate” literature; it **interprets, contests, and reconstitutes** it—thereby participating in a larger discourse on narrative, representation, and meaning. In an era of media convergence and cultural hybridity, the dialectic between cinema and literature continues to evolve—inviting us not to ask which medium is superior, but to interrogate how each medium reconfigures our understanding of storytelling, subjectivity, and the world itself.

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