

Sita, not Ram's story retold

By Sanskriti Singh

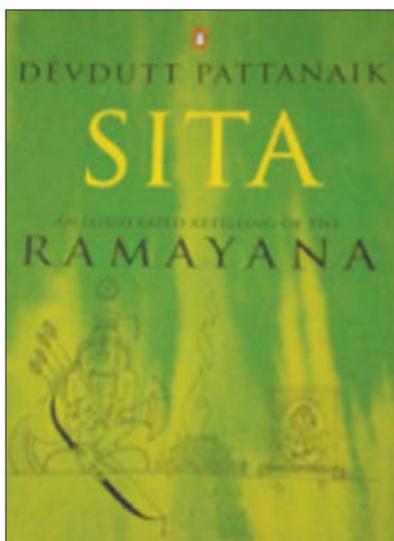
Indian mythology has been a genre I have grown up reading or listening to the stories, especially from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. For example, the stories of Rama and Sita, the demons and the gods in the Ramayana are fascinating. I have always been interested in the Ramayana and to read a retelling of this epic has to be interesting enough and must provide new aspects.

The book *Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of The Ramayana* retold by Dr Devdutt Pattanaik has all the contents of the epic but are presented in a new way. We always hear about Rama but this was the first book which described Sita as a goddess — Sityan instead of Ramayan could well be its title.

The book has 3 major parts. First, an author's note — what Shiva told Shakti.

This part mainly explains the story or the core of Sita and Rama's life. Shiva explains the different incarnations of Vishnu. The author has also brought forward the concept of Suryavansh as the story revolves around the Solar Dynasty. He explains the birth of Rama and the reason he came to Earth.

The second important section of the book is the 'Prologue' that starts with Hanuman illustrating the story of Sita to Vasuki, the God of the Nagas. This is followed by the birth of Sita. She was born of the earth and raised among sages. She was found by Janak, the Rajrishi, and he brought her up amidst an environment of knowledge and the Vedas. Thereafter comes her Marriage — 'Janak told her to bring happiness to marriage rather than seek happiness from it'.



The next section deals with the Exile — 'She followed her husband to ensure that he never feels incomplete'. This deals with her experiences during the exile.

Next is the Abduction — 'Her body could

be imprisoned, but never her mind', illustrates her captivity by Ravana, the king of Lanka.

How can we forget Sita's patience and faith? Hence this section is named Anticipation — 'From her faith came her patience'.

Ram would have never left Sita in any bad situation but people in Ayodhya brought the purity of a Sati to question. Rama rescued her in the Rescue — 'Lanka desired her submission, Ayodhya demanded her innocence'.

And then the last section considers the freedom of Prakriti from the bounds of Purush, explaining the injustice that Ram and Raghukul meted out to the Pure Goddess who had submitted herself to her husband's family. Here we are also introduced to Luv and Kush, the twin sons of Rama and Sita, and her role of a single mother.

The conclusion signifies Sita's return to Mother Earth, aptly called the Freedom — 'He remained trapped in culture, but nature set her free'.

This whole Prologue ends with the grief Rama felt without his Sita and how he decided to leave Earth and go back to Vaikunth, the dharm of Vishnu. This section brings the book to an end with the Epilogue — Ascent to Ayodhya.

Devdutt has done justice to the epic by retelling the Ramayana and giving it a different angle. Being a constant reader of mythology, I found the book reasonably justified and fascinating. And surely we cannot forget the artwork that has been applied by the author in each section. The presentation is amazing. What comes to my mind when I read this book is the artistry and splendid narration. I came across various parts which helped

me discover the unknown facts of the characters. Before reading this book I never knew that Rama was a person who never questioned things or contradicted them, he accepted life the way it came to him, nor did I ever know that Sita was a curious princess who had hundreds of questions about everything, or the sacrifice Urmila made for her husband. These untold aspects of the characters are graciously revealed in the book.

The book has many vignettes and the author has offered his personal views and provoking new questions to arise in our minds. As a reader, look for the answers between the infinite myths.

The interesting plot, which explains women's point of view and the indirect metaphors, have explained what a woman's decision depends on. Sita as an example of women in general is a perfect way of defining truth, grace and knowledge along with rules and regulations of marriage and motherhood.

The book is a splendid representation of literature. It must be read by one and all. It is easy to understand and the narration will keep you spellbound. And you are sure to love it more with the beautiful lines conveyed by the author:

"Within infinite myths lies an eternal truth/ Who sees it all?"

(The author is a Class X student of B.K Bajoria School)

Book: Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of The Ramayana; Author: Dr Devdutt Pattanaik; Publisher: Penguin Books India; Pages: 220; Price: Rs 328

Clean clause



One of the most important parts of looking and feeling good is your personal cleanliness and hygiene. You may have attractive features and an alluring figure, but lack of cleanliness can put people off. Believe me, it shows, says beauty expert **Shahnaz Husain**.

We are also exposed to air pollutants.

They are posing a threat to health too. Apart from lung and respiratory problems, the skin and scalp also bear the brunt of pollutants. They not only cause dryness of the skin and hair, but actually disrupt the normal acid-alkaline balances. They can cause rashes and other eruptive conditions.

Pollutants also collect on the scalp and can also affect the eyes, causing burning or redness. If there is a rash or eruption, add a little rose water to sandalwood paste and apply on the face. Wash off with plain water after 15 minutes. For the scalp, mix one teaspoon each of vinegar and honey with one egg. Massage the mixture lightly into the scalp. Leave on for half an hour and then wash the hair. Rinse well with water. Or, give the hair hot oil therapy. Heat pure coconut oil and apply on your hair. Then dip a towel in hot water, squeeze out the water and wrap the hot towel around the head, like a turban. Keep it on for five minutes. Repeat the hot towel wrap 3-4 times. This helps the hair and scalp absorb the oil better. Leave it overnight and wash hair the next day.

Eyes should be washed with plain water several times. Soak cotton wool pads in chilled rose water and use them over the eyes as eye pads. Lie down and relax for 15 minutes. This really helps to remove fatigue and brightens the eyes.

Improper daily hygiene can undermine the health in a number of ways. The skin is influenced by many external factors, like dirt, chemical pollutants and bacteria.

By daily washing, bathing and cleaning, we can help in removing this and keeping ourselves free from infections and accumulation of toxic wastes. Dirt and pollutants can block the pores of the skin and hamper the excretion of wastes. As you know, the skin excretes waste substances through sweat. Sweat and sweat deposits also settle on the skin and must be removed daily. In fact, it is the decomposition of bacteria in sweat that causes an unpleasant body odour and decomposition begins to occur about six hours after you sweat.

Daily bath is a must. All parts of the body should be washed well, specially the neck, armpits and feet. These are areas where germs accumulate. Apart from a mild soap, you would need a clean rough-textured washcloth or loofah, sponge, a long-handled brush for the back, a pumice stone, a nail brush, an aromatic oil, cologne, talcum powder.

If you have dry skin, a pre-bath cream or oil application will help. Sponges are ideal for soaping the skin, while a washcloth helps to scrub the body. This not only removes dirt and pollutants, but also helps to cleanse the skin of dead cells and stimulate circulation.

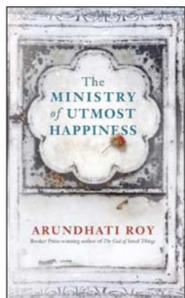
A pumice stone can be used on the elbows and heels. An aromatic oil can be added to the bath water.

Talcum powder during summer helps sweat to evaporate. Use a cologne or deodorant soon after your bath while the skin is still damp. Pay special attention to the feet. After washing them well, dry them thoroughly and apply talcum powder, during the hot weather. In summer wear open footwear, so that the sweat evaporates. This helps to avoid fungal infections like athlete's foot and ring worm, which grow on moist skin.

Cleanliness and hygiene also extend to your clothes. Sweat clings to clothes and leads to bad odour. Change your clothes daily. Wear cotton clothes in summer.

Utmost happiness after 20 years

Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, which hit the bookstands across India on June 6, comes 20 years after the author's *The God of Small Things*, which won the Booker Prize in 1997 and was a bestseller in more than 30 languages worldwide. Excerpts:



The first time she made her way past the crowd — the sellers of itars and amulets, the custodians of pilgrims' shoes, the cripples, the beggars, the homeless, the goats being fattened for slaughter on Eid and the knot of quiet, elderly eunuchs who had taken up residence under a tarpaulin outside the shrine — and entered the tiny red chamber, Jahanara Begum became calm. The street sounds grew faint and seemed to come from far away.

She sat in a corner with her baby asleep on her lap, watching people, Muslim as well as Hindu, come in ones and twos, and tie red threads, red bangles and chits of paper to the grille around the tomb, beseeching Sarmad to bless them. It was only after she noticed a translucent old man with dry, papery skin and a wispy beard of spun light sitting in a corner, rocking back and forth, weeping silently as though his heart was broken, that Jahanara Begum allowed her own tears to fall. This is my son, Aftab, she whispered to Hazrat Sarmad. I've brought him here to you. Look after him. And teach me how to love him. Hazrat Sarmad did.

For the first few years of Aftab's life, Jahanara Begum's secret remained safe. While she waited for his girl-part to heal, she kept him close and was

fiercely protective of him. Even after her younger son, Saqib, was born she would not allow Aftab to stray very far from her on his own. It was not seen as unusual behaviour for a woman who had waited so long and so anxiously for a son.



When Aftab was five he began to attend the Urdu-Hindi madrasa for boys in Chooriwali Gali (the bangle-seller's lane). Within a year he could recite a good part of the Quran in Arabic, although it wasn't clear how much of it he understood — that was true of all the other children too. Aftab was a better than average student, but even

from the time he was very young it became clear that his real gift was music. He had a sweet, true singing voice and could pick up a tune after hearing it just once. His parents decided to send him to Ustad Hameed Khan, an outstanding young musician who taught Hindustani classical music to groups of children in his cramped quarters in Chandni Mahal. Little Aftab never missed a single class. By the time he was nine he could sing a good twenty minutes of bada khayal in Raag Yaman, Durga and Bhairav and make his voice skim shyly off the flat rekhab in Raag Pooriya Dhanashree like a stone skipping over the surface of a lake. He could sing Chaiti and Thumri with the accomplishment and poise of a Lucknow courtesan. At first people were amused and even encouraging, but soon the snick ering and teasing from other children began: He's a She. He's not a He or a She. He's a He and a She. She He, He She Hee! Hee! Hee! (ANS)

QUIZ

1. What is the unit that is used to express nuclear sizes?
2. When was the first Journalist Day celebrated all over the country?
3. Who received the World Health Organisation Director-General's Special Recognition Award for global tobacco control for 2017?
4. What is the name of the hottest star that was discovered recently?
5. In which year were the names of the Laccadive, Minicoy and Amindivi islands changed to Lakshadweep by an Act of Parliament?
6. The world's oldest Buddhist shrine was destroyed in the Nepal quake in 2015. What is the name of the shrine?
7. Which celebrity is credited for inventing gravity-defying 45-degree lean shoes?
8. Who wrote the first history book?

Picks of the day: Identify the personalities



Last week's answers: 1. The statue of the Fearless Girl 2. Liar Liar GE2017 3. Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein of *The Washington Post* 4. C.A Bhavani Devi 5. *Cleyera grandiflora* 6. Vijaydan Detha 7. Juan Manuel Santos 8. *Los Tres Golpes*: mix of mashed plantain, fried eggs, slices of deep-fried cheese, and circular slabs of crispy, fried and strangely addictive salami

Picks of the day

1. Nikos Kazantzakis 2. Benjamin Earl King 3. Jacob Zuma 4. Runa Laila

The winner of last week's quiz contest is Chesrang Sangma

Send in your answers to sundayshillong@theshillongtimes.com. Names of the first five persons with all correct answers will be published next week and the first entry with all correct answers will get **Rs 200**. You have to collect the prize money from *The Shillong Times* office after providing proof of your identification.

Need to call a spade a spade

Journalism is a noble profession. It gives one the power to tell the truth and expose the corrupt. The power of words surpasses the power of money and muscle. A well-researched report and strong words can make a lasting impact on society and can even bring about a perceivable change.

With the advent of technology, journalism has attained a different dimension. The electronic medium brings news faster than newspapers. Social media flash breaking news even faster. But the role of print media in forming mass opinion has not diminished, especially in a place like Shillong. While news can be obtained at ease using technology, for analysis of news one needs to turn the pages of a quality newspaper.

However, no matter how glamorous journalism looks from a distance,

the job is tedious and needs undivided focus of a professional. Again, print and electronic media have their own challenges. With so much competition in the media sector, time is a major challenge and everyone has to chase the deadline. One's efficiency will be judged not only by the journalistic but also how fast one can deliver.

In the race to remain in the game, professional ethics sometimes take a backseat and one has to compromise his or her stand. In doing so, not only the credibility of the profession is lost but also the common man is misled. This has to change and the old glory of the profession has to be revived so that only truth prevails at the end.

(Contributed by Priyanka S Raj)

(Continued from Page A)

"It is all up to the Government to decide because we NGOs have continually stressed that a mechanism is important. We feel the Government should put on hold everything to decide first and then to release the KSU members," FKJGP's Rani says.

Green alarm

An important factor that should have worried not only KSU or FKJGP but even the Government and the local population is that how the project will affect the natural diversity of the State and how much green cover will it lose in order to lay down the railway tracks.

Saikia of IIT-Guwahati says the political class of Meghalaya will have to be extra alert that the rail-

ways do not bring "massive environmental degradation".

"The classic example is that in Uttarakhand. Rapid improvement in transport facilities led to rapid but unwise development of Uttarakhand. The 2012 disaster was a result of this. The people of Meghalaya will have to ensure that railways bring only limited damage but more good," he adds.

Heavy rain led to floods and landslides in Uttarakhand in August 2012 killing more than 30 people and destroying several villages.

In the doldrums

Work on the railway project in the Meghalaya portion has stopped

though it is in progress in the Assam part. An official of the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) says workers are scared as the May 27 attack was not the first time. In 2015, a similar attack took place and without provocation.

"I think the mass here wants the railways because they are aware of the benefits. It is only a handful of people who are creating trouble. Meghalaya, unlike Manipur or Nagaland, is not a militancy-hit state. Those who are creating hurdles are locals... The Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) wanted railway line in every northeastern state by 2020. But the way things are progressing, 2030 also seems a distant dream," says the NFR official.

The word of caution had also come from veteran politician D.D Lapang who had said if the violence continued then the State might lose its chance of moving a step forward on the development path.

NFR could not give a time frame as to when they can start work again in Meghalaya putting the project in the doldrums for now.

Dialogue is the need of the hour and all stakeholders — the Government and the opposition, the protesters and the public — need to participate. Instead of rhetoric and hyperboles, politicians need to be logical and honest in explaining the pros and cons of railways to the protesters who, in turn, can be less emotional and more practical in analysing the future prospects.

(With inputs from Nabamita Mitra)

ESSAY COMPETITION

Pen is mightier than sword and words are louder than scream. So Sunday Shillong is giving readers between 20-26 years of age the opportunity to write not more than 600 words on 'India and secularism'. The best essay will get Rs 200. The winner will have to collect the money from *The Shillong Times* office after providing proof of identification.



Striking the right chord

By Willie Gordon Suting

The best music lets us journey to special moments in our lives. And it need not be lyrics that could bring forth memories. Melodies are charming as they speak more to the heart. We glide along with its rhythms letting it free ourselves. Feten Feten Duo, who performed at U Soso Tham Auditorium recently, showed that communicativeness is essential to the power of art. They made the audience sing, hum and whistle like them bringing a smile to everyone. Inspired by folk music of rural Spain, the duo veered rustic tunes. There was a verisimilitude to the life of rural folk.

The members, Diego Galaz and Jorge Arribas, had a natural elasticity playing different types of musical instruments. Arribas was magnificent on the accordion weaving dreamy melodies. Galaz's violin seemed to speak a haunting sadness which later altered to a joyful crescendo. The tunes were redolent of the humbleness and simplicity of rural life as the audience visualised sceneries of Spain in their minds. The music spoke of the beauty of nature and dance rhythms of Spanish tunes. It had a laid-back feel that is rare to find in other genres. Every chord progression by the duo was approached with scrupulousness and care.

There was a give and take of energies as the duo made the audience sing along. They made them hum and whistle also telling them to wave their hands to tunes. There was an intimate connection felt between the artistes and the audience as they journeyed together with the rhythms.

The compositions had a verve and playfulness to them. The tunes were never overwrought or sounding technical. They were intelligible and accessible with their purity. There was a characteristic spiritual feel to the duo's music as it touched the hearts of the audience. There was a cheer from everyone as they applauded with joy.

The duo showcased their versatility even more by producing musical sounds out of a saw, sweeping brush, frying pan, spoons and a camping stool. This at first amused the audience, but with the beautiful sounds produced they felt like witnessing real musical

MUSIC & BEYOND



Humour with music: A poster of Feten Feten Duo and Jorge Arribas (right) interacts with the audience at U Soso Tham through music. The auditorium witnessed a lively evening

instruments. There was an unconventionality in the duo's approach as they made best use of daily household objects. There was a quirkiness in the way they composed the tunes rich with humour and light heartedness. In between the tunes, Galaz made the audience laugh with his self-deprecating jokes.

Speaking to *Sunday Shillong*, Arribas explained that during World War II in Europe, poverty-stricken Spaniards in the countryside had no musical instruments to entertain themselves with. They hence made use of household objects producing sounds out of them.

Formed in 2008, Feten Feten Duo has come a long way having performed in countries like America, Argentina, Costa Rica, Austria, Belgium and Tunisia. Ar-

ribas describes his band's music as "connecting with the innocence of childhood".

The saw produced sounds of waves and cries of seagulls and the soaring wind. The sound of the accordion felt like witnessing rural Spanish people dancing in a country club. There was the trumpet violin made in 1910 that had a mellow longing sound, an antique among the many instruments played.

Feten Feten Duo also fuses folk music rhythms from different countries like Africa, France and Italy. They compose a rich amalgamation of the different cultures they come in contact with. "We take music from different parts of the world," says Galaz.

The duo is originally from the town of Burgos in Spain and has released three albums so far —



Cantables, Bailables and Feten Feten. "We adapt traditional music to contemporary times," says Galaz. The duo's aim is to spread awareness on the richness of Spain's folk music with the world. They desire to honour this form thereby spreading a message about their roots.

"Shillong audience was just amazing! We never knew it would turn out this good," says Arribas.

When asked about future collaborations with Indian folk musicians, the duo replied that they would very much like to be part of it. "Of course, we would like to fuse some Indian folk music sounds as well with help from Indian artistes," says Galaz.

The concert was organised by the Indian Council For Cultural Relations in collaboration with the Department of Arts and Culture.

Hilsa at its best



For fish lovers, hilsa is a delight. The king of fishes can be prepared in different ways and each recipe is mouth-watering. This week Chef Md Enamulla Khan (Ali) of Eden Group of Hotels and Restaurants will cook up a storm with a popular dish, **Bhapa Ilish**, or baked hilsa. This is a delicacy in many parts of the country and has a rustic elegance about it. So get set for some culinary lessons. All you need is to follow instructions and then enjoy the meal.

COOK UP A STORM

Directions

Sprinkle fish slices with salt and half of the turmeric powder.

Make a smooth paste of yellow mustard seeds, black mustard seeds, green chillies, ginger, salt and the remaining turmeric powder. Take a pan and place the fish on it and place the pan on the ring in the pressure cooker.

Spread paste liberally on fish. Pour mustard oil on top. Place the ring in the pressure cooker. Pour three cups of water into the cooker and place the pan with the fish on the ring. Cover with lid and steam the fish for 8-10 minutes. Serve hot.

Ingredients

- Hilsa (ilish) 500gm
- Salt to taste
- Turmeric powder 1 teaspoon
- Mustard seeds yellow 1 teaspoon
- Mustard seeds black 1 teaspoon
- Green chillies 2-3
- Ginger 1 inch piece
- Mustard oil 3 tablespoons



QUIZ

1. Which Indian won gold at the 10th edition of Moscow sand art championship?
2. Which Oscar winning singer will star in *Mama Mia 2*?
3. Which Indian teenager has won the 2017 Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) award in the environmental engineering category?
4. The "Hallikar" cattle, a popular draft breed of India, is indigenous to which state?
5. Which volcano is threatening human habitat in Bali?
6. What is the name of the psychedelic ingredient in magic mushroom?
7. New Zealand is currently facing 'chipocalypse'. What exactly is happening in the country?
8. Irish comedian Sean Hughes died recently. Which show on television was he famous for?

Picks of the day: Identify the personalities



Last week's answers: 1. Pencil 2. Child actor 3. Shot put 4. Bundelkhand, Madhya Pradesh 5. GPRS based railway enquiry system 6. Black Sea and Sea of Marmara 7. Syama Prasad Mukherjee 8. Cervantes

Picks of the day

1. Adolf Hitler Marak 2. Don Bradman 3. Frederick Forsyth 4. Anjum Hasan

The winner of last week's contest is Eric Ropmay

Send in your answers to sundayshillong@theshillongtimes.com. Names of the first five persons with all correct answers will be published next week and the first entry with all correct answers will get **Rs 200**. You have to collect the prize money from The Shillong Times office after providing proof of your identification.

History, not Myth

By Sanskriti Singh

"Within infinite myths lies the eternal truth who sees it all. Varuna has but a thousand eyes, Indra has hundred, You and I only two."

These lines truly define the mysterious Mahabharata. The Mahabharata has been retold a hundred times in the *Garbagrihas* (the inner part of a temple) through plays, books and even tele serials.

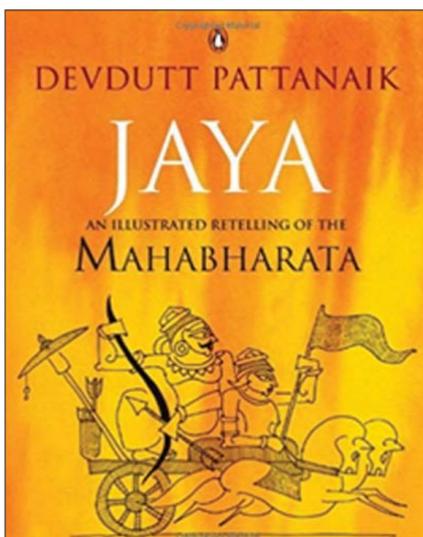
Painters have painted the stories and writers have been retelling it for long. The story of the Mahabharata is not only vast but even entangled. Its divine knowledge brings forth truth and beauty. Each strand placed in order to compile it into a vast stretched muslin called the Mahabharata, which defines the rules of *sanskriti* (culture). The Mahabharata is only a story of Pandavas and Kauravas, it is a tradition that shapes India into a compiled union called *Bharat Varsha*.

The book, *Jaya: an illustrated retelling of Mahabharata*, by Devdutt Pattanaik has all the concepts of the epic but is presented in a new Avatar. *Jaya*- meaning victory is more like a satire where no one is the winner, neither the Pandavas nor the Kauravas, still it is called *Jaya* by the writer Ved-Vyas. We listen to the stories but many may not understand. Or if we understand it do we learn from it? No! Because if we had then why would we be miserable? *Jaya*, *Vijaya* or *Mahabharata*- whatever be it called, it is the true divine knowledge of life. The book has five major parts. First an author's note- What Lord Ganesh wrote.

From a long time we have known that Vyas dictated the epic and Lord Ganesh brought it down to life. So this section explains the structure of the Mahabharata as Lord Ganesh wrote it along with the true name of this epic. Here passing of the epic from one generation to the other is explained.

The second important section is the 'Structure of Vyasa's epic'. Here the author tells the structure of Vyasa's epic called *Jaya*.

The third comes the prologue. The start of snake sacrifice, which is extended into 18 chapters which give us the main essence of the Ma-



BOOK REVIEW

habharata. The ritual of snake sacrifice that was being conducted by "Janamejaya" to teach the Nagas the lesson for killing his father Parikshit. Then came a voice "Stop". "Janamejaya" turned to find Artika, nephew of Basuki. He told the king of the sin he was performing. Then asked a disturbed Janamejaya to tell him the story of his forefathers — the Pandavas. Hence starts the story of the Kuru Vansa. The story of Kauravas and Pandavas, Kurukshetra and the birth of the *Gita*. As the prologue is divided further into 18 books, it talks about the descendants of Kurus and the life of Pandavas.

The different parts of the book deal with different subjects, telling stories of Kauravas and

Pandavas, and Draupadi.

For instance Book Six talks about the marriage and a mother's order to her sons to share a wife. Was she an object that could be divided? Alas, she was divided. Draupadi, a Devi was turned into a wife to be divided into five parts. Her morals were later questioned in the epic by the Kauravas. This part of the epic shows us that our karma or action determines the happiness in our lives.

There are chapters on exile, hiding and the war. The chapter on the aftermath of the war, where Pandavas are the winner, explains how Draupadi as well as Gandhari lost all their children. Not only this but the group of chapters brings forward the rage that the elders of the Kuru family possessed after the blood bath.

In the epilogue, "The end of the snake sacrifice", the author has beautifully explained that *Jaya* (Spiritual Victory) and *Vijaya* (Material victory) have different meaning. And when a person overcomes this mystery, he understands the importance of the Mahabharata.

The main motive of the Mahabharata is to show people the mirror of truth and divinity of life. And no doubt the author has retold the epic so beautifully that the mysteries are easy to understand and get the true lesson of life.

"Brilliant in pages" ! that's what I can say for "Jaya". It brings forward the tradition, culture and roots of history. Yes! the Mahabharata is not a mythology but history, which gives a person a true moral of life. This book proves that India is the only country that can have such an important moral put into numerous stories to teach the world the meaning of forgiveness and the core civilisation.

I recommend this book to all the readers as it is not only mesmerising but even captivating that will keep you spell-bound till the end.

(The author is a student of Class X of BK Bajoria School)

Book: *JAYA, An illustrated retelling of Mahabharata*
Author: Dr Devdutta Patnayak
Publisher: Penguin Book India
Price: 499, Pages: 372



ESSAY COMPETITION

Pen is mightier than sword and words are louder than scream. So Sunday Shillong is giving readers between **18-25 years of age** the opportunity to write not more than **600 words** on '**Independence and Freedom**'. The best essay will get **Rs 200**. The winner will have to collect the money from The Shillong Times office after providing proof of identification.

Women in desert kingdom

By Sanskriti Singh

Sultana's fight for women's rights in a repressive, fundamentalist Islamic society has an extra sense of urgency. Terrorism is the threat. The gathering strength of religious leaders and the discontent of impoverished Saudis are threatening to topple the comfortable world Sultana has known. Royal women live as virtual prisoners, surrounded by

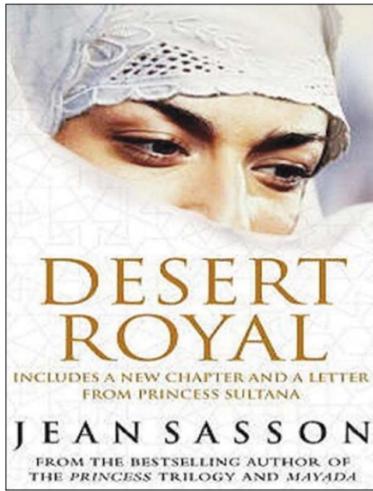


unimaginable wealth and luxury, privileged beyond thoughts and yet subject to every whim of their husbands, fathers and even sons.

In several chapters of *Desert Royal*, Jean Sasson brings out the painful life led by women of Saudi Arabia. The first chapter of the novel is 'Munira's Destiny' followed by 'Munira's wedding'. Sultana's niece Munira was given to a man who was of her father's age. She suffered endlessly and bore the pain of life ravished by time and people. Munira's father himself gave her away to suffer the pain and death.

Sasson describes the subjugation of women in Saudi society and their helplessness in the name of tradition. Women are nothing more than a commodity, a mere showpiece.

These chapters are followed by many more chapters that unravel the truth behind the veil of each dying woman and the girl child who faces harassment each moment and survives the rav-



ages and tortments.

This is a compelling story set against the background of a tur-

lent society pitting monarchy, external political pressures and the tug of economic hardships in the land overflowing with oil revenues.

This is the land that produced Osama-bin-Laden yet it is a land of beauty, history and home of Islam's holiest sites.

Surrounded by unbelievable opulence, Princes Sultana fights for justice and she has reacted to terrorism in an equally desperate ways.

It is on the desert trip with her family that she discovers her truth of life and fights for the will of each slave and past of a "Harem".

She witnesses her own nephew harassing a 14-year-old girl and she decides to fight. For the helpless women and daughters

"Sultana's circle" was the main essence of her quest to overcome the challenging situations.

Princess Sultana, the mother of two daughters Maha and Amani and a son Abdullah, is successful as a mother too. She raises her son to be a personality in favour of justice and teaches him to oppose injustice towards women.

Sultana strikes a chord among all women who are lucky to live their share of freedom. Women of this status are having everything but freedom. That is a gripping topic.

The book has deep essence of pain and imprisoned thoughts and is captivating.

(The author is a student of Class X)

Book: Desert Royal
Author: Jean Sarron
Publisher: RHUK Publishers
Pages: 343 Price: 399

A Curious Case

He trudges the sidewalks of Laitumkhrach. Says he whispers to himself Others see him making strange indistinct noises. Everywhere he goes He carries a paperback in his black trench coat It's a novel by Joyce, A story about a poet. When he sits alone in that same old bus stand He quivers and shivers when he reads. He sees those words dance in the air He wickedly smiles as he mumbles and mumbles "Me...am...poet..." The sad memory flickers with colours of fame and glory Nothing is lost to a man who believes.

Willie Gordon Suting

Oblivion

Growing up, pleasant smiles everywhere I had dreams, they were vague. Will I ever reach my goal? Holding up, with my slight conscience; I was naive and everything didn't seem clear. Oblivion, I fear you. I'm still trying to find my path and I'm impelled to be remembered. I will not relinquish my promise, For I don't want to be buried away and lost. Oh oblivion! Spare me. I beg you, don't call out my name. I'd rather endure pain while I'm remaining rather than being called out by you when my build goes cold. My oath to you oblivion, I will not cease until I'm fully sated with myself. I wish for individuals to remember my title when I'm reposed on a bed of white silk. I'm rather impulsive, but I shall never feel no remorse. Oh oblivion! Spare me. I beg you, don't call out my name. I'm restive knowing you're out there. I shall age with mistakes but oh; I beg you, don't call out my name.

Althea Faith Kharshiing, Class IX

Revenant

A revenant she was, wrapped in silent screams. Her nights were hellish, haunted by her dreams. The tale of horror was written on her skin, The scars were ugly, her past was mean.

Trapped in the gallows of time were her deeds. Sowed in the tar of guilt were the sickly seeds. But she was the iron that went through fire. She became the shield of her sisters' desire. In her rested the sun's rage, In her kindle the wild fire. She cared for no sage, She was the master of her own desire.

The moon, her distant sister cried, I have no spark, I have no light. Darkness engulfed, she lost her sight. The enraged Sun caught hold of her light. "Imbecile mistress! Oh my dear moon. Reflect my light, for yours would end soon." Said the sun in her own glory, Stronger she became for the wars so gory.

The sun burned and burned more, The war mongers ended like they were folklore. Her fire moulded her sisters' sculpture She filled them with love, she gave them their lustre.

Aadrita Chakravorty

Mysteries of clouds' own country

Under a Cloud by Bino K. John, with its eye-catching cover and a few colour plates, sets about the task of looking at life in the world's rainiest place (along with Hawaii's Waialeale), and unravels some of the mysteries attached to the phenomenon at Cherra and the nearby village of Mawsynram, and then casts a story.

The "Great Rain Show" crucially begins at midnight, where there is "an aura of expectation and a soporific stillness in Cherrapunji"; a phenomenon that has cast a spell on locals, visitors, meteorologists and neighbouring Bangladesh alike, and played out for three months.

In fact, in 1873, a torrent of water is reported to have moved a 250-tonne block of granite over a distance of 100 yards in a night.

But what is even more fascinating is that in this plateau, there is no flooding. And there can be a drought too. Or even the big-

gest recorded earthquake, 8.8 on the Richter, in 1897.

Writer and MLA Paul Lyngdoh, who is currently reading the book, says, "John has a rich poetical sensibility which is reflected in the book. It is a travelogue that captures the essence of Sohra."

John has quoted numerous facts, especially recorded during the Raj that he has acknowledged from his many archival sources, the main one being the Assam Gazetteer. The book essentially comes alive in his journey into the "watery innards" of Cherra — in his descriptions of the beauty of the hills, and his account of the lifestyle of Khasi people who inhabit them. This could be the heart of Cherra, not the rains, and, in a way, the heart of his book as well.

There is the description of children skipping along to school with careful attention on not getting their notebooks wet, and the "in-good-shape education industry in this playground of



evangelism"; the blanket-covered labourer waiting to be hired; John's classifications of his experiences in the various jeeps and rickshaws in Shillong; the shadow of secessionism; the bureaucrats; his run-ins with the Khasi women, "with their sense of purpose, poise and confidence that comes with their having been brought up in a matrilineal society"; a hair-raising trek and stomach churning meals.

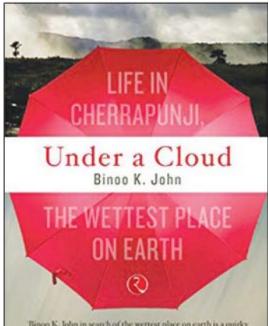
"John has a knack for attention to detail in painting a panoramic view of the Cherrapunjee landscape, its chequered history, its cultural relevance, proselytisation and its alluring beauty," Lyngdoh says.

John begins to unwind his journey and meets the rain men to unravel the magic behind the blast of rain in Cherrapunjee's Met office. An analysis of the figures in the row of columns have weather offices the world over reaffirm Cherra's exalted status as being the "Clouds' Own Country".

"A worthwhile read, I would recommend it to everyone", he says.

Reading suggestions for the week:

1. 3 Novels by Cesar Aira
2. The Savage Detectives by Roberto Bolano



WEEKLY READING

Willie Gordon Suting

QUIZ

1. Who is the author of the book *Big Little Lies*, which has been adapted into a miniseries by HBO?
2. Dr G Yunupingu, a blind singer-songwriter from Australia, died recently. In what language would he sing?
3. Government of which country has recently cleared the sale of 22 unmanned Guardian drones to India?
4. Who was the top goal scorer in the Champions League 2016-17?
5. Which State Government has launched, 'Anuyatra', an empowerment programme for the differently-abled?
6. Michael A'Hearn, who was posthumously awarded for his works, is a pioneer in which subject?
7. Who was India's first Dalit President?
8. Which country launched the first World Pest Day, aimed at eventual reduction and elimination of pest-borne diseases, this year?

Picks of the day: Identify the personalities



Last week's answers: 1. Dark net marketplaces 2. Rami Malek 3. 96th 4. India 5. Ray Phiri 6. June 29 7. Takehiko Nakao 8. Despacito

Picks of the day

1. Dirk Bogarde 2. Elon Musk 3. Ronan Keating 4. Jay Panda

The winner of last week's contest is Madhusmita Nayak

Send in your answers to sundayshillong@theshillongtimes.com. Names of the first five persons with all correct answers will be published next week and the first entry with all correct answers will get Rs 200. You have to collect the prize money from The Shillong Times office after providing proof of your identification.

Signs of fascism

ESSAY

"If I were a dictator, religion and state would be separate. I swear by my religion. I will die for it. But it is my personal affair. The state has nothing to do with it. The state would look after your secular welfare, health, communications, foreign relations, currency and so on, but not your or my religion. That is everybody's personal concern!"

— Mahatma Gandhi
There seems to be an uncertainty over freedom of religion in modern India. Following one's religion is the constitutional right of every citizen of the country. This means that our policymakers will endorse and support our countrymen no matter how diverse they are in their religious beliefs. The minorities and the backward classes will have the freedom

to practise their respective religions. Since the time of Independence, many rules and policies were amended and replaced to create a common platform for all and to justify the popular phrase 'Unity in diversity'. I firmly agree and admit that despite the diversity, the idea of secularism is inspiring.

However, as we start developing in some way or the other, many ideologies begin to influence people. The mindset that one section of the society will dominate others starts growing. For instance, we have seen what happened during the 1984 Sikh agitation, December 1992 Babri Masjid demolition, communal riots in Mumbai in 1992 and 1993, 2002 Gujarat riot and 2013 Muzaffarnagar riot.

The violence and the dance of death in every nook and corner of these cities and towns, which once saw peace and harmony, prompted many citizens to brood over their safety and security in the country.

The incidents show that secularism in India has become substantially affected by some section of bigots. All these incidents show how the secular and democratic India is rapidly becoming an intolerant fascist Hindu Rashtra. Therefore, the need of the hour is to make the present Government realise that as we belong to a country of diversity it should make an effort to protect the freedom of religion. As citizens we should force and protest if any Government tries to create communal disharmony and divide people in the name of religion. Any initiative taken by any government should not have an impact on any religious group.

Secularism is not only in our Constitution but also in our veins. We worship Mother Nature too. We believe that the world is our family — Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in one of his speeches. Now he has to walk the talk.

(Contributed by Cleverson Majaw)

ESSAY COMPETITION

Pen is mightier than sword and words are louder than scream. So Sunday Shillong is giving readers between 12-15 years of age the opportunity to write not more than 600 words on 'Where have all the playgrounds gone'. The best essay will get Rs 200. The winner will have to collect the money from The Shillong Times office after providing proof of identification.



Darknet

(Continued from Page A)

"We organise frequent awareness programmes and warn people against sharing ATM card or any personal details with strangers. Also, we ask them to report social media and email hackings at the earliest so that we can control the damage," says a senior officer.

The situation in the State has not gone out of control and an advisory still discourages many youngsters to be adventurous on social media, she assures.

Such advisories, however, do not stop cyber fraudsters who are operating from outside the State. A victim of hacking in the city says his Yahoo account was hacked from Nigeria but CAC could not trace the culprit.

The cyber cell justifies its failure by saying Yahoo never replied to their email. "This is another problem that we face. These companies in most cases do not get back to us. Such non-communication slows down our investigation," says a cyber cell officer.

Another impediment for the cell is lack of a well-equipped forensic laboratory in the State. For important cases police have to depend on laboratories in Kolkata or Hyderabad and in the process, investigation is affected.

But Priya says it will be wrong to single out states or the police machinery. "The Centre is talking big about digitisation and hushing up the thousands of cyber cracks that are taking place in the country to conceal the security system."

In 2016, 32 lakh debit cards of various banks were compromised. In the same year, the Prime Minister's mobile app was hacked by a 22-year-old whose intention was to point out the loophole in the system.

The pace at which cyber crime is increasing in the country, it won't be wrong to be apprehensive about the security of one's identity the details of which are stored under the unique identification number.

~ NM

(The contact details of the cyber assistance cell are 0364- 2504001, 9615191002 and email is ccw-meg@gov.in. The cell functions from 10am to 6 pm on all working days)



First day of freedom

By Uma Purkayastha

It was August 15, 1947, the first Independence Day of India after centuries of humiliation of the British bondage. It was a great thrill, a tremendous unprecedented feeling of joy and fulfilment of the long-cherished desire of the Indians.

"Today, we have in front of us the refreshing brightness of a noble dawn! Everywhere in the nation, there is the advent of the freshness of the morning mist. The country reborn has risen from a deep slumber of foreign dominion. We have triumphed after a long penance. We have left behind and era of darkness and aching pain; with thousands of our comrades fearlessly sacrificing their lives. At this moment of success of our penance, we respectfully remember the contribution of the freedom fighters and martyrs. As long as the National Soul is alive, the contribution made by the great patriots will glitter in golden colours," was the expression of Kalpana Gupta, the first lady journalist of Assam on August 15, 1947.

But a good percentage of people were deeply shocked and hurt to see their motherland partitioned and fractured, though free from foreign bondage. It was a great calamity in the national life of India, the evil effect of which is still burning the country.

Hemanta Kumar Gupta, a freedom fighter (Secretary, Khasi Hills District Congress Committee, and later a renowned journalist of Assam), said, "My soul was with innumerable freedom fighters, who bore the brutal torture of the British Raj, who sacrificed everything for our dear motherland, who tolerated infinite distress, only to see our motherland free from foreign bondage; but this freedom, fractured and imperfect! Our dreams of Independence were shattered with the physical amputations of our Mother India, and the untold misery of her children... What a cruelty of destiny! The freedom fighters are compelled to put up the Pakistani flag on the sacred soil of their homes — on the holy lands of our ancestors. The dream of ceremoniously unfurling our National Tri-colour flag on the soils of our sacred homes was mercilessly shattered". (Ref: Ajo Nityah by Kaverri)

During 1947, Shillong was the capital of undivided Province of Assam with Gopinath Bordoloi its



Prime Minister. (During the British Rule, Chief Ministers of Provinces like Assam were designated as 'Prime Ministers'). The First Independence Day was celebrated in Shillong in 1947 with unprecedented pomp and gaiety.

Gupta and E.H Pakyntein, senior assistant commissioner were selected as the secretaries of the First Independence Celebration Committee, Shillong, 1947. A special meeting was convened to chalk out the programme of the celebration with representatives from recognised organisations and institutions. In the meeting it was decided to have a two day programme starting with hoisting of the national flag.

"It was decided that the Union Jack, wherever it normally flies will be taken down as usual at sunset of August 14, 1947, and will not be hoisted ever again in Indian soil. At sunrise on August 15, the national flag will be hoisted on all public buildings. The hoisting of the flag by the public will be permitted and all will be requested to participate. No other flag, other than the tricolour shall be displayed on or near any public building or in any public procession or meeting on the 15th and 16th August 1947."

Regarding distribution of sweets, there were 9,265 children in the 51 schools of Shillong; 418 patients in the TB Hospital, Civil Hospital,

Ganesh Das Hospital, Welsh Mission Hospital and Police Hospital; 47 inmates in the prison. Order was placed in 11 dairies in Shilling for supply of sweet packets containing one rasagolla, one sandesh, one nimki and one samosa, at a cost of seven annas per packet. The school authorities were requested to collect the packets for students from the designated dairies near the school on the August 16, 1947. G.A Small, Rev. Bro. J.I. O'Leary, Rev. T.B. Phillips and Miss D. Franklin were to distribute the food packets to the hospitals and jail.

Shillong wore a festive look at the advent of a new dawn on August 15, 1947. The entire locality rose to action and life.

Kalpana Gupta wrote, "I stitched the three coloured pieces of saffron, white and green clothes that I had woven at home to make our national tricolour. It had taken me some time to plan the design and weave the "Ashok Chakra" at the middle of the white band in navy blue. Though the design of the "National Flag" was adopted on July 22, 1947 — I managed to get it only on the first week of August. It was a rush situation but I was determined that the national tricolour to be hoisted at our house, must be the one that I have woven". (Ajo Nityah by Kaverri)

On August 15, at 10 am, as soon as Hydari arrived, the Pipe Band played "The Royal Salute". Bor-

doloi went up to the flag stand — The "Union Jack" was fluttering in the morning sun. As he gently hoisted the national tricolour, the Union Jack came from the other end of the rope. The people sprang to jubilation. Thundering applause roared from every nook and corner of the Polo Ground. The slogans used were, "Vande Matram", "Jai Hind", "Swadhin Bharat Amar Rahye".

"The Independence Day celebration was the talk of the town. All the programmes went off in total perfection. Our hearts were filled with peace, blessedness and fulfillment. We prayed to God to show us the way, give us the strength to make our dear Motherland the most prosperous country. Let non-violence, tolerance, peace and love be the guiding principle of our people. Let there be no hunger, no illiteracy, no ill-health, no injustice in any corner of our Sacred Land. Let the great culture and heritage of our Motherland lead the world to blessedness and fulfillment". (Ref: Kalpana Gupta, as referred above)

(Memoirs of the first Independence Day in Shillong, collected from the diary of Kalpana Gupta, Ajo Nityah by Kaverri)

(The author is retired principal, Government Girls' High School)

Urmila's story

By Sanskriti Singh

Urmila was Sita's sister the princess of Mithila. She suffered endlessly with her sisters and braved the ravages of time. That's what Kavita Kane has explained in her novel 'Sita's Sister'.

It is believed that Sita was the woman who made the Ramayana possible. But when Ram and Sita followed by Lakshman left for their 'vanvas' (exile), there was a lady of wisdom who also suffered this exile along with these three. It was Urmila, Lakshman's wife — Sita's younger sister, more like her friend who went through this difficult time. She waited for her husband to return for 14 long years.

Ramayana is the story of Ram, Sita, Lakshman, Bharat, Kaushalya, Dashrath and many others. But amidst them Urmila did not catch the attention of many. But Kane tells 'Urmila's Story'. The girl who turned into a woman much earlier than her age, one who suffered endlessly.

The author has chosen a topic that is far behind in history but still exists, somewhere hidden. The book has description and narration like a perfect painting. The places, people and characters are well-described and take us to a different level of imagination. We can easily picture the events in our minds by the mere description of the novel.

Urmila, here the protagonist of the novel, has been described as a beautiful girl, who is outspoken and rich with knowledge and wisdom. She is a support line for Sita and a

strong supportive wife. Though the author has said the marriage does not hold much of Urmila's interest but it is a social discipline she has to conform to.

She would rather seek knowledge instead of a suitor. And she does seek knowledge. This is the main moral we can get here. Whatever be the circumstances, seek knowledge from it and try to understand it with grace.

This quality of Urmila makes her a scholar who debates with rishis and stands upright against all the sufferings.

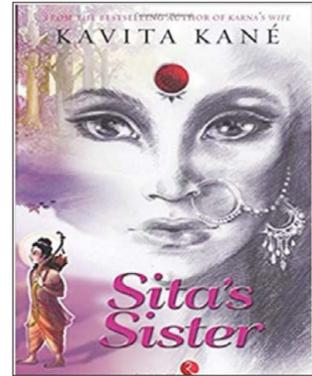
This book only talks about Urmila, the most overlooked character in the epic. Urmila stays in the doomed palace of Ayodhya and goes through each and every struggle that is enough to break a person into fragments. "She was like the colors. She was sounding dexterously — warm, vibrant and sparkling. Her quicksilver temper completed her", the author describes Urmila.

The author also narrates Kaikeyi's reason for Ram's punishment and his attachment with Urmila.

The life of Urmila truly depicts the values that a person should possess. "A girl is the mother's invention," Kane says as she shows a woman's perspective of life and Urmila's patience and dignity.

(The author is a student of Class X, BK Bajoriya School, Shillong)

Book: Sita's Sister
Author: Kavita Kane
Publisher: Rupa Publications
Page: 311, Price: Rs 295



Murakami's mind-bending novel

Kafka Tamura is a 15-year-old boy who runs away from home to escape an Oedipal curse: he will murder his father, a famed sculptor with whom he lives alone and sleep with both his sister and his mother, who abandoned him as a small boy. He runs off to a city where no one will know him and finds work and shelter in a library under the watchful tutelage of a hermaphroditic librarian, Oshima, and his mysterious and elegant employer, Miss Saeki, a middle-aged woman that may be Kafka's mother, and who lives in mourning following the death of her lover years before.

No sooner does Kafka leave than his father is found murdered, and Kafka wakes up in a city miles away, covered in blood.

Meanwhile he meets a girl who may be his sister, and after a brief sexual interchange, rapes her in a dream. To complete the prediction, he embarks on an affair with Miss Saeki — first, with the ghost of her 15-year-old self, then with the middle-aged woman she is in the present day.

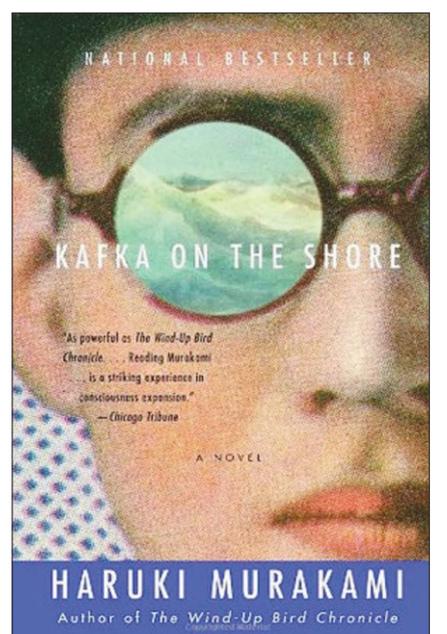
Poet and NEHU English Professor Esther Syiem, currently reading *Kafka On The Shore*, says, "I'm just halfway through, but it's been holding my attention for it's very thought provoking!"

"Meanings don't come easily in the boy Kafka's journey. Such incidents are common in Murakami's novels. Kafka is just trying to live," she adds.

In a second storyline that alternates chapter by chapter with Kafka's adventures, an elderly man named Nakata flees to the same city after murdering a mysterious character who calls himself Johnny Walker (after the man on the whiskey bottle) and may in fact be Kafka's father.

Nakata, who suffered an unexplained illness following a childhood UFO sighting, is now unable to read or write, but has the ability to talk to cats and to cause bizarre phenomena like fish and leeches to rain from the sky. He kills Johnny Walker to defend the neighbourhood cats Walker is murdering in order to build a flute that steals souls. Nakata befriends the trucker Hoshino, and together they carry out a mission Nakata is psychologically compelled to complete — they must find the entrance stone that separates this world from the spirit world and thereby allow Kafka and Miss Saeki to find resolution.

Despite the Oedipal background, Kafka's story is as much fairy tale as myth. Kafka is a teenager, a highly charged time of life, uniquely open to erotic and supernatural possibilities. He runs away to escape a wicked parent and finds himself in a place of mystery, comes under the protection of a wise guardian, and falls in love with a lonely and isolated beauty. Nakata's story, by contrast,



is much more spiritual — he is the holy fool, a simpleton who possesses otherworldly wisdom and a quiet, stoical dignity.

In John Updike's essay on this book for *The New Yorker* magazine, he compares Murakami's creation to the abundant and disordered spiritual world of Shinto, which stands in sharp contrast to the more mannered and highly structured monotheistic religions.

Murakami is presenting a very polytheistic worldview: not a single, ordered hierarchy of meanings, but a riotous, cross-pollinating sacred system. Yet his characters long for calm and emptiness. Nakata sits in a meditative trance while waiting for Johnny Walker and contemplates an interior world where everything is there, but there are no parts.

"This is my second Murakami novel. Thoroughly enjoyable, it is a mind-bending novel! I would like to recommend this to all," says Syiem.

Reading suggestions for the week:
1. *A Brief History of Seven Killings* by Marlon James
2. *Collected Poems* by Jeet Thayil

QUIZ

1. In which country the 8th meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Ministers of Law and Order was held from July 11-13?
2. The world's first centre for breeding Saola, a critically endangered hoofed mammal, is being constructed in which Asian country?
3. Who has become the new president of Ramakrishna Math and Mission?
4. What is the name of the new species of snake recently identified in Europe?
5. Recently, 15 EU countries received contaminated eggs. What is the name of the insecticide found in the eggs?
6. 'International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples' is observed on which date every year?
7. The drama, *Man in an Orange Shirt*, is part of a BBC season to mark which occasion?
8. Which country will host the 2024 Olympics?

Picks of the day: Identify the personalities



Last week's answers: 1. China 2. Adam Peaty and Kylie Masse 3. Justice BN Srikrishna Committee 4. Karachi Vynz 5. Bitcoin Cash 6. Samsung India 7. Shahid Khaqan Abbasi 8. Emperor

Picks of the day

1. Juan Rulfo 2. Akira Kurosawa 3. Geeta Dutt 4. Anya Singh

The winner of last week's contest is Chesrang Sangma

Send in your answers to sundayshillong@theshillongtimes.com. Names of the first five persons with all correct answers will be published next week and the first entry with all correct answers will get Rs 200. You have to collect the prize money from The Shillong Times office after providing proof of your identification.



In Letter & Spirit

To Sunday Shillong,

This is in reference to the article 'Road to Perdition' published in your newspaper on August 6.

I am a tourist in Shillong and will leave the city after two days (August 10). A habitual morning walker, I went out early on Sunday morning to experience Shillong in daylight (I reached here on Saturday evening, August 5). I, again by habit, picked up a newspaper, *The Shillong Times*, from a pile of local newspapers in front of a shop. While going through the stories of the day, the article on traffic congestion on the front page of the supplementary section caught my eyes. I read through with great interest because this is one issue that locals should raise and compel the Government to take effective measures.

Before coming to Shillong, at least six persons, friends and relatives who had either visited Shillong themselves or know people who had, cautioned me against the 'infamous' traffic here.

"If you reach Guwahati at 2.30pm, then rest assured that you are not reaching Shillong before 8pm/9pm/9.30pm," they had told me. I was shocked. From Guwahati to Shillong is around three hours' drive and considering the usual traffic, it may go up to 3.5-4 hours. But six was unbelievable.

I believed it only when I experienced it. It took me more than six hours to reach Police Bazar where my hotel was booked. I always thought Shillong was a quiet city but honking cars and the unending wait cleared all the myths.

I was happy to see that the local newspaper has brought up the topic so prominently and presented a holistic view of the problem. I was also happy to read that the Government is seriously thinking about various measures to control it. The next time I visit the city, I would like to see a decongested Shillong where people can breathe easy.

Thanking you
Sabyasachi Ghosh,
Kolkata, West Bengal



QUIZ

1. Bertrand Russell had a cameo role in a Bollywood film that was released in 1967. What is the film?
2. Which state in India became the first to provide women an injectable contraceptive for free?
3. Which famous cartoonist passed away this month?
4. Which country will set up the world's first data embassy in Luxembourg?
5. Which Bollywood actress is the co-owner of fashion brand 'Rheson'?
6. For which movie did American director John Avildsen won the Oscar?
7. Who was the first woman Chief Justice of the Nepal Supreme Court?
8. Berhampur Thakurani Yatra is a festival celebrated by the weaving community of which state?

Picks of the day: Identify the personalities



Last week's answers: 1. Ashutosh Maharaj, founder of the sect Divya Jyoti Jagriti Sansthan 2. Sweden 3. The stamp is coffee-scented 4. Switzerland 5. 2000 syrian Pound 6. Err is Human 7. Brazil 8. Amelia Earhart

Picks of the day

1. Mithali Raj 2. Shruti Hassan 3. Charlie Chaplin 4. Damien Sayre Chazelle

The winner of last week's contest is **Madhusmita Nayak**

Send in your answers to sundayshillong@theshillongtimes.com. Names of the first five persons with all correct answers will be published next week and the first entry with all correct answers will get **Rs 200**. You have to collect the prize money from The Shillong Times office after providing proof of your identification.

Memorable interview

There is no god; god left us long time back but He left back one commandment which is the law of karma. This short story deals with this law of modern era where the result of our karma is instant like our instant coffee.

I usually get up late but that day was a big day and I was waiting for this day since long. I got out of my bed, no, I would say I jumped out of my bed and took my towel and was ready to take a shower. While bathing I was thinking of this lifetime opportunity that I had just chanced upon. I was an MBA and was working in sales with a small firm and a few days back, I had received a call from this company — a big name in the market. I was sure if I hit it right, my days would change for better.

In the past too I had missed some glorious opportunities but this time I didn't want anything to go wrong and I didn't want to leave anything to chance. Though I had faced umpteen number of interviews, yet I had butterflies in my stomach and was thinking of all the probable questions and their answers enacting out in front of the mirror. My excitement was at its peak for it was the company that I always wanted to work for.

I was going to face the best so I too needed to be the best. With this thought in mind, I wondered what should I wear for the interview. Well, the absolutely safest option was my favourite blue shirt and black trouser and of course, that tie which Tina had gifted me on my birthday.

I got ready, locked the door and was about to leave when I thought to myself and ascertained if everything was in order. I meant the lights and all for otherwise my landlord, Mr Sharma, would waste no time in calling me up and giving a good lecture on electricity bill. To avoid any embarrassment, I unlocked the door and was about to move out when I realised that I had not picked up my car keys. So I went back to pick them up.

Soon I was running down the stairs as I had no patience to wait for the lift. I reached my car, unlocked it and got inside. With a deep breath I started the car and pulled out of my building.

On the way, I decided to take a shortcut as this would save plenty of my time and I would reach the venue well before the interview and could relax and prepare myself. At that moment, I was only planning like a student preparing at the last moment for his exams.

But it seemed that the traffic and time had other plans for me. They kept me back and

nowhere stepped in and took my space!" It was strange; the man was not reacting at all, as if he was not listening to me at all. This made me feel insulted and I held him from the shoulder so that he could come face to face with me. I pulled him by the collar and shouted, "Do you think I'm mad that am talking to you and you are pretending not to listen to me at all! You are insulting me and you can't get away with this. I will make you pay for this."

Saying this I made it a point that I note down the vehicle number so that I could teach him a lesson. Abusing him with all the words I knew I vented my anger but he slightly put my hands off his collar and went away without a frown on his forehead.

That arguably was enough to put me at my argumentative best and I was about to start off again but the man walked off without saying a word. I was not convinced but in the process I lost my mind and it took me a good lot of time to calm down. I was so agitated that in the waiting room too I was not able to sit at one place. I was pacing all over the place.

The lady at the reception requested me a number of times to be seated but I could not take this incident out of my mind and was wondering how could someone walk off like this so casually without a word as if nothing had happened! Didn't he realise at all that because of him I could have missed my appointment?

However, at the back of my mind I was thinking about the way that man had reacted. I had abused him and told him whatever came to my mouth and even held him by his collar but he coolly walked off without saying a word or even resisting. It was rather strange in today's world to not react where everyone is waiting for a small chance to pounce on the other.

(Contributed by *Paramita Chakraborty*,
(To be concluded next week)



SHORT STORY

finally I reached the interview venue in the nick of time. Just as I was about to park my car in the only parking slot left, a car from nowhere suddenly screeched in and took the last slot.

This was the last straw and it made me furious. Where was I supposed to park my car? It would again take a long time to find a parking place and by that time I might end up missing the interview call. As this was going on in my mind, in a fit of anger and frustration I started shouting at the man, "What the hell do you think you are doing? Who do you think you are? Are you blind? Can't you see that I was about to park my car and you from

New-age Ramayana

By **Sanskriti Singh**

Twisting and bending the fabric of an epic and then presenting it in a form of fiction is tough. When you are creating the fiction out of a much celebrated epic, you need not expect much out of it. But the author of Shiva trilogy and Ram Chandra series has done the job well.

Sita: Warrior of Mithila by Amish Tripathi is not only an epic narrated as a fiction but it is a mindset that present India needs.

In this book Sita has been depicted as a warrior princess, quite different from what we have always heard of. She is a tough lady, obsessed with the law, the Prime Ministers of Mithila, an adopted daughter destined to become the Goddess.

The book starts with the beautiful Sanskrit verse: *Yada yada hi dharmasyaglanirbhavati-subrata/Abhythanamadharmsyadaprakriti-sambhavap* (O keepers of righteous vows, remember this, Whenever dharma is in decline, Or there is an upsurge of adharma; The Sacred Feminine will incarnate. She will defend dharma. She will protect us).

The author has given a different start to the novel where Sunaina, Sita's mother, is a warrior princess of Assam and Janak, a noble man. Sita is found in a furrow by King Janak and his wife Rani Sunaina. This is followed by Sita's marriage to Ram and then her exile with him.

The Lankans here are as usual shown as the cruel "Rakshasa".

There are certain chapters that have been adopted word by word from the book *Scion of Ikshvaku* by the same author, but that makes it easier for people who have not read the first series to understand the story.

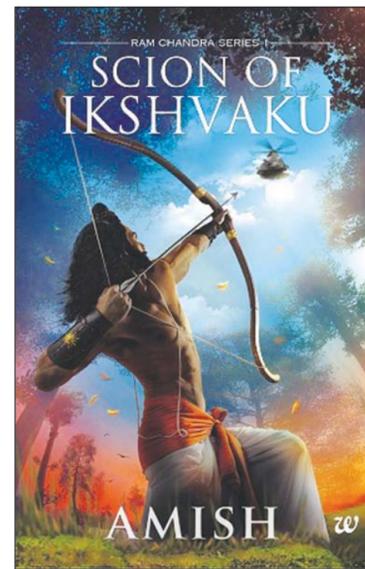
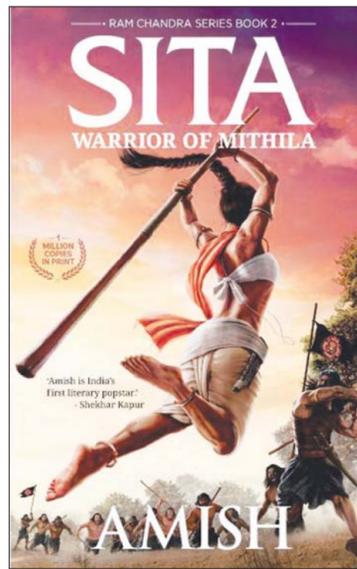
The Ram Chandra series itself is a series having shown the social deformities of our country.

The author does well in teaching the youth by retelling a much elaborated epic instead of *satsangs* (religious teaching by guru in group).

Both the books (*Scion of Ikshvaku* and *Sita: The Warriors of Mithila*) talk about governance, economy, social problem and lack of unity in the country that allows the invaders like Ravan to capture it.

Sita's thoughts depicted in this book are admirable. These thoughts are the ones which India today is in serious need of. Whether it be the caste system, poverty, freedom, laws, everything needs to be changed in new India, with a new point of view.

In the book, Amish has brought up caste



system, another sensitive issue in India. Here the author has explained how an individual should always be recognised by his/her work and not by birth.

Along with this the author has also written about freedom and cultures. From the epic Ramayana itself we can say Sita and Surpanakha were given freedom, but one used it for the wellbeing of society and the other became a burden on society.

These topics are reasonably to be taught to the generation but who is really ready to listen to the epic of our country?

So this is the perfect method narrated by the author. He has presented these teachings in a creative manner so that the youth can read it and accept it.

Book: Sita : Warrior of Mithila; Author: Amish Tripathi; Publisher: Westland Publication; Pages: 361; Price: Rs 350

Ending and retelling the real story at a whopping level of imagination is the way Amish presents his book. *Scion of Ikshvaku* is one such representation of literature or fiction.

Through this book, the writer has well presented the deformities of rules in our country. The narration is splendid and perfect.

He has presented the fiction beautifully. Ram who in Ramayana has a very different impor-

tance in his father's life has been presented as a person who faces a terrible mental torture.

Sita, who we always think of a soft and quiet lady given up with all the love and warmth, is shown as a tough woman.

The twist of the stories is acceptable. Certain characters are really a reminder of how rules were flouted in the country, such as the character of Roshani (Manthara's daughter) that reminded me of Nirbhaya.

The way Amish presents his book helps us imagine the circumstances and even the location well. The places where the event happens are so well explained that we can see the event occurring in front of our eyes.

The first meet of Ram and Sita is so well depicted.

How Ram bows to Sita and now the snapped off and leaves him speechless with her confidence and her obsession with the law as the best twist in the novel.

Characters here are hidden behind the epic ones, it is we who have to take a lesson. Respect each and other and get the right for our country and its protector.

Ram Rajya is what we call a perfect land but perfection has a price. He paid that price. We have to pay the price to get the country united and together. It is we who have to understand the message conveyed. It's really a perfect book and a nation-building one.

Book: Scion of Ikshvaku; Author: Amish Tripathi; Publisher: Westland Publication; Pages: 354; Price: Rs 350

Verse from the mountains

Books about mountains usually evoke a sense of wanderlust and serenity in readers that they would expect an impromptu trip to a hill station over a weekend. It is the feeling of glossing over the calm surface of a land, visiting spots endorsed for their natural beauty and renowned as tourist attractions. The audience here expects to look at these lands through the eyes of a traveller, the voyeuristic gaze that finds only beauty but not the struggle underlying this snowy exterior.

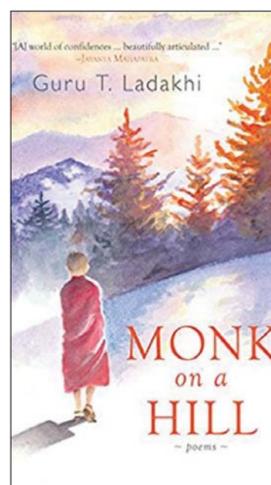
Guru T. Ladakhi, however, through his poems brings out the skeletons in the cold closets of places he belongs to, and has travelled to.

In his collection of poetry *Monk on a Hill*, Ladakhi divides his poems into sections: people, places, seasons, haikus and postscripts, meticulously fleshing out a narrative that is unafraid, loud and clear. He doesn't take the easy way out with his poems, instead choosing to delve deeper into the heart of the mountains and bring out for readers pieces steeped in the fragrance of melting snow as much as it carries the stench of spilled blood. The very first poem, *For Robin the Poet*, makes it abundantly clear that he's not one to shy away from harsh truths, choosing instead to ask questions that have echoed in the repressed corners of every poet's mind:

Shit, grime, murder, mediocrity/How much more must a poet endure/and still keep faith aglow/in the dark lustrated streets of his brain?

R.G Lyngdoh, writer and Vice Chancellor of Martin Luther Christian University, currently reading the book, says, "The collection has very personal poems which are poignant in nature. The poems are based on Ladakhi's personal experiences — from family to places travelled like Ladakh, Kohima, etc."

In the first section, aptly titled *People*, Ladakhi talks about the strife between pursuing dreams



WEEKLY READING

Willie Gordon Suting

and falling into despair, trading a voyeur's usual tone of judgement for an endearing voice that is pain-stricken and honest about the despair around him. His poems traverse a multitude of emo-

tions, stemming from his ability to both feel and sympathise with the pathos of the people he talks about; from the ache of loss to the jubilation of victory. When talking about death, his voice remains sombre, but resolved, like that of a poet who has accepted death as an inevitability but isn't afraid to shed tears when it does occur.

Departure, a poem that has been described as a sister's lament at the loss of her brother, portrays this best:

In the wake of departure you have left/a mother battered by insomnia/clinging to the sheets you slept on,/and a father unhealed, grasping at shadows./hoping to make amends./I reject your relentless absence.

In the section, titled *Places*, he delves into the intricacies of the land. His voice remains the same, honest and not scared to reveal truths about these places, but it also contains an aching depiction of nostalgia. These are places he has had a deep connection with, and has watched them change and weather trying times, as all lands must do.

In the short section titled *Seasons*, Ladakhi shows us the changing pictures of the year through his eyes. The poems here are rich in imagery, describing key aspects of the various seasons that hold special relevance to the

poet, with a surprising playfulness. The poem about *Monsoon*, for example:

Two clouds walk with moist feet/over the shoulder of the opposite hill./picking sunshine from the undergrowth.

Amidst honest confessions of the problems that plague the lands, he also finds the opportunity to romanticise. His poems in the final section, *Postscript*, are thus about love and longing, and are just as honest and open. He doesn't flinch from letting his words depict the yearning of a lover, or the warmth of a friendship that has aged well with years of togetherness and alcohol.

Monk on the Hill is a collection that holds in its chest many precious moments and memories. It is a poetry book of a life lived, secrets shared; and pain, some healed and some that refuse to. To paint a picture so honest and grounded in reality, of places that have long been considered mere tourist attractions, is something Guru T. Ladakhi does well.

"Ladakhi is a friend of mine from Sikkim, a very talented poet. I would like to recommend this book to all," says Lyngdoh.

Reading suggestions for the week:

1. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* by Arundhati Roy
2. *Men Without Women* by Haruki Murakami



Pseudo-intellectualism

Writers nowadays have acquired celebrity status and fame with success and popularity of their novels. Many of them, though, are quite self-conscious about it.

The question arises — Shouldn't they be considered "thinkers" rather than "celebrities"?

Literary festivals like the Jaipur Literature Festival, The New Yorker Festival etc have boosted their self-image in society.

Writers and books are "commercialised" to an excessive degree with such literary festivals.

Panel discussions are mostly on trivial and irrelevant topics like "East and West", "Indian Diaspora", "Global Writer" to name a few. Serious literary topics are never discussed.

In this age of literary festivals, one longs for reclusive introverted writers like JD Salinger, Harper Lee, Emily Dickinson and Robinson Misry. Literary theorists, too, possess a similar disposition. These writers, though being invited, avoid literary festivals.

A literary festival is mostly celebratory where the whole purpose of literature is subverted and deviated. Its original essence is lost.

Now with advent of social media like Facebook and Twitter, writers "overshare" what they are up to just to get more attention from the world.

What is sad about most books written by them is that they haven't been "original". There is a lot of plagiarising going on. It is a known fact that Indian novelists often copy writing

WEEKLY READING

Willie Gordon Suting



A file photo of the crowd at the Lit Fest in Jaipur. PTI

styles of western novelists.

Take the case of Jeet Thayil whose hallucinatory prose resembles that of Roberto Bolano's.

Or even Janice Pariat who copied the style of Alice Munro in *Boats on Land*. Her subject "incompleteness and being whole" in *Seahorse* was stolen from David Nicholls's novels. Now her new novella with multiple narrators reminds one of *The Sense of*

An Ending by Julian Barnes.

The problem with Indian writers today is they fail to look inwards and introspect to correct this major flaw. They should try to write original books.

The Indian literary media, which is ignorant, keeps praising them. In fact, most Indian literary journalists who review books are not well-read. And such writers keep winning

awards. The Sahitya Akademi literary award for example, in these recent years, was awarded to mediocre Northeast novelists like Aruni Kashyap, Kaushik Barua and Mamang Dai.

Also there are cases where literary endorsement from Salman Rushdie, for Tishani Doshi's *The Pleasure Seekers* with a blurb, is undeserving.

The Jaipur Literature Festival, in the past, invited controversial exiled novelists like Salman Rushdie and Taslima Nasreen just for publicity's sake, to make waves in national and international media. This is deliberately done to garner more footfall at the event.

There is a lot of pretentiousness and artificiality at such festivals. For example in the local Creative Arts Literary and Music festival 2013, the literary poet Monalisa Chingkija released commercial novelist Shobhaa De's memoir. This was farcical and odd for the writers belonged to opposing and contrasting styles of writing.

The recent Penguin Random House Festival held in the city was also ludicrous. There was a slam poetry competition where poetry was treated like a sport. Literary critic Harold Bloom calls slam poetry "the death of art" because of its directness and effusiveness with no depth, concealment or layering whatsoever.

Reading suggestions for the week:

1. *Woes of the True Policeman* by Roberto Bolano
2. *A Model Kit* by Julio Cortazar

SHORT STORY

Desire

Tarabari, a small but vibrant village in middle Assam, is inhabited by rich cultivators. The PWD road leading to the big village Islampur passes by the side of Tarabari. Villagers of Islampur are deeply religious but sympathetic to others.

The two villages are separated by a stretch of woods with an abundance of bamboo bushes. On the opposite side of the woods one can notice a small thatched house where a beautiful woman lives. For the purpose of this story, we may call her Anamika. Some village people call her a prostitute while for some others, she is a social worker.

Anyhow, she entertains people for money and has a definite clientele. Her personal life is not known and no one is interested in her past shrouded with mystery. Her present is her asset and people love it.

It was a cold December night. The road was deserted and not even a stray dog could be seen. The entire area was covered in a thick blanket of fog. But the estranged son of a rich and politically powerful man, defying the spine-chilling cold, visited the house of Anamika. A school dropout, the 18-year-old boy wanted to test his masculinity for the first time. In the process, he was restless and almost dragged her to the bed. The boy was a good football player with a gymfit body. It was pitch dark inside the room as the kerosene lamp was put off by Anamika. Though electricity had reached the villages, her house was not yet electrified and she had to use a kerosene lamp. In the evening, she used to lit an earthen lamp under the tulsi plant on the eastern side of her house. In her childhood days she witnessed her mother lighting up an earthen lamp under tulsi plant. She loved the fragrance of burnt mustard oil.

Tuk.Tuk.Tuk. Someone knocked the door. Anamika pushed the young guy to her kitchen and asked him to wait. Then she opened the door. There was some delay.

"Why you are so late?" The man was visibly annoyed.

"Sorry Sir, please come in. It's too cold outside." The middle-aged man, known to Anamika is the president of the local panchayat. He is a very wealthy person. "Why it's so dark inside the room?"

"Let it be dark. I love darkness. Please come to the bed." Anamika led the man to her bed.

The man under 50 has a beautiful wife. Yet he frequently visits her in search of extramarital bliss. He has enough money and some people dub him as corrupt. Being a member of the ruling party in the state he exercises political power over the poor villagers. These people occupying high positions in the society fear to visit her in day light. But they come under the cover of darkness. In darkness she could see the darkness of these people. What else she could do? She is a caged pigeon only to obey their commands.

Anamika jumped out of her



Pinterest

bed. Yes, she was not wrong. Some one really called her by name. Who else could be? She dragged the man on bed to her makeshift dressing room and asked him to keep quiet. Then she opened the door to welcome the guest. "Sir, please come," said Anamika. But the old man around 74, hesitatingly asked, "Why it's so dark? I simply hate darkness. Make some arrangement to light a lamp."

"Don't worry, I will help you to come to the bed. I simply love darkness. My life is full of darkness all around. Darkness helps me to feel the brightness of light. Only in the darkness, you can see the stars in the sky. Isn't sir? You are maintaining a robust health even at this advanced age. What is the secret behind? The old man said, "I started my daily life with chanting of 'OM' 21 times. The magical word drives away all negative thoughts from my mind instilling a positive outlook necessary for leading a happy and healthy life. I used to perform some easy yogic asanas followed by pranayams. In the early morning, first thing to do is drink three glasses of lukewarm water to flush out the toxic materials from our body. You will feel lighter and energetic. Your BP will come down. Eyesight will also improve. Diabetes will be controlled, if not cured. Make it a habit to drink water. Water is elixir of life."

Some moments of silence inside the room. The old man and the young lady on the bed. The poor old man was quite unaware of the presence of two other persons in the room. Suddenly the erotic silence was broken. An owl hooted nearby. She came out of her room and tried to see the owl in vain. Nothing could be seen even at a close distance. The old man kissed her as usual and left, followed by his middle-aged son and his school dropout grandson. What a scene! Three generations in the house of Anamika.

Anamika smiled in the darkness.

(Contributed by Sarat C Neog)

Imprisoned princess

By Sanskriti Singh

Princess by Jean Sasson is the true story of Saudi women behind the veils and is unforgettable and fascinating. It is a book that will move your heart. Sasson captures the flavour of the country that is full of extreme contradictions.

The book talks about the reality of life behind the unimaginable wealth and power in the royal families.

Princess Sultana, who is closely related to the monarch himself, lives amid these contradictions and suffers. She lives the contradictions, amid the priceless jewels, numerous servants, unimaginable wealth at her disposal, but captured and underestimated. Her freedom is stolen and she is crushed by her own family males.

A bird in a golden cage looks bashful but for the bird, the golden cage will always be a prison, so is the circumstance with the women in Saudi Arabia. She is totally at the mercy of the men in her life... her father, her brother, her husband.

A royal Saudi lady opens the door to give readers an unrealized look inside a closed society.

Princess Sultana lifts the veils that curse down for decades on the shocking world of marriages, slavery, rapes, honour killing and other such outrages against women, not only common but even royal.

Yes, it was sure to come from native women to become believable. When we think about Saudi Arabia what do we see? Terrorist spreading fear? Religious zealots? A corrupt government and

fabulously wealthy royal family living lives of unimaginable luxury? These are the questions that get answered by this book. For women who believe in freedom this book is a testimony to the plight of the thousands of women in a highly fundamental Islamic society, where the women are mere a commodity.

Princess is a startling truth that resides in the grains of the far spread desert. We take for granted our freedom but after reading this one would become judicious about the carefree life. You will respect your country more. I assure all that this narration of Sasson would win your heart and touch your soul.

Princess is about a woman of indomitable spirit and great courage. By voicing the truth "Sultana" risks the wealth of Saudi Establishment.

This book has a frank and vivid revelation. The drama that unfolds is fascinating and gripping.

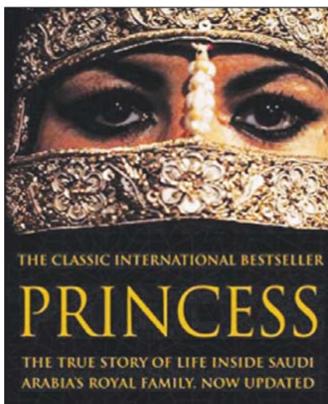
It is a well written real life story. The story of Princess Sultana is true.

While the world is of the Princess herself, the stories of shocking human tragedies are factual. It does not demean the Islamic faith.

A woman's depiction of father's love and her mother's togetherness explains the truth of the painful life of people in that world.

(The author is a student of Class X, BK Bajoria School)

Book: *Princess*; Author: Jean Sasson; Publisher: Bantam Books; Price: 303; Pages: 303



BOOK REVIEW



To Sunday Shillong,

This is in reference to the article 'A Gem Lost Forever' that was published on January 21. It was a touching write-up about a great talent that we lost. However, there were several factual errors on Leslie Hardinge Pde's life.

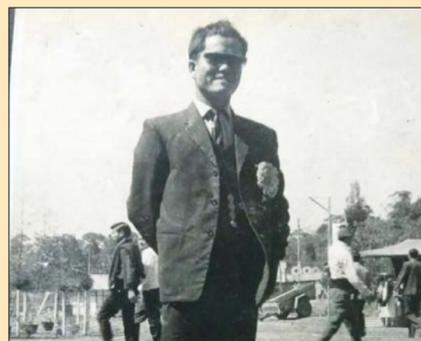
Harding's father's name was Liton Niangti and not Lytan Niangti. Harding had eight siblings. His mother's paternal aunt Kyrshum Nongkhlaw saw the potential in him, and brought him to Shillong in 1947 to continue his studies where he joined Savio School and St Anthony's School. Harding continued to stay with the Nongkhlaw family till the time he was married in 1960. The Khasi writer and folklorist, Donbok T. Laloo, was a lifelong friend and mentor who provided tremendous inspiration to Harding.

Hardinge was posted as Sub-Deputy Collector in Lakhimpur District of Assam and one of the responsibilities was the coordination of the 1970 census in the district. After Meghalaya attained statehood, he served as Block Development Officer in several CRD blocks in Khasi and Jaintia Hills. Hardinge had a long stint in Garo Hills serving in the districts of West and East Garo Hills. He had served in several departments which include Planning, Survey and Settlement, Judiciary, Taxation, Excise and Registration, Revenue, Labour and Employment.

Hardinge retired as Director of Employment and Craftsmen Training and Labour Commissioner. After retirement, he devoted his time, almost exclusively, to writing. In 1995, during the celebration of the UK Year of Literature and Writing, Hardinge was invited to visit Wales and performed at several venues in Wales, England and the Republic of Ireland, including one at the Dylan Thomas Centre at Swansea.

Hardinge was a realist who delivered his ideas through novels and plays showing how good and evil are inherently part of life. He was one of the few Khasi writers to dwell on contemporary issues, he was a revolutionary writer who was candid in his depiction of modern Khasi society.

Thanking you Anonymously



ESSAY COMPETITION: Pen is mightier than sword and words are louder than scream. So Sunday Shillong is giving readers between 18-24 years of age the opportunity to write not more than 600 words on 'Electorate in India do not have any power'. The best essay will get Rs 200. The winner will have to collect the money from The Shillong Times office after providing proof of identification.

QUIZ

1. Who does the voice over for Dory from *Finding Nemo* and *Finding Dory*?
2. What was the 1st video ever played on MTV?
3. The name for which type of building or construction stems from both the French and Latin word for butterfly?
4. Who were the first four men to have been awarded the title 'European footballer of the year' two or more times?
5. What role does Daniel Day-Lewis play in the film *Phantom Thread*?
6. What kind of equality will be affected if a country adopts the policy of racial discrimination?
7. Which famous Korean company has started making crypto-currency coins?
8. What is the method of growing plants without soil called?

PICKS OF THE DAY: IDENTIFY THE PERSONALITIES



Last week's answers: 1. Kid Galahad 2. Tenor 3. Midge Ure 4. Brendon McCullum 5. China 6. Grumpy Cat 7. Environment Ministry 8. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit

Picks of the day: 1. Amartya Sen 2. Björn Borg 3. Juan Manuel Santos 4. Portrait of a young man with red cap by Ales Sandro Botticelli

This week's winner is Prakash Marak

Send in your answers to sundayshillong@theshillongtimes.com. Names of the first five persons with all correct answers will be published next week and the first entry with all correct answers will get Rs 200. You have to collect the prize money from The Shillong Times office after providing proof of your identification.



VERSE TILE

A tribute to Asifa

I cried
I cried for help, I cried for mercy
I cried in pain, I cried in fear
I cried in anger, I cried in shame
When can I see my horses again?

I cried the night, I cried the morning
I cried for Mum, I cried for Dad
I cried for uncles, I cried for aunts
When will they come and help me?

I cried in hunger, I cried in thirst
I cried in cold, I cried in sickness
I cried for food, I cried for milk
When will they let me go home?

I cried to stop, I cried for life
I cried in tears, I cried in blood
I cried when I am awake, I cried when I am unconscious
When will my bleeding stop?

I cried for help, I cried for mercy
I cried in fear, I cried in pain
I cried and cried and cried...
Because I know I won't be home anymore.

L Mang Ngaihte



The Last Laugh

Confronted with curiosity as they candidly spoke,
Elucidate as with cause since they despised a joke,
Bewildered was I, other than for everyone to see;
There's constantly other side of the story as it be,
Was engaged to toil, the arena of political show;
Of a barren land, to turn fertile and make it glow;
Genuine associates, rescuers all came to cohere;
Endowed a help out, of hands from far and near;
Aspirants list of names declared, I was not there;
An awkward act, the affront which I had to bear;
Enquired rhyme with reason, how was I ignored;
So vaguely came the reply, I walked out the door;
Was severely wounded, cuts akin of salon blades;
For fortune that altered, of effortless twirl of fate;
Alike situations re-iterated in the past, but gone;
Beloved ones beside me, opines waste to mourn;
The grace, strength and status that have depart;
The hypocrites, deceives by their bleeding heart;
Yes, all was not loss and with wings on our feet;
We shifted allegiance, with the intend to unseat;
Efforts yielded the outcome,
Brandishing of scarves;
Too late to dabbles, triumphantly, the last laugh.

Sonny L Khyriem

Spring time

Hitting spring corners, love winks at time
Dance lifts spirits of mine to repeat efforts
To be young, even with a leaning head.

Singing in bathrooms, I imitate hopefully
Love's honeyed lips, clapping of my own accord
To break youthful record of shouting joyfully
Slightly away from children.

Love nurses me, dance stimulates my mirth
During spring time, pushing me ahead of wisdom,
Pulling me from dark thoughts
To eternal light of confidence.

Let us be green insiders, strongly guarded by flowers
We will be evergreen
Conquering air of laziness and sickness.

Bipul Chandra Kalita

Lyrical enchantment

When novelist Orhan Pamuk was asked by *The Paris Review* whether he wrote poetry, Pamuk replied in the negative. He then added, "...because poets hear voices from God."

This is true, especially of lyric poets. In ancient times, the writings of Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Virgil were regarded as highly prophetic.

Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung, in his book *The Psychological Types*, states that lyric poets mostly suffer from different types of psychosis but which is not known in society because the illness is internalised.

During the psychosis period, the "voices" that Pamuk spoke of are experienced as auditory and visual hallucinations. Lyric poets are mostly introverted intuitive types and employ the mechanism of reification. Jung explains reification as "treating ideas,

images or insights as if they were real physical objects". The lyric poet is a very sensitive soul and whatever external conflict he experiences is internalised.

The lyric poet is like a faith healer. He suffers for all the wrongs in the world. He carries the burden and the weight of darkness in society. Jung says if the introverted intuitive type lyric poet breaks down, he becomes schizophrenic. What occurs in the mind of a schizophrenic is a strong feeling that he can hack into other people's minds. This psychosis state, though helps with writing as the lyric poet, is thus able to pen impersonal poems and create fictional characters.

Experts say a lyric poet comes of age when experiencing love for the first time. As the stage of childhood is difficult for the lyric poet, love comes as a blessing in young adult years. This is the age when ancient poets like Homer, Sap-

pho and Ovid penned many love lyrics.

Lyric poets, during young adulthood, are elevated to another consciousness. They employ the technique of reification to its fullest. The woman who comes to their life is worshipped as an oracle. The muse signifies inspiration. It is she who alters and evolves his psychological and emotional state. The case both of falling in and out of love can have tremendous impact on a lyric poet.

Lyrics of Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Virgil were meant to be sung to the accompaniment of a lyre. But contemporary lyric poets find inspiration from other music.

The improvisational techniques in jazz and the wrenching call-and-response pattern of blues inspire lyric poets like Jorge Luis Borges and Octavio Paz to free-associate and explore ideas and images. It is a free play.

Music is intrinsic to lyric poetry. In fact, it is the musical and lyrical qualities that lead the ideas and not vice versa. The subject or idea for lyric poems can be on anything under the sun. But

lyric poets mostly prefer writing in the autobiographical-confessional mode.

For the fact that most lyric poets are introverted, the journey inwards is more beautiful than life outwards. Even if external reality is absorbed by the lyric poet, he perceives it to a deeper subjective level. Politics, violence and warfare like in the case of Pablo Neruda's lyric poetry are inquired with intuition.

This is the same with Shillong Poets like Robin S Ngangom, Almond Syiem and Desmond Kharmawphlang.

Reading suggestions for the week:

1. *Consciousness Explained* by Daniel C Dennett
2. *The God Argument* by AC Grayling

WEEKLY READING

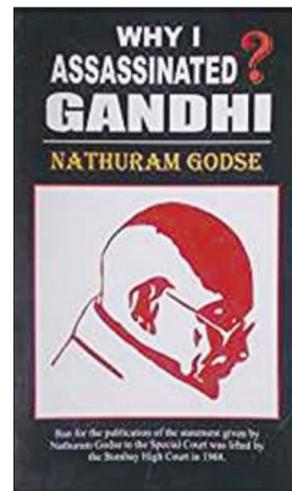
Willie Gordon Suting



Pinterest

150 reasons why Godse killed Mahatma

BOOK REVIEW



By Sanskriti Singh

Nathuram Godse had requested the court not to show any mercy to him or any one begging for mercy on his behalf and that the court should pass orders of sentence that might be proper. He professed that honest writers of history would weigh his act and find the truth behind his decision to assassinate the Mahatma.

Godse had stated 150 reasons to assassinate Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. But the main reason stated by him was the Mahatma's fast to put pressure on the Indian government to pay Rs 55 crore to Pakistan at the time of the partition. They had no other method of hindering this act of the Mahatma.

Had India paid this amount, its economy would have drastically declined, Godse had noted.

The book *Why I Assassinated Gandhi?* presents the statements of Godse in its unabridged form at the Red Fort trial. It also accounts the events, details of the investigation and formation of the special court. It was noted that at this juncture, the government became wiser when Godse completed his arguments before the High Court in Simla in June 1949.

As soon as the judges returned to their



Mahatma Gandhi leaving Meherauli, a Muslim shrine. This was one of his last appearances between the end of his fast and his death in 1948.

Photo courtesy: Pinterest

chambers, the police pounced on the press-reporter, snatched notebooks and tore them into pieces. They threatened them too.

The world had, since then, been curious

to know about the details of Gandhi's murder. "What kind of men were they and of what ilk" had been asked all through these years.

Many writers of repute have ventured into this subject. In doing so they have destroyed the facts, substituted plain facts with malicious statements, and made insinuation in this so-called literary works.

The authentic statement will clear the air of misgivings.

The author, Gopal Godse, is the younger brother of the assassin. Gopal was also an accused in Gandhi's murder.

If one wants to know the point of view of the assassination of Gandhi, one must read this book. Godse's love for his country is truly revealed by the last statement — "Akhand Bharat Amar Rahe-Vande Matram (long live undivided India-Vande Mataram)".

(The author has appeared for Class X examination from BK Bajoria School)

Book: Why I Assassinated Gandhi; Author: Nathuram Godse & Gopal Godse; Compiled and Edited by: Virender Mehta; Publisher: Farsight Publishers and Distributors, Delhi; Pages: 207; Price: Rs 170

The importance of being idle

My eyes flutter open and I wake up to the sound of raindrops hitting the windowpane. It's a gloomy day and I sit up in bed, convincing myself that I'm awake enough to study a chapter of History... and then it hits me, "Wait a minute. My exams finished weeks ago."

I now find myself at that point in a student's life where I no longer know what to call myself — a Class X student, a *la dep exam matric* student, or a 16-year-old who's basically jobless and thus, more prone to mood swings than a normal teenager is supposed to be.

Well, those usual 'horrifying nightmares about having board exams the next day and naturally being unprepared' still continue to haunt me at night and I know the reason for this; it's because every other person I come across these days has the same godforsaken line to tell me — "All the best for your results mo khun".

I know I sound ungrateful and I understand that all those 'Uncles and Aunties' mean well but the frequency of the thing has made me take a hateful approach towards the statement. I mean, we all know that SSLC results will not be out for a month. So "Let me live!!!"

And then, the very 'interesting conversation' between this Uncle or Auntie and me takes the obvious turn, where the former asks, "So, what are you doing these days?" to which I answer the usual, "I've been relaxing, doing things here and there, you know," which, almost always, places me in a very difficult position where I'm facing a person in his/her mid-thirties/forties, looking at me with raised eyebrows as though I stated that I'm leaving the city and becoming a hermit. "Aren't you taking up computer classes? Or any

other course for that matter?" asks the person, somehow utterly concerned for my future.

I shake my head, wondering why the world is suddenly so interested in Computer Science and why every single student around me seems to be going for these classes.

"So you're doing absolutely nothing?" asks the person, now agitated and emphasising on the word "nothing" so as to make me feel guilty for wasting the precious life that my parents gave me, but that this person is suddenly responsible for. Hmmm... Strange.

"Oh well, I'm reading a lot and I'm continuing my writing. I also play the piano so..." I say, trying to quickly

think of all the activities that I perform on a daily basis that do not include sleeping, eating, singing Korean-Pop songs or aimless wall-staring. "So you're actually doing nothing! *Ko Khun*, you can't waste two months like this. Take up some classes, they'll help you. Remember to enjoy *too kein*. I'll go *thid jhur* now then *mo*. Bye," responds the person who then floats away, leaving me puzzled.

And then on my way home, I find my mind preoccupied with the entire conversation I would have just had. Since when did 'literature' mean 'nothing'? Since when did 'music' mean 'nothing'? You can't tell me Shakespeare and

Beethoven did 'nothing' their entire lives! And oh, I get it, remedial classes for two months are going to offer me a whole world of knowledge, I'd become, what society calls intelligent. Well, what if I don't want to?

I really commend people who do attend such courses. But there's just no way that I can stop my eyelids from going against the rule of gravity when they don't want to. I could actually consider leaving the city and become a hermit rather than challenge my sleep.

And don't get me wrong. I do not 'want' to waste precious time either. It's just that I don't consider reading and writing a waste of time. Nor do I consider hours of piano-playing a useless activity. What I also understand is that what we students do during our vacation is our choice, which is made according to our interests. 'Interests' is the word to be emphasised here, I hope it's not too difficult a word for the world.

So, two things I've got to say; one, fellow students (let's just stick to that term), let us do what we want to do, shall we? Because the eventual recipients of either 'suffering' or 'enjoyment' will be us. Let us, of course, not take life too lightly, but let us also not indulge ourselves in this ever-whirling pool of competition, that the world calls the key to success. We all know it isn't.

Two, the adult readers, I am no one to tell you what to do but let me just tell you anyway (or hours of me writing this article would actually be considered a waste!); just relax a bit, will you? As you can clearly see, we are not really concerned about results (as yet); you may wish us when the time is right. As for now, let us do what we consider worth our time- studies, music or even sleep! Please keep your defence mechanisms away too. I urge you not to start cursing me for feeding garbage to young minds because garbage is never fed to the mind, it is created. And I have faith in my contemporaries; I know they won't waste their time.

The thing is, we all have dreams we want to achieve, so from time to time, could you please ask us what these dreams are? Could you help us believe in them, instead of explaining the fundamentals of the competitive world we live in? Could you help us build a world of goodness, instead of wasting time and energy explaining all the bad that there is on earth? Could you? I know you're capable of doing so. The question is: Are you willing to look past competition and status and help develop skills that really matter in the youth of today? Anyway, so here I am now, sipping on juice and typing on a laptop; so, yes, Uncles and Aunties, I've spent almost a month doing 'nothing' and guess what? I plan to continue with it.

(Contributed by Athira Saji)





Telling tales of North East

By Willie Gordon Suting

Understanding India's North East, by Rupa Chinai, was recently released by Barkos Warjri, chief information commissioner. The event, held at Don Bosco Youth Centre, had a discussion on the book.

The North East, a region of varying and contentious complexity, is largely misunderstood by the mainland. Narratives and reportage work by national media suffers from misrepresentation and factual inaccuracy.

The region differs from the mainland in terms of its mythological tales, political scenario and cultural ethos.

Issues of insurgency and violence still trouble the region. Literary and non-fiction works by poets and novelists have strived to shed light on key issues.

Chinai sat with *Sunday Shillong* to

discuss about her book. Replete with individual narratives of struggle and strife, each describes political conflict, economic and socio-cultural problems.

As a 10-year-old studying in Mumbai (then Bombay), Chinai romanticised the North East having read voraciously of India's glorious past. It was only after meeting Niketu Iralu, a Naga, that she came to know about many truths.

During her service in *Himmat* magazine in the 1980s she was sent to the region for reporting duty.

"At the time, none of the national media were interested in covering the North East. But I was very curious about this place," she said.

The North East was a cultural shock for Chinai as she witnessed firsthand its disturbing realities. A different picture emerged which she said was painful.

Chinai sought to report and write

mostly on communities who were marginalised. She felt it necessary that knowledge of any society can be acquired only by experiencing life in the periphery.

"There is a very human approach in this book capturing lives and lived realities with empathy," she says.

Chinai's forte in health and development issues is evident in the book. Her reportage on the region serving in *The Times of India*, *Indian Express* and *The Sunday Observer* is collected in the book akin to journal entries. Chinai now works as an independent journalist.

"Reporting for *The Sunday Observer*, I witnessed many problems of the Bodo tribe in Assam. I met the locals whose schools had no blackboards. They wanted recognition for their indigenous language."

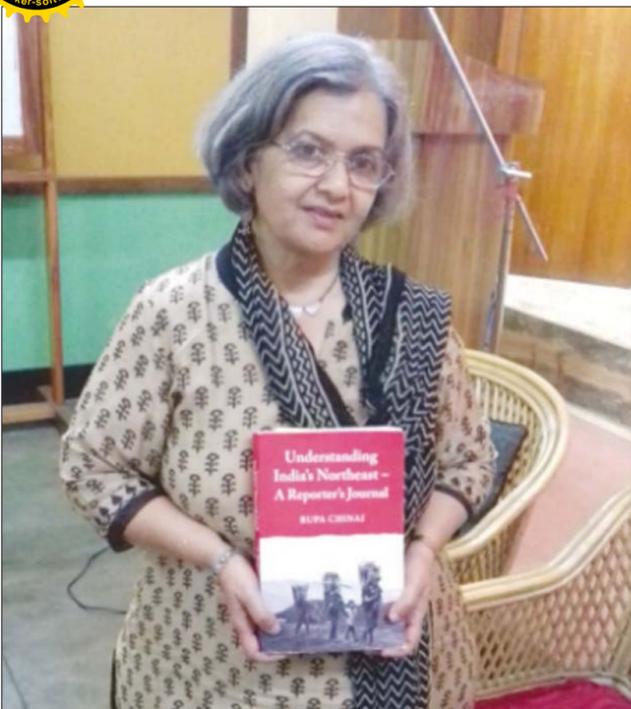
Chinai explains with sensitivity when she was told by a Kuki National Army militant that they wanted at-

tention to their problems. The militant organisation pushed a bus-load of Nagas off a cliff.

"The whole media and the justice system had disregarded them. No one was willing to listen, pushing these communities against the wall. And when finally they resorted to violence, why then are we surprised at the outcome?" she questioned.

Chinai adds that a bridge of social dialogue is still missing. Whatever reportage that exists is mostly on breaking news of which are factually inaccurate. "From the absence of context and historical knowledge, we can see there is lack of empathy."

Chinai also mentioned that the government has abdicated its responsibility in terms of health and protection of land and culture. The problem, she said, with the government is that although it states livelihood and development programmes, yet none of the heads visits the region.



Need to spare time for facial care

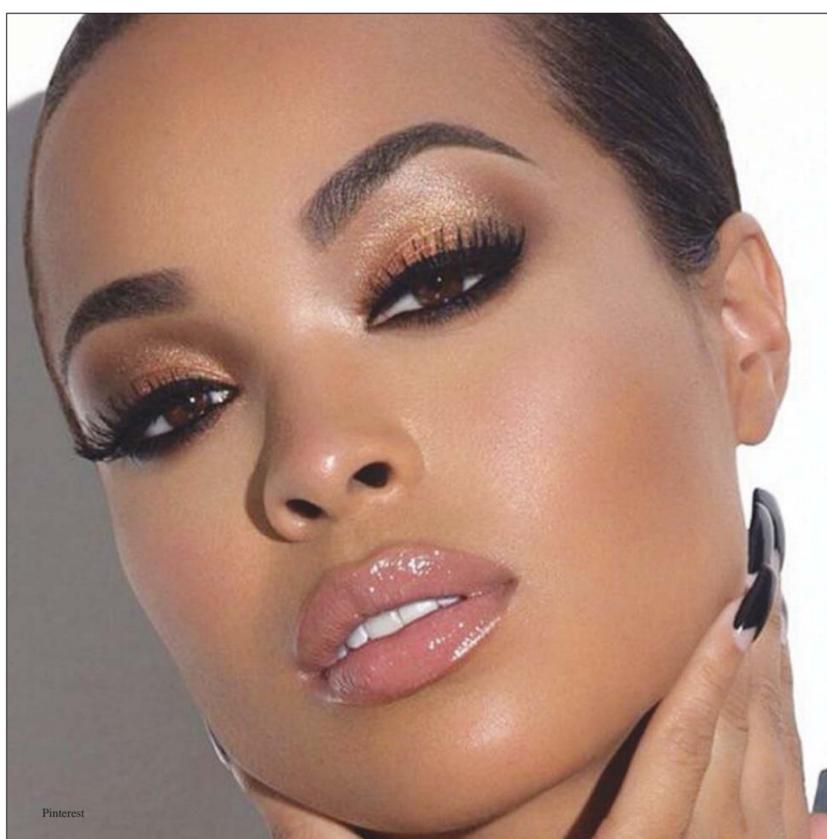
While every woman loves to pamper herself with a facial but there's absolutely no time to head to the spa every weekend or even twice a month as these facials are expensive affair and most of the metropolitan spas hardly use pure and natural products. Facials are essential for healthy, glowing and rejuvenated skin but most beauty products are packed with substances and synthetic ingredients with long-term negative effects.

Beauty expert **Shahnaz Husain** will tell you how to make your own facial pack at home.

It's a good idea to keep one day in the week to give yourself a home facial. It helps to keep the skin in good condition and also to counteract the effects of pollution and dirt, which are present in the air in most cities. It helps to refresh the skin and rejuvenate it after a week of stress, strain and fatigue.

First take a head band or scarf, place it just above the forehead along the hairline and tie it at the back just above the neck. This is to protect the hair.

Start by cleansing the skin thoroughly. Choose the cleanser according to skin type — gel/cream cleanser for normal to dry skin; cleansing milk or lotion for normal to oily and combination skins. Apply it on the face. Take cotton wool pads, wet them and squeeze out the water. Using



these, wipe your skin with upwards and outwards strokes. On the forehead, use strokes from just above the bridge of the nose, going on either side towards the temples, following a gentle arc. Pay special attention to the corners of the nostrils and don't for-

get the neck area. Wash the face with plenty of water.

While the face is still damp, apply a facial scrub for deep pore cleansing. This is particularly good for oily skin and blackheads. However, if you have spots, pimples, acne, rash-

es or any eruptions, avoid using a scrub. Facial scrubs are easily available nowadays. You can also use home ingredients, like almond meal, oats or rice flour. Add a little rose water or yogurt and apply on the skin. Rub the skin gently with it and wash the

face with plain water.

If you have a normal to dry skin, nourishing should come next. Apply the nourishing cream, wet your hands with water and massage the cream into the skin, using outwards and upwards strokes. Use extremely gentle strokes for the area around the eyes, using only your ring finger. The motion should be outwards and care should be taken to see that the skin is not pulled or stretched. For the neck, use strokes from the chin downwards. Continue the massage for three to four minutes and wipe your skin with damp cotton wool or a clean, moist face towel. Avoid applying cream if the skin is oily, but nourish the neck area.

Next, apply a face mask. Mix together two teaspoons choker (wheat bran), one teaspoon each ground almonds, rose water, curd and honey into a paste. This is suitable for all skin types. Apply this on the face, leaving out lips and area around the eyes. Take two cotton wool pads and soak them in rosewater, for eye pads. While the mask dries, lie down, close your eyes and put the eye pads on the eyelids. Allow your body to relax. This kind of relaxation is a beauty treatment in itself.

After 20 to 30 minutes, wash off the face mask with water. Next, soak cotton wool pads in chilled rosewater and wipe the skin with it. Stroke the skin too, with the rose water pads and pat your skin briskly with it. This helps to tone the skin, close the pores and add a healthy glow.

BOOK REVIEW

Kshatriya princess

By Sanskriti Singh

Karna's quest for respect defines Uruvi's life. She bore his pain and carried the fear of losing her beloved ever since she married him.

Karna was born out of wedlock to Kunti and Surya, the sun god. He was abandoned by his mother and was brought up by Radha and Adhirath, an outcast family in Champagnagari.

He deserved the faith in a prince and the pride of being the eldest Pandav, but he was deprived of all.

Uruvi was a *kshatriya* princess brought up comfortably in a lavish palace. She was the only daughter of the king of Pukeya. As a little girl, she amazed people with her wit and won hearts by her loving nature. Kunti was her mother's friend, and she loved her as she loved her mother.

The author beautifully describes Uruvi and her plight as a woman who lives each day with the fear of losing her husband.

Kunti wants Uruvi to marry her son Arjun, who is her childhood friend. But Uruvi is determined to marry Karna, the man whom she fell for in the bustling area of Hastinapur. He was the only man she ever loved, and she wanted to marry him desperately. And she does this.

Going against the family and society, she put the garland around Karna's neck. Leaving the *kshatriya* prince she chose a *sutaputra*.

She went against each and every moral code and married him. The women from all around ignored and teased her for marrying a *sutaputra*. But with her head held high, her pride was untouched.

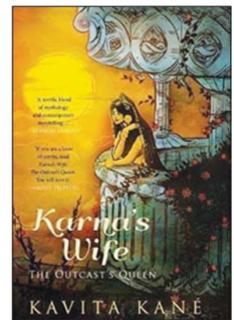
Uruvi was wilful from childhood and fiercely protective for her loved ones. She never fled away from the problems that came forward and she fought it in any way she could. A healer she was and in her nature was hidden a magic that healed the pain of each and every one.

Karna was happy with Uruvi eventually becoming his mainstay, counselling and guiding him. She had also described she was pained by his blind alli-

ance and love towards Duryodhan. She always tried to hit him with the truth and make him walk the right path of dharma.

Uruvi hated war, for she had experienced it all her life. Uruvi and her life bring forth the dreadful circumstances that come to every woman, and how she deals with tells us how to stay headstrong.

Uruvi's life shows what pain makes us do in life. Uruvi also condemns Draupadi, the lady who made the whole war happen. She shows us how Draupadi might have seen life. A different perspective emerges.



Karna's wife is told from Uruvi's point of view, and it reveals the pain and plight of women behind veiled palaces of *kshatriyas*. Lyrical and inventive, it is a heart touching story of love, war, pain and sacrifice.

Uruvi knew that Draupadi loved Karna, but she still never felt insecure about losing him to her. Forgiveness is the biggest lesson in the novel. The author conveys that if one can forgive, then one can find peace of mind.

And I felt that the author had also left a question: "Does pain really leave a person devastated? Or does it give a person the power of surviving?"

The book is a blend of mythology and contemporary storytelling. If one loves mythology, then one must read *Karna's Wife* for a delightful experience. The novel is unforgettable in every sense.

(The author is a student of Loreto Convent School)

Book: Karna's Wife: The Outcast Queen; Publisher: Rupa Publications; Author: Kavita Kane; Pages: 310; Price: 148

QUIZ

1. The film *Hazaar Churasi ki Maa* starring Jaya Bachchan and Anupam Kher is based on a novel by which Indian author?
2. In 1991 Whitney Houston raised funds for which war with a recording of the Star Spangled Banner?
3. Who received the Sahitya Akademi Award 1986 for her English novel, *Rich Like Us*?
4. Google Doodle recently celebrated social reformer Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay's 115th birth anniversary on which date?
5. Who was appointed as the new Chief Election Commissioner on January 21, 2018 by President Ram Nath Kovind?
6. Which Bollywood personality became the official brand ambassador of Sikkim?
7. Name the creator of iconic Old Monk rum who died recently at the age of 88.
8. Which former Union Minister and Trinamool MP passed away recently?

PICKS OF THE DAY: IDENTIFY THE PERSONALITIES



Last week's answers: 1. *Catch-22* 2. Jeffrey Archer 3. Lala Amarnath 4. Lady paramount 5. *Guddi* 6. Mauritius 7. Vladimir Putin 8. Adilabad dokra and Warangal Dhurries

Picks of the day: 1. Deepika Padukone 2. Anna Paquin 3. Olga Tokarczuk 4. James (singer)

This week's winner is Simiran Mohapatra

Send in your answers to sundayshillong@theshillongtimes.com. Names of the first five persons with all correct answers will be published next week and the first entry with all correct answers will get **Rs 200**. You have to collect the prize money from The Shillong Times office after providing proof of your identification.

ESSAY COMPETITION: Pen is mightier than sword and words are louder than scream. So Sunday Shillong is giving readers between 14-16 years of age the opportunity to write not more than 600 words on 'Science in everyday life'. The best essay will get Rs 200. The winner will have to collect the money from The Shillong Times office after providing proof of identification.



Rosy picture of a raging fire

By Saket Suman

In a book released this week, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has been projected as “the most influential cultural organisation in India today”.

The implications of the Sangh’s functioning on India’s culture, particularly in the context of Hinduism, or what is called Hindutva, is well known but is this projection an appeasement of the all-powerful Sangh by providing them legitimacy in what is billed as a scholarly offering “backed by deep research”, or is it worthy praise bestowed in the light of its work in the culture domain?

The offering at hand is the sum total of all aspects that the authors felt have led the Sangh to take its present shape — that of the ideological parent of the ruling government with country-wide presence and strong political affiliations. It reveals many answers but, for reasons best known to the authors and publisher, it deflects, ignores and often beats around the bush when it comes to tackling the most pertinent issues related to the Sangh in contemporary times.

Let us begin with two chapters in the book titled “Ghar Wapsi” (Homecoming) and “Protecting the Cow”. Both of these issues have gained prominence ever since the current RSS-backed government came to power in 2014 and has led to numerous instances of mob violence and lynching. The horrors arising from some (of many) recorded instances have shaken the nerves of right-thinking individuals and has caused fear among the minorities, but the generosity with which the authors tackle the subject is appalling.

The book elaborates on why protecting the cow and ghar wapsi hold such immense significance for the RSS, charting the beliefs of its idealogues Hedgewar and Golwalkar, and then draws a case study around the BJP’s dealings with the beef issue in

the North East, where the ruling party sort of accepted it as it is a norm in the region.

It quotes a slew of prominent RSS and BJP leaders who contend, like the Sangh’s *prachar pramukh* Manmohan Vaidya, that “we (the RSS) don’t tell society what to eat”, adding that even people who eat beef could become its members.

Their assertion, however, is in stark contrast to the ground reality where members of the Sangh’s affiliates have been directly responsible for horrendous acts of violence in the name of the holy cow, dearer to the organisation than those lynched for slaughtering and, supposedly, consuming its meat.

The authors fail to raise tough questions despite their “unprecedented access” to key leaders of the Sangh, who are otherwise largely unapproachable by mainstream media.

And then there is “What Does Hin-

chief Mohan Bhagwat as saying that forcing others to chant “Bharat Mata ki Jai” is wrong and that “all people living in the country are our own and we can’t force our ideology and thinking on them”. Really, the authors should have asked some questions here as well, but they do not.

Moving on, there is a chapter on “Indianising Education”, where the authors claim that within months of the BJP’s victory in the 2014 general election, the then HRD Minister Smriti Irani “met with senior RSS figures” who wanted “the essentials of the Indian culture” to be reflected in school curriculum across the country.

It further mentions that in view of the “importance of the HRD Ministry in implementing the RSS goal of ‘indianising’ education”, the party selected Prakash Javadekar to replace the controversial Irani.

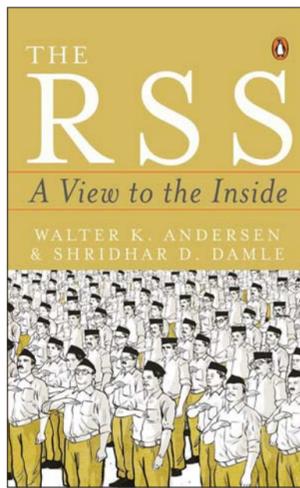
“Just a month after assuming his new post, Javadekar called a meeting that included senior RSS and BJP officials and other constituents of the Sangh parivar engaged in education,” the book says.

The motive of this meeting, says the book, was to discuss “the draft education policy earlier initiated by Irani” and to seek “suggestions to instill nationalism, pride and ancient Indian values in modern education”.

Notably, the over-400-page book’s actual text runs till page 256, after which is the appendix and notes section, which go on for about 150 pages. It also charts brief biographies of the RSS leadership, in glowing terms, and its constitution.

Even though this book is a missed opportunity as there is much more — and of utter significance both to the RSS and the country — that demanded exploration, it is not devoid of merit.

This book’s big achievement is in charting the journey of the Sangh — how the once banned organisation came into the mainstream, mobilised voters and played a crucial role



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in the 2014 general election, as it is expected to play in the coming election too.

But in its totality, the sense that a reader gets after reading this book is a glorification of the Sangh. It describes the inner working mechanisms of the organisation but fails to point out the outcomes resulting thereby.

The book surely has a lot of substance but can one possibly look at a raging fire and ignore those being burnt in it? This book does just that. (IANS)

Book: The RSS - A View to the Inside; Authors: Walter K. Andersen and Shridhar D. Damle; Publisher: Penguin; Pages: 405; Price: Rs 699

Rowling’s gripping murder mystery

By Sanskriti Singh

The *Cuckoo’s Calling* written by J K Rowling in 2013 and published under the pseudonym Robert Galbraith is a wonderful crime fiction to read. It is wonderfully entertaining though there is nothing amazingly original.

Cormoran Strike is a wounded war veteran with a chequered past and damaged love life. Financial woes trouble him. He sleeps in his office. He left the army that his mother could never give him. He sets up a private detective agency but the only problem is lack of clients with deep pockets.

Then comes the temporary secretary Robin Ellacott, with a slightly stuffy fiancé and a secret dream to become a detective. Both Strike and Robin are fully fleshed out characters that we care for at the end of the novel.

The crime that he is to investigate is the suicide of a super model Lula Landry.

A man with a complicated father and a confusing girlfriend, both of whom could do the worst to hurt him, finds a case that involves a woman with similar problems where her people can hurt her in any way to gain her property. The novel is full of old values and simple realisations.

Lula is adopted by a wealthy family and her adopted brother is a money-minded man who for wealth can do anything.

As Strike sets out to investigate the suicide case we are introduced to an elaborate cast — an effeminate dress designer, a drug taking paparazzi avoiding boyfriend, a disgruntled ‘wannabee’ film star chauffeur, an elderly, dying mother, disapproving family members,

etc. The girl wanders to look for her biological mother and finds a woman unaffected by any human emotions.

The author creates a realistic scenario with London almost becoming an extra character as Strike walks the streets and a satisfactory plot with a good cast of suspects. The element of suspense remains intact till the end of the story and the plot unfolds gradually.

“Unhappy is he whose fame makes his misfortunes famous.” Lula was such a character that her fame made her misfortunes of having a broken family and a sad life famous. She was suffering quietly the complications of her life.

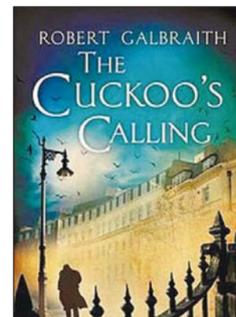
But the most gripping character here is that of Cormoran Strike, the detective. A good start for a crime novel reads this year.

This novel begins slowly from a simple complicated man to a mysterious murder case. The author has done an excellent job diverting the thoughts of the readers from the real killer. I really admire the cover of the book as it complements the story line. Finally the end is beautiful here with the lines that keep wavering in my mind.

I cannot rest from travel: I will drink/Life to the less; all times I have enjoyed/Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those/That loved me, and alone; on shore and when/Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades/Next the dim sea: I am become a name...

Book: The Cuckoo’s Calling; Author: Robert Galbraith (JK Rowling); Publisher: Sphere; Pages: 550; Price: Rs 499

(The author is a student of Loreto Convent)



BOOK REVIEW

“What Does Hindutva Mean?”, an elaborate chapter on the philosophy of the Sangh. Here again, the Sangh’s leaders paint a rosy picture of all things good in their philosophy. They say, as the book quotes them, that India is “a civilisational nation state” and that the RSS has never talked of making Hinduism a state religion.

The book points, flatteringly, to RSS literature, which, according to the authors, speaks approvingly of the religious and cultural diversities. Again, there is no meeting point between their words and ground realities, and what is more, the authors just let that be, without probing further.

The book goes on to quote RSS

QUIZ

1. In which part of the world did the ice cream prank start (it involves real ice cream)?
2. Which two cricketers have topped the ICC Test batting and bowling rankings?
3. Who has been appointed as the youth ambassador for Commonwealth?
4. Who won the women's title at the Asian Continental Blitz Chess Championship in Chengdu, China?
5. World Champion Saksham Yadav recently passed away in a road accident. He had won the 2017 world championships in which sporting category?
6. What song, released to promote the film *The Millionaire*, featured its stars Peter Sellers and Sophia Loren?
7. What seven words provide the opening line of the Shakespeare play *Richard III*?
8. Punjab was annexed to the British empire during the reign of which governor general?

Picks of the day: Identify the personalities



Last week’s answers: 1. 14 2. Cuba 3. Allahabad Bank 4. Madhya Pradesh 5. Cancer 6. Zimbabwe 7. MP 8. Umbayee

Picks of the day

1. Sanjay Gandhi 2. Neil Nitin Mukesh 3. K C Pant 4. Ajit Wadekar

The winner of last week’s contest is Simiran Mohapatra

Send in your answers to sundayshillong@theshillongtimes.com. Names of the first five persons with all correct answers will be published next week and the first entry with all correct answers will get Rs 200. You have to collect the prize money from The Shillong Times office after providing proof of your identification.

Tips to beat monsoon woes



Looking gorgeous, glamorous and radiant is mandatory for girls during Raksha Bandhan, the most special Hindu festival celebrated to mark the bond and love

between brothers and sisters. Beauty expert **Shahnaz Husain** will tell you how to get ready for the special occasion.

Celebrations remain incomplete without looking good and dressing differently which signify love, joy and emotions shared between brothers and sisters on this special occasion.

The festival is celebrated in the Hindu month of Shraavan in peak hot and humid monsoon season that wreaks havoc on your skin and hair.

A common problem during monsoon is rash and allergy on skin and moist dull hair which can spoil your mood.

Here we have some wonderful tips that will make sure that your charm and glow remains at its best this Rakhi.

In the hot and humid season, the skin needs toning and refreshing. Here are some home remedies:

Watermelon juice is a good skin toner and relieves dryness too. It cools, refreshes and softens the skin. Apply on the face and wash off with plain water after 20 minutes.

Fruit Mask for all Skin Types: Fruits like banana, apple, papaya, orange can be mixed together and applied on the face. Keep it on for 20 to 30 minutes. Then wash off with water. It cools the skin, cleanses dead cells and removes tan.

Cooling Mask: Mix cucumber juice with two teaspoons of powdered milk and one egg white into a smooth paste. Apply on the face and neck and rinse off with water after half an hour.

Mask for Oily Skin: Mix one tablespoon of multani mitti with rose water into a paste and apply on the face. Wash off when dry. After applying face mask, take two of the cotton wool pads soaked in rose water and use them as eye pads. Squeeze out the rose water and then apply on closed lids. Lie down and relax, while you have the mask and eye pads on. Used tea bags can also do the trick. Soak them in a little warm water,



squeeze out the water and apply on the eyes like eye pads.

To soften rough, bushy or frizzy hair, mix some water with creamy hair conditioner and put it in a spray bottle. Spray the mixture on the hair. Then comb the hair, so that it spreads through the hair.

Raksha Bandhan is usually celebrated during the day. Daytime make-up has to be light and carefully done. If you have a clear skin, leave out foundation. After cleansing, apply a sunscreen with a built-in moisturiser.

Then apply powder. Translucent powder, like a baby powder, is good. For oily skin, apply astringent lotion instead of moisturiser. Then apply compact powder. Pay attention to the oily areas on the face, like nose, forehead and chin. Press the powder all over the face and neck with a slightly damp sponge. This helps it to set and lasts longer. If you wish to apply blusher, use less and blend well. Blush-on should be like a gradual flush on the face.

For eye make-up stick to eye pencils during the day or line your eyelids with brown or gray eye shadow. This gives a softer effect. Then apply only one coat of mascara that helps to make the eyes look darker and brighter, but prevents the “heavily made-up” look.

For lipstick, avoid dark colours, like dark maroon. Go for light pastel colours, pink, mauve, light brown, copper or

bronze. The colours should not be too intense. Or use only lip gloss. First outline the lips with a lip pencil, same shade as your lipstick. Fill in colour with a lipstick brush. Obviously outlined lips are out of fashion.

For a special occasion like Raksha Bandhan, you can try a new hairstyle, like putting up your hair with fancy hair clips or ribbons. Wearing flowers in the hair can be quite alluring.

Long hair is very much the trend, with cascading waves or curly and bouncy hair. Go for the softer look with curls or natural waves in the lower half of the hair. The classic ponytail is also dictating trends. It suits most face shapes, because one can wear a pony tail high or low with a fringe or without, or with wisps or curls falling down, with that carefully-careless look.

A ponytail is actually an easy hairdo. With ribbons or other hair accessories, it can even provide a touch of glamour. One can have a ponytail for a formal or an informal look.

For a long face, wear a low pony tail and have a light long fringe falling straight down. For an oval face, wear it with a side-swept fringe. For a square jawed face, have wisps of long curls falling down on either side of the face, just beyond jaw level. It will suit a round face too. Or you can put the hair up with the help of hair clips.



Wear right make-up, let eyes speak



Diwali, or Kali Puja, is only three days away and I am sure all of you must be wondering how to look beautiful in this short period of time. Beauty expert **Shahnaz Husain** will give you some simple Herbal

tips which will help you get over the fatigue of shopping and arranging the get-together at home and bring back the glow. Husain will also share the secret of mysterious eyes and how you can keep them luscious for hours.

Mix a mask at home with two teaspoons of wheat bran (choker), one teaspoon each of ground almonds (badaam), curd, honey and rose water. Mix everything together into a paste and apply on the face, avoiding the lips and area around the eyes. Wash it off after 20 minutes.

For a "quick fix" pack, mix honey with egg white and apply it on the face. Wash off with water after 20 minutes. It leaves the face soft and glowing.

For dull and tired eyes, dip cotton wool pads in rose water and use as eye pads over closed lids. Lie down and relax while the mask dries. It helps to remove fatigue and brighten the eyes. The fragrance of rose has a calming effect on the mind.

Mix one teaspoon each of lemon juice and honey with one egg. Beat them together well. Massage the mixture lightly into the scalp. Then wrap the hair in a hot towel for 20 minutes, before washing. Your hair will have more body and look shiny and manageable.

For oily hair, have a hair rinse after shampoo. A tea water and lemon rinse will add shine to the hair. Boil used tea leaves again in enough water. After boiling, you should have about 5 to 6 cups of tea-water. Cool and strain it. Then add the juice of a lemon and use it as a last rinse after shampoo.

Have your manicure and pedicure a day before Diwali and then have henna applied. After applying henna, keep it on for an hour or two, dabbing with lemon juice and sugar mixture from time to time. The longer the paste is kept, the darker the colour. The henna paste should be removed by scraping it off. It should not be washed off. In fact, apply oil and avoid washing the hands with soap and water for a few hours.

Following a healthy lifestyle always reflects on your face that will have natural radiance and vitality. The right diet, exercise,



adequate sleep and relaxation are absolutely essential for good looks. In fact, a healthy lifestyle helps to restore beauty and put a glow on the face. Deep breathing exercises are helpful in terms of calming the mind and making it more tranquil. However, two days are not enough and this festival, you should resolve to start a healthy life.

Make-up

For make-up, first cleanse the skin and apply a liquid moisturiser. For oily skin, apply an astringent lotion. Cover blemishes with a concealer, before applying foundation. To conceal acne pits (tiny holes in the skin left by acne), take a little concealer at the end of a cotton bud and fill the pit with it.

Then apply foundation. Try gold foundation for this special occasion. Dot the face with it

and blend with a moist sponge. Lightly dust golden tinted powder to set the foundation. Highlight the cheeks with a blusher, blending well, so that it gives the face a natural glow.

Outline the eyes with kajal or dark eye pencil. Apply it to the upper lid and smooth out with cotton bud. Gently blend a line of kajal or eye pencil on the lower lid. Then apply mascara.

Gloss is popular for the lips. Go for red and shades of red. Use a lip liner the same colour as your lipstick. Apply gloss on top of colour unless you prefer the matte look. If you don't want to use bright red, go for shades like brick red, cherry, rose, plum, wine, burgundy or dark pink. A Bindi is an integral part of make-up during festivals. Look for a decorative bindi to match the colour of dress. A bindi, studded with small sparkling stones,



combined with a bright colour will add to the sparkle on that day.

Kohled mystery

Your dark, appealing and stunning eyes can give away your mood and emotions better than any words ever can. A neatly applied dark black kajal is all they need to look mesmerising. Every woman wants beautiful eyes and the right application of kajal is perhaps the easiest way to achieve sensual and attractive look.

Eye makeup enhances the look of a woman and makes her look all the more appealing. But like everything else, beauty is not so simple a thing to achieve as kajal feathers and smudges at the inner corner of the eyes making it embarrassing rather than gorgeous. Beauty expert Shahnaz Husain will tell you

how to apply kajal perfectly to have those mysterious eyes.

The use of kajal and kohl goes back to the ancient times. In fact, it has been traditionally used in India for beautifying eyes. The application of kohl was also very popular in Egypt and in countries of the Middle East. Kajal is still very popular. There is no doubt that kajal helps to impart an exotic Indian look.

Smudging of kajal is a common problem. You may start off with exotic eyes and end up with dark smudges under the eyes. So here are some tips to save yourself from the embarrassment.

First, buy the kajal of a reputed company. It may also be safer. Invest in a good quality product that is long lasting and smudge proof. It will turn out to be your best friend in makeup.

The area around the eyes and near the lashes should be free from oil or sweat. First wash your face. Pat it dry. Before applying eye makeup, wipe the area near lashes very gently, using a cotton bud. Apply ice cubes around your eyes in case of oily skin to look bright and get rid of oiliness.

It will help to remove oil and sweat. Dabbing a little face powder near eyes may also help in soaking the oil present in the region. Makeup experts say applying primer really helps. Primer helps the kajal last longer.

When you apply kajal on the lower lid, start from the outer corner and go inwards. However, leave a tiny space in the outer and inner corners. Avoid applying kajal in the inner corners because this is where the smudging actually takes place.

Apply kajal close to the lashes and then apply black eye shadow over it with a thin brush or sponge tipped applicator. This helps to prevent smudging and also provide the smudged look, which many try hard to achieve. If you wish to extend the kajal outwards and slightly upwards, beyond the outer corner of the eyes, use the black eye shadow on the outer corners of the eyes to achieve the same look.

Mascara can also cause smudging. It should be applied in two light coats. First, apply one coat. Allow it to dry. Comb out the lashes with an eye lash comb. Then apply the second coat and repeat the procedure. Make sure that you do not touch your eyes if you have applied kajal on it or you will smudge it by doing so.

Images: Pixabay

QUIZ

1. Which club did Usain Bolt play football for?
2. Staff at Google offices around the world have staged an unprecedented series of walkouts after a high-profile executive, accused for sexual misconduct, received a heavy payout. Who is the person?
3. When is the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists observed?
4. Angela Merkel has announced that she will step down from her position in 2021. She is the Chancellor of which nation?
5. Blood platelets have been found to be the first line of defence against which infectious human disease?
6. Scientist of which country recently launched the world's first microfactory to help tackle e-waste hazard?
7. A massive black hole was discovered near a bright and very compact astronomical radio source at the centre of the Milky Way. What is the name of the astronomical radio source?
8. When was the first time Ranji Trophy was played in Shillong?

Picks of the day: Identify the personalities



Last week's answers: 1. West Bengal 2. Mustafa Hassona 3. Venice Film Festival 4. The Showband 5. Rajnath Singh 6. Bihar 7. Kerala 8. Niti Aayog

Picks of the day

1. Suketu Mehta 2. Radha Reddy 3. Kriti Shanon 4. Lykke Li

The winner of last week's contest is Arpita Pal

Send in your answers to sundayshillong@theshillongtimes.com. Names of the first five persons with all correct answers will be published next week and the first entry with all correct answers will get **Rs 200**. You have to collect the prize money from The Shillong Times office after providing proof of your identification.

Struggle of Kurds

By **Sanskriti Singh**

Each time I read the works of Jean Sasson, I'm awe-struck. The way she narrates the atrocities on women is splendid. I always find her books fascinating.

The stories she tells have an enchanting aura that none can ever forget. *Desert Royal* was the first book written by her that I read and that's the magic she has in her pen. The more I read her works I feel like reading more. The suppressing world of deserts will move every reader to tears. Not only fascinating, it's disheartening that a part of the world suffers endlessly and we don't believe their words.

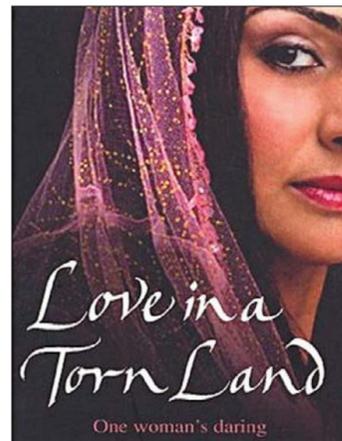
Jean Sasson has written endlessly in the genre of human rights but what makes it so appealing? That's what people ask. So her work abides writers because it's all true, stories narrated by native women imprisoned and crushed by men and the hopeless government.

Love in a Torn Land is the story of the struggle of Joanna, for freedom and love. In 1987 Saddam Hussein got Joanna's village bombed by chemical explosives that made her flee from the place. But there's not only this but a lot more in this novel. Concentration of power in the hands of a corrupt government that waged a war against its own people led to endless sufferings by the Kurds living in Iraq under Saddam's rule.

A highly corrupt government that has no rules along with a male dominating society where women are suppressed every time they try to find space, and a population of people fighting against each other are the defining elements of this country.

Joanna was a girl from an Arab father and a Kurd mother. She is the daughter of a common man, a deaf and dumb whose furniture factory has shut down due to war. The youngest child with loving parents and lovely siblings who truly love and admire her, and brothers who are different from the other male population

BOOK REVIEW



The book takes a human look at the struggle of Kurds and one woman's heroism, temporally blinded by a chemical attack and rescued by her Kurdish husband

of the country. She is surrounded by love and care. A lost life that has no surety of being alive, she faces a bombardment each day in her country witnessing war each day.

Her whole childhood is full of the sounds of exploding bombs and fired bullets. After this she falls in love with a

freedom fighter, a Kurd. Her love has no directions till he proposes marriage.

Do not declare your war on me

In this case

I am a weary stranger in this town

Do not torture me

From there afar, thousands are persecuting me

Stay with me and make me happy

I only have your eyes to make me happy.

These are few lines of his many poems sent to Joanna as his proposal to marry him and make him alive. The words of the novel attract a reader and make one read it with all the heart and make one believe in the power that love professes.

When I was a child I built a wall of hatred around me

When I was asked 'from what did you build this wall?'

I replied 'From the stones of insults'

This story is about Joanna Al-Askari who had dared to love in a land torn apart by 'people of repute' and tarnished by the endless and unfruitful war that were fought each day in the land that could have been a land full of history and heritage. Her quest for freedom and her war against her own limitations and fears are heart-wrenching.

The book takes a human look at the struggle of Kurds in Iraq and one woman's heroism, temporally blinded by the chemical attack and rescued by her Kurdish husband.

Shocking, candid, sad, sobering and absolutely riveting, this is what I can say about this book.

I cherish the moments I spent reading this beautiful life story of Joanna Al-Askari and I admire my collection of books by Jean Sasson.

(The author is a Class XI student of Loreto Convent)

Book: Love In A Torn Land; Author: Jean Sasson; Publisher: Bantam Books; Price: Rs 399; Pages: 432

WRITERS' BLOCK

ESSAY COMPETITION: Pen is mightier than sword and words are louder than scream. So Sunday Shillong is giving readers between 17-20 years of age the opportunity to write not more than 600 words on 'Clean country, clean soul'. The best essay will get Rs 200. The winner will have to collect the money from The Shillong Times office after providing proof of identification.



To Sunday Shillong,

This is in reference to the article, 'Tracing Nabon's Journey', which was published on March 17. It is good to see such an elaborate writeup on a film made in a local language. However, the article had a major factual mistake that needs immediate rectification. The article mentioned the name of the wife of Thomas Jones, the Welsh missionary who is regarded as the father of Khasi language, as Emma Cattell. The correct name is Anne Jones. This is a historical fact and the writer should have checked before printing wrong information as youngsters reading the article will only learn the wrong name.

Having talked about the mistake, I would also like to thank KJP Synod, the director, the researcher and other members of the cast and crew for taking up the project. There is very little documentation of such historical events, which otherwise might seem inconsequential, and efforts should be made to dig out such facts which have helped our society grow. The research on the subject and the person, Nabon Sawian, should be converted into a book in multiple languages other than Khasi for everyone to know. I am convinced that Sohra has many such anecdotes and some individual, organisation or church should take the responsibility to find those out and document them.

I haven't been lucky enough to attend one of the shows of Nabon but I wish to watch the film. I would request the KJP Synod to once again organise screenings of the film so that those who missed the first opportunity can watch the movie. The film should also be screened in villages, not as a religious movie but as a historical documentation.

There should be more articles on films made in local languages as the industry here needs immense support from all quarters. Such writeups will encourage more people to not only make quality films in local languages but also draw audience. The government should think seriously about promoting local filmmakers than investing in Bollywood movies.

Thanking you,
Gavin Kharshandy

Naqvi's book reflects on S Asian geopolitics

By Mayabhushan Nagvenkar

Heavy on flourish, fleet-footed to the point of extreme convolution and desperately crammed with humour, HM Naqvi's second novel *The Selected Works of Abdullah the Cossack*, deserves a reread, if only to understand what happened when you read it the first time.

Set in Karachi, or Currachee as the author prefers to call the port city where the plot plays out, the novel feeds of the reflective narration of septuagenarian Abdullah, a man who refuses to see the city as well as issues in his country in black, white and shades of the conservative.

It is through Abdullah's grey outlook that the novel reveals, in its observation of the ordinary, mundane, conservative lives and customs which make up for Karachi and its inhabitants. Keeping pace with the slow unravelling plot, the reader is offered a glimpse of the liberal city which Karachi once was in the early days after Partition, with its jazz gigs, live cabarets and bars which served as watering holes for those thirsty for the brew and the banter.

There are several aspects to the plot which come together towards the end, when the protagonist tries to find a "one-for-all" solution to tide over the crises, which he finds himself and others close to him involved in. Abdullah, who once used to manage his father's hotel, is one among many brothers, who are now keen to sell off the family home. On the other hand, just as he contemplates jumping off his bal-



cony, he is re-acquainted with an old friend, Felix Pinto, a Goan-origin jazz singer from Karachi, who entrusts his grandson in Abdullah's care.

Around the same time, he crosses paths with a mysterious woman, Jugnu, who has foes gunning for her.

While the plot promises much, especially with a more than promising and unusual protagonist in an almost anarchic atmosphere, the convoluted style used by the writer makes the book a laborious read.

It is as if someone really smart went ahead and stuck more thermocol apples to an apple tree in season so that it would appear even more beautiful and laden than it already is. Humour could supplement an element of relief to writing. But in the world of Abdullah the Cossack (he's called the 'Cossack' apparently because he was once known

to have outrunk Russians) the attempts at humour on many occasions appear contrived and desperately fastened to the text, with a wrench on one end and a punctuation mark on the other.

By the time one runs through the first few pages, the reader would actually warm up to Abdullah, who we know, by now, as someone eclectic, with a philosophical bent of mind, one who's soul is in typically liberal torment.

But there are times when the sheer verbosity of the narration jars the brain more than the 75-year-old narrator's knees when he walks about. The abundant footnotes which are meant to add perspective to the novel's text may also perhaps end up confounding readers with more elevated levels of unwarranted cockiness.

The novel certainly has something going for it in the current geopolitical context in South Asia, where being liberal, isn't exactly a walk in the park in the times when angry gusts of conservatism are all too common.

But pick up a copy only if you are willing to put in some labour to get a grip of the plot, which seems to be almost suffocating under layers of 'style'. (IANS)

Book: *The Selected Works of Abdullah the Cossack*; Author: H.M. Naqvi; Publisher: Fourth Estate; Pages: 269; Price: Rs 599



New murder mystery by JKR

By Sanskriti Singh

The Silkworm written by JK Rowling in 2014 and published under the pseudonym Robert Gilbraith is a wonderful and gripping crime fiction to read. There is nothing amazingly original but the novel is interesting in many ways.

Like the previous novel *The Cuckoo's Calling*, this novel has the awesome detective Cormoran Strike, the wounded war veteran with a complicated past and a damaged love life. After the super model Lula Ladary murder case, he is in a better financial condition. He now has his small apartment in the same office building. The previous case has made him a famous private detective and now he has clients with deep pockets.

No one can forget his beautiful secretary Robin Eucott who is now his permanent employee. Her slightly stuffy fiancé is still the same.

The crime that he is to investigate is the murder case of a writer, Owen Quine. The writer authored a book that was a flop and was working on the second one. Anyone who has read the previous book of the series can never resist this second one.

Strike at first is uninterested in the case but gradually he finds the body of the writer in an

old empty house, acid poured upon his body and his intestines ripped out. He has been brutally murdered.

As Strike goes on investigating the case we are introduced to an elaborate cast — the wife, the writer's daughter who is mentally unstable, the publisher and many more.

Before dying, the writer was working on his second novel which he named *Bombyx mori*, which means Silkworm, with characters which could get many people into trouble. This one fact builds up a large number of suspects. Rowling, alias Gilbraith, creates a realistic scenario where London again turns into a sin city as Strike walks through the streets gathering evidence.

Quine's own thoughts killed him. But how, why and when is all the mystery one has to unfold in the novel. That mystery has a lot of excitement and suspense, but the reader must remember that if you usually want to enjoy the mystery then read it as though a movie is going on in your mind, and I assume that once you strike the play button you would never want to pause.

The novel begins with a missing case that turns into a bizarre murder. The author has done an excellent job in hiding the killer till the end and one is left puzzled when the murderer is revealed.

(The author is a student of Loreto Convent)

Book: *The Silkworm*; Author: Robert Gilbraith (JK Rowling); Publisher: Spencers, UK; Pages: 580; Price: 499

QUIZ

1. Taliban women are required by law to wear what on their left arms?
2. How did Aeschelus, the Greek dramatist who is considered the father of tragedy, die?
3. What is the German word for poison?
4. Which Indian airlines carrier recently joined the International Air Transport Association?
5. Who was appointed as India's first Lokpal on March 19, 2019?
6. Two South Korean companies recently announced a \$300 million investment in India-based Ola Cabs. The first company is Hyundai, name the second.
7. Which movie won the Oscar award for Best Film in 2018?
8. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India recently signed an MoU with which organisation for better implementation of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016?

Picks of the day: Identify the personalities



Last week's answers: 1. Édouard Manet 2. Italian actress Gina Lollobrigida 3. Russia 4. New Delhi 5. Water pistols 6. Farting, for health reasons 7. Ear wax 8. The Leyden jar

Picks of the day

1. Ardhendu Chaudhuri 2. Ismail Marak 3. Ole Gunnar Solskjaer 4. Jonas Mekas

This week's winner is Arpita Paul

Send in your answers to sundayshillong@theshillongtimes.com. Names of the first five persons with all correct answers will be published next week and the first entry with all correct answers will get Rs 200. You have to collect the prize money from The Shillong Times office after providing proof of your identification.

WRITERS' BLOCK

ESSAY COMPETITION: Pen is mightier than sword and words are louder than scream. So Sunday Shillong is giving readers between 14-16 years of age the opportunity to write not more than 600 words on 'Burden of school bags'. The best essay will get Rs 200. The winner will have to collect the money from The Shillong Times office after providing proof of identification.

For I satisfy the weary ones and refresh everyone who languishes. ~ The Bible, Verse 31: 25

Change does not come like a tsunami. It comes in drops, a trickle seeping out of the cracked breast of a rock that gradually turns into a stream and then river that transforms the barren earth into civilisation.

Aahar, an initiative by a local charitable organisation, is that drop of relief in the sea of insurmountable pain and penury. Ardhendu Chaudhuri Charitable Trust, which was formed to pay tribute to the former MLA whom the constituents remember as the common man's leader, has taken a humble step towards alleviating hunger by providing a day's meal at a nominal rate of Rs 5. Chaudhuri died in a helicopter crash in 2004.

Started six months ago, the initiative has gained steam with well-wishers joining hands to steer it forward.

"Aahar is a unique experiment for proving that service to the poor can actually be unselfish. Aahar is a small step towards providing one wholesome meal to the destitutes and the uncared for. Under this scheme, some 300 hungry persons belonging to the wrong end of the economic ladder come to enjoy a filling vegetarian meal every day at virtually no cost," says the Facebook page of the trust.

Every day, hundreds make a beeline to satiate their hunger as well-wishers contribute generously to be part of the novel deed. A visit to Jhalupara any day of the week and one can see emaciated men, women and children holding a plate of rice each, contentment written on their faces.

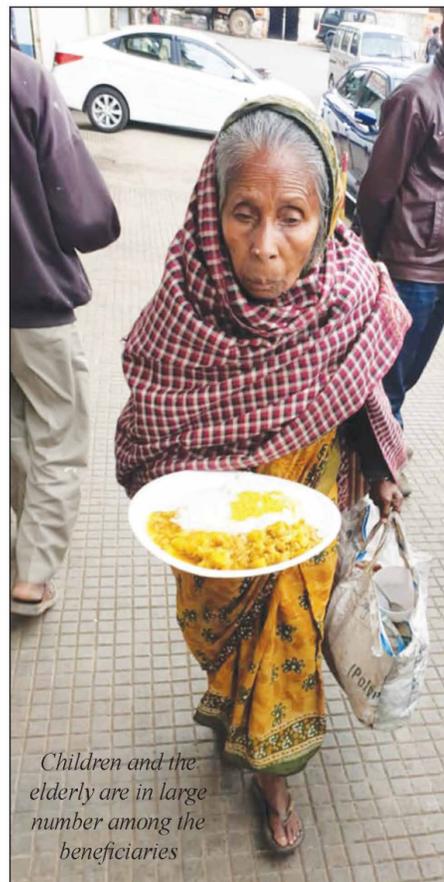
The trust was initially funded by Manas Chaudhuri, the managing trustee, out of his salary and other earnings as MLA of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly from 2005 - 2012.

In the last six months, 4 lakh meals have been provided by the trust. Over 30 individuals and organisations have helped Aahar sustain.

"The response has been overwhelming. Many people have donated cash, sponsored a day's meal, provided material donations. And this whole thing is spontaneous," said Manas, adding that the expenditure a day depends on the food provided. The food distributed is vegetarian.

Though many people doubted the sustainability of the initiative, Aahar continued to serve the poor without any glitch. There is a steady clientele too.

Aahar for all



Children and the elderly are in large number among the beneficiaries

"The best part is when people share special moments of their lives with Aahar and the hundreds who need help. They celebrate their special ones' birthdays, death anniversaries and other occasions. After six months, people are more confident (about the initiative)... It gives a feeling of fulfilment," the former MLA shared. He sounded confident that the initiative would be sustainable.

Religious groups, local organisations and women's groups, besides local residents, have come forward to help. The trust has already received donation of Rs 2 lakh.

"I am really happy that the trust is doing an excellent job. I have contributed meals and it is satisfying. The quality of food is also good. And as an individual I am looking forward to making more contributions to Aahar," said Sanjiv Bajoria, a prominent citizen. The managing trustee of BK Bajoria School has contributed Rs 1 lakh to the cause.

After Aahar, the charitable trust is planning to extend its services. Manas said the trust may start a de-addiction unit.

"For this we need trained and experienced people. We are thinking of inviting experts to help us but it is still in the planning stage," he said, adding that the trust is also involved in other activities like providing buses for schoolchildren and distributing water at a subsidised rate.

~ NM



Truth behind Staines story

By Heather Cecilia Phanwar

Graham Stuart Staines, an Australian Christian missionary, and his two minor sons, aged 10 and six, were burnt alive inside their car in a cold January night of 1999 in Odisha's Kendujhar district. The reason: Staines was allegedly forcing Hindus to convert to Christianity. The criminals: right-wing activists.

"The story of Staines needed to be heard," Aneesh Daniel, the director of *The Least of These: The Graham Staines Story* that released nationally on March 29 and in Shillong on April 5, told *Sunday Shillong* during his visit to the city.

Daniel said he never thought he would direct a movie based on the incident but he strongly felt the need to tell the story. He met Staines' wife one year after the grotesque incident and "it was only when she agreed to it that our production started".

Though the script was ready by 2007, Daniel and his crew took five years to complete the movie. "The movie has five elements from five continents — the writer is an Australian, the music director is from South Africa, music was recorded in Budapest, the producer is from America and the director an Indian. The film was shot in Andhra Pradesh," said the director.

The director said he tried not to stray away from the true story and incorporated in the movie those people who witnessed the event. People who were affected with leprosy were also part of the film. The man who played the driver of Staines is a real character. His name is Mishal.

The characters of Daniel and Gladys Staines are played by Stephen Baldwin and Shari Wiedmann.

A dedicated team worked on choosing the cast, Daniel said.

The director said he wanted to show the leprosy home in Odisha where Staines had visited. "This made the movie truer and more authentic," he said.

However, Daniel said he needed a "conflict" to divert the story "but Staines did not have any conflict in his life". This was when the need for a fictional character was felt and the character of the journalist Manav Banerjee, played by Sharmen Joshi, was introduced. In the film, the journalist visits Staines to find evidence of the alleged conversions. "But in the end the truth always cost something," said the Hyderabad-based director, who has over 30 years of experience in showbiz and the latest film is his first feature film.

Before venturing into feature film, Daniel made films for tele-



(Top) Aneesh Daniel with Sharman Joshi; (above) the director and Stephen Baldwin discuss a scene from the movie; and the Staines family

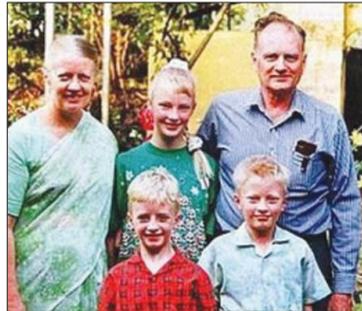
vision and corporate houses, ad films and television series. He has worked with eminent directors like Shyam Benegal and Mira Nair.

When asked if there is any political agenda in releasing the movie before the election, the director said, "There is no reference to any political party. The film does not raise a finger at any political party, neither it was biased towards any colour or any individual."

Daniel said he wanted to release

the movie during Easter but no theatre was available since a blockbuster movie was scheduled to release.

"Why not during election time? The film is about forgiveness. This is the best time to talk about forgiveness because we are throwing mud at each other. Forgiveness plays a strong element in the movie," he added.



The film received clearance from the censor board without any cuts "because it does not point a finger

at anyone and it stands on its own merit".

The director said the response to the film was overwhelming and shows were running houseful.

According to Daniel, people don't need to be missionaries to a different country but can start noble work at home and in the neighbourhood.

"You can help people in need. You can be your own missionary. Of course, there is a price to pay for the truth but you have to work hard for the truth. Truth has a strong influence and you need to be courageous to tell the truth," the director added.

"Unfounded fear prevents you from doing good," says Staines in the movie.

Public view

The shows in Shillong also ran houseful and the audience comprised people from all age groups. There was pin-drop silence inside the theatre hall.

Euffi Lyngdoh, who had come to watch the movie with her friends, said, "I loved the movie. It made me realise that I'm so blessed to have the liberty to worship and witness Jesus freely. Also, to be a true Christian means carrying your cross, be forgiving in any situation. The movie should be screened for many more days and weeks in Shillong so that through it the love of Christ will be known."

"What the director portrayed about Christians is true and it is still happening all over the world. The movie is unbiased and stuck to the incident. What really struck me is that though India is a secular country, hatred between different religions still exists. What we believe should be decided by us and not by anyone else. Graham Staines was a true missionary who did not care what other people thought about him. He was the one who took care of the lepers when no one was there to help them. As human beings we tend to criticise people who do something good when we can't do anything about it. I highly recommend people to watch it," said an elderly person who was emotional when she came out of the cinema.

A young member of the audience, Lizzie Phanwar, felt that the movie portrayed true love for mankind. "To live is Christ, to die is gain" is an example of who Graham Staines is as a missionary," she said.

Shaphrang Sawkmie, another young viewer, was surprised how a sensitive incident such as the Staines' murder could be portrayed on screen without any bias or political innuendoes. "It is emotionally overwhelming and shows how life is all about selflessness," he said.

VERSE TILES

Race

Cementing all cracks in heart
an invisible rat runs
in flooded fields, reddish blue...
It shakes off fears from tears
becoming a flame
not to burn the world around
but to turn barren minds
into green fields for future races.
Visibly run innumerable rats in dry fields
to reach invisible goals
to teach indefinite colors of those races
which fold and unfold open secrets of life.
The invisible rat taps my shoulder
to be ready for trips to peep
belling my insight to sight into real facts
easily concealed in winged imaginations.
I become more practical
in noble vision, in solemn mission
than seasonal birds in flight,
and the rat provides me the light.

Bipul Chandra Kalita

I am not an island

While lying on the bed feverstruck,
I was all alone
Within the solitary precincts of my house.
Outside, the din and noise
Of tiny-tots playing cricket on the road
Came pouring into my ears
Regularly; and there was no dearth
Of voices from beneath my floor.
I heard frequently the familiar sound
Of motor vehicles
Whizzing past the curb in front of my house
I also tried music and books
To stave off the dreaded specter
Of boredom and loneliness.
I remembered my friends,
My pals and acquaintances;
But nobody came. Music was there
And books were there; Noise was there
And houses were there.
Encircled by the people,
Yet alone, my heart cried, and cried so often
Come to me O, my dear ones,
I am not an Island.

Rakesh Chandra

The ocean

The ocean with its deep composure
touches my mind.
For ages, it remained floating in its static
stage; history changed,
New civilisations came and left,
But the ocean stood its place in
the test of time.
The strength of its silent presence
The depth of its dark water
In the sea of time; thus making it immortal.
The meeting of the ocean with the sky at the
horizon; the incessant beating of the waves
on the shores
The sandy coastline washed every second by
the surf, the birds flying on the top of waves
The fishes riding with the waves,
The shells and oysters dropped on the beach
Demonstrates the majestic presence of
the ocean.
Throughout the ages like the great old grandpa,
sitting beside in his cozy armchair,
Looking at us silently with soothing eyes.

Saikar Kumar Basu

'Today's women can relate to Shanta'

Sanskriti Singh is 17 and she has already authored a book. The student of Loreto Convent recently released her first book, *Ram's Sister*, based on a mythological character.

Born and brought up in Shillong, Sanskriti studied in BK Bajoria School before shifting to Loreto Convent. She belongs to the Bundela Rajput clan that has its roots in Orchha, also known as the city of palaces, Bundelkhand. Her ancestral home is in Bhagalpur. "I truly believe that the history and culture of this clan have influenced my life," says the young author.

Sanskriti, who is also a kathak dancer, says her mother would tell mythological stories when she was a child and over the years, her interest in the epics only increased. The *Ramayana* was the first epic she read. She has read both the epics "well". She believes by reading these books, she has become more calm and patient and definitely a better person.

In an interview with *Sunday Shillong*, Sanskriti talks about her book and her inspiration for choosing the subject. She says she loves reading as well as writing, especially on subjects like women empowerment and environment conservation. She is also deeply interested in Indian art, culture and heritage. Excerpts:

Why did you choose mythology as your genre?

Indian mythology has a beautiful base. It is like a movie consisting of every emotion... it has war, politics,

love, passion, pain, endurance, friendship, enmity and the list is endless. It is a very strong medium that can influence the thoughts of a reader. It gives the picture of an idle society in contrast with the one which is unstable and full of foul play. I am a deeply spiritual person and personally I feel that mythology has had a great influence in my life. Mythology gives the picture of what values are important for the society as well as an individual.

I wanted to write something that brings about some moral to the society and is also interesting to read. Hence, mythology is the best way to do the same.

Why did you choose that subject for the book?

I choose Shanta because not much was written about her and I wanted to write something new which readers did not know about. Shanta has a very beautiful persona which I am sure will be loved by readers. She had faced difficulties in life and had surpassed her limitations.

These were the main reasons to choose this subject. And then the genesis of the novel was a philosophy, that of a new woman in today's world. Shanta was the perfect figure who matched this philosophy.

She is Lord Ram's elder sister right? What piqued your interest in her? When?



Yes. Shanta is a beautiful character to read about. She is a simple woman with her flaws. Her flaws make her perfect. This piqued my interest in Shanta.

I read about Shanta for the first time in the *Valmiki Ramayana 1: Bal Kand Sarga 11*. And again I saw her being mentioned in the television series *Siya Ke Ram* on the Hindi channel Star Plus in 2015-16. It was then that I began my research on Shanta.

Authoring the first book is not difficult but sustaining writing is. What is your plan?

Yes, I agree... I think the main reason for this is that writing is an art which requires a lot of patience, research and thoughtfulness. And authoring a book tests your patience a lot, because it takes a lot of time, it took me exactly one year to get the hard copy in my hand. And this journey of a whole year gave me a lot of ideas about how to move forward and now I guess I know what to do next.

I will try to divide my attention between writing and studies as I am in Class 12. Still I cannot leave writing. It is an inseparable part of my very existence. I have already planned my new project and am also researching about the same. I plan to work with historical stories too in future as my major paper is history but that will be later. For now it will be

mythology.

How much research did it take to write the book?

A lot of research went in this book; I have to truly say this. Because the only reference I could find about Shanta was small paragraphs or a few hundred to two hundred word article.

When I write anything, my prime focus is to refer to the Epics, Vedas, Upanisads and books by new and old writers.

Does Shanta have similarities with today's women?

Yes, every woman can relate to Shanta. She is emotional, sometimes weak and sometimes strong. She is not perfect... I truly believe the words said in the play *Candida* by George Bernard Shaw where he portrays *Candida* the protagonist of the play as today's new women.

How do you categorise the epics?

I categorise them historically because I firmly believe that they have influenced the culture of this country. Both the epics bring forth two different kinds of societies. These epics are not for a particular religious group... Every character in the epics teaches us something, it's the vision that matters.

Are you aware of the political and social-economic upheavals centring Ram and Ayodhya?

Ram was a righteous king who be-

lieved in following rules. The whole dynasty stands on the pillar of truth, rules, its extreme forms of following their promise and dharma. King Harishchandra's promise given to Vishwamitra is famous.

We come to see those harsh rules when Sita had to leave the palace. Ram remained shackled even though he was assured with political powers; he had no control over himself and his life. While talking about Ram, I would say how one cannot understand the harshness of society which could not see Ram's pain when Sita left Ayodhya. He had suffered because of those rules.

To write this novel I truly had to remain indulged in knowing the political and socio-economic upheavals centring Ram. I have done extensive research on this prospect and it is explained in the novel clearly. One can witness these complications in the novel in the essence of each character...

Your favourite writers...

I am always hungry for literature whether it is in Hindi, English or Sanskrit... My favourite writers in English are William Shakespeare, George Bernard Shaw and Jean Saxon. In Hindi, I love reading Ramdhari Singh Dinkar, Siyaramsharan Gupta, Maithilisharan Gupta and Kabir Das. And who can resist Kalidasa in Sanskrit.

Anything else you want to add?

At the end I would like to add that I hope that my novel "Ram's Sister: True Scion of Raghu" will be liked by readers... I hope readers will be able to know Shanta as I have known her in these many months.



In Letters & Spirit

To Sunday Shillong,

This is in reference to the article, 'Sewing up the gap in time', published in the May 5 edition. It is a nostalgic write-up and not only brings back personal memories but also revives life and time in old Shillong. The city has changed drastically over the last few decades. From a simple and innocent hill city, Shillong has turned into an urban sprawl. The glitter is everywhere, in markets, on roads and in our lives. And amid these are the surviving stories of those good old days, clinging to these tailoring shops. Unable to withstand the competition from new-age apparel market, many old tailoring shops in the city have closed down. Those who survived are merely trying to meet ends as demand for stitched clothes has gone down. I still remember my childhood when my siblings and I would go to a tailoring shop near our house (which shut up shop a decade ago) for getting new dresses stitched before Christmas. It was fun as our mother instructed the designs to the man in the shop. The designs were simple, the fabric cheap as it was not possible for a single mother to afford expensive clothes for six children. I still remember visiting JC Das Tailoring Shop with my elder brother who wanted new trousers for a special occasion in college. I remember how excited he was when he got the stitched clothes. For hours he spent in front of the mirror until we girls started giggling and teasing him. It is the cycle of time and life. The old are always replaced by the new and these tailoring shops are victims of that vicious cycle. They will probably vanish soon and with them many stories of old Shillong will also be forgotten forever.

**Thanking you
A saddened citizen**

To Sunday Shillong,

This is in reference to the article, 'Time for a bigspin', published in the May 12 edition. It is really wonderful that the skateboarders in the city have finally got an exclusive space

for practice. Many skateboard enthusiasts in Shillong are often seen practising on the premises of Central Library, or on streets, sometimes even on busy roads, and in cramped localities. It is really sad to see these youths and children desperate for space. Youngsters should get enough space to play and run around and be themselves. In today's world where space crisis is a major problem, children are getting addicted to indoor life, playing video games and watching television. And some who want to go out and play have to be satisfied with a slice of space. I think the Pro-Life park is a good initiative and more such open spaces should be created in the city to cater to youths with interests in different sports and activities.

**Thanking you
S Pyngrope**

To Sunday Shillong,

This is in reference to the article, 'Need that extra in education', published on May 12. Extracurricular activities are indeed important, especially in today's world when pressure of studies is tremendous. Children do need a change, enough time to refresh their minds.

As a parent, I completely sympathise with my child who has to do multi-tasking even at the age of 12. He is so afraid of falling behind in the competition that he refuses to listen to me when I tell him not to study after 8pm. I am usually against children spending their whole vacation doing homeworks and studying for examinations. So I tell my child to read more story books than textbooks. Though he is a fine reader, he does not stop reading textbooks. I am surprised how panic-stricken our children are. This is not a healthy way of growing up. As aptly pointed out in the article, education should not become a burden on our children but should be fun for them. Only then they can imbibe the best qualities and remember their lessons properly, and for life.

**Thanking you
A concerned parent**

By Sanskriti Singh

The sun never shone over Auschwitz. It was either grey or dark. The smoke from the crematories filled the sky with darkness. Skeleton-like figures ran around in stripped clothes, their hair shaven and eyes bulging out. It was hell on earth. Bodies from the gas chambers and bunkers were heaped on carts and taken away to be burnt down to ashes. Cold winter nights spent without food, water or clothes were unbearable.

Auschwitz was one of the most notorious of all concentration camps of Adolf Hitler whose hatred for one particular group led to the largest genocide in the history of mankind.

Adolf Hitler! Where did he come from and how did he die? Not everyone has the answer. Hitler lost his father at 13 and mother at 15.

A doomed child struggling with the responsibilities of his siblings would one day become a dictator. Hitler's determination to make Germany a mighty power and his ambition to conquer all of Europe is well-known even if one does not know who he really was.

Nazism was not one or two isolated acts. It was a system of ideas about the world and politics. Hitler was a powerful speaker. His passion for the country's development and his words moved people. He promised to build a strong nation, undo the injustice of the Versailles Treaty and restore the dignity of Germans. He promised employment and a secure future for the youth of his country. He said he would resist all foreign 'conspiracies' against Germany.

Hitler knew how powerful mass mobilisation was. He adopted this theory of politics. The red banners with the swastika, the Nazi salute, and the ritualised rounds of applause after speeches were all part of the political adaptation. Hitler was a messiah, a saviour, someone who had come to save Germany from distress. He captured the imagination of the people living in time of acute economic and political crises.

Every person around us has a negative and a positive sides. We try to see the worst and tend to overlook the positives. Reading Hitler's story (*Mein Kampf*) is such. He was a man with vast and varied thoughts. He had progressive ideas for his coun-

Reading a dictator's mind

BOOKS & BEYOND



His autobiography outlines his political ideology and his plans for fatherland Germany. The book was dictated to Rudolf Hess, his deputy, and was edited by the same... He was a man with varied thoughts

try. He had great respect for and understanding of his teachers. He honoured their advice.

A child who wanted to become an artist or an architect, he had a thirst for education. Not all know about Hitler the painter. Some of his paintings titled *Steeple Study* and *Germania* are in museums around Europe. At a very young age, he developed a strong feeling of nationalism and by the time he was 15 he understood the distinction between patriotism and nationalism. His views on socio-economic situations and high rates of poverty were unquestionably clear. His views show that he had been an observant. His words were really distinct, "If social democracy should be opposed by a more truthful teaching, this truthful teaching

will finally, provided it be enforced with equal ruthlessness."

Being a patron of art and architecture, he wrote, "...it is in youth that men lay the essential groundwork of their creative thought, wherever that creative thought exists." I was shocked when I read the lines. Really! Those are said by a dictator. Shocking and intriguing.

It is very confusing when one compares this man's two personalities — a nationalist and a tyrant.

When one reads Hitler's autobiography only as a reader, one can see a man who was a nationalist and a leader who wanted to bring about the best out of his people.

For his people he was a good leader. I remember watching a documentary on a maid who served in

Hitler's house. She explained Hitler as a man who was good to everyone who worked for him. The day he was defeated by the allies, she says, "I saw him standing alone on the terrace looking towards the mountains. Standing still without any hope or fear, he was at last defenceless and alone. All alone, after all that he had stood for and worked for."

Once a person told me, "I know of all the atrocities he did to the Jews, those cannot be forgotten or ignored. I contempt him for this act but I truly feel some kind of pain when I look at his eyes in pictures. There is some hidden story in those, something hidden and unknown". It's funny when one listens to such words. Everyone would live to know the whole story of the emergence of this man as a dictator and his end.

His autobiography outlines his political ideology and his plans for his fatherland; Germany. The book was dictated to Rudolf Hess, his deputy, and was edited by the same.

Hitler's ideas, frustrations and dreams were humongous. He could make things possible, that was the worst part in his life. Said to be a schizophrenic, he continued his atrocities. But was his illness the real reason? There is something unknown and this is what I think every time I read about this one man who changed the course of history dramatically.

Hitler died in May 1945 in his bunker, with his mistress and one day wife Eva Braun. The bunker was later bombed and destroyed by his followers. Recently a controversy arose saying that he never died because the bunker had only one skeleton, that of a woman.

If it is to be believed that Hitler died in that small little bunker where he spent his last few days of life, then one cannot help but feel pity, if not a hint of melancholy deep inside. The leader who led his country to an era of power, wealth and strength, the tyrant who committed crimes against humanity and the racist who killed around 17 million people unceremoniously became part of the dark history of human civilisation and growth, an end that belied his stature and arrogance and yet imminent.

(The author is a student of Loreto Convent)

QUIZ

1. What was the air quality category for Delhi in May 2019 as per the readings of SAFAR?
2. Which nation has decided to mobilise its military in fight against African swine fever?
3. The surveillance software that was installed by hackers using a major vulnerability in messaging app WhatsApp was developed by which firm?
4. Which player has won the Purple Cap in IPL season 2019?
5. The ISIS has announced the establishment of a new province in which Indian state?
6. What is the name of the English woman who openly married another woman in 1834?
7. A group in Britain knits artificial breasts for women who have had mastectomies. It has also won the People's Choice Epic Award. What is the name of the group?
8. Who has been named as the Vice-Captain of the West Indies World Cup Team?

Picks of the day: Identify the personalities



Last week's answers: 1. Shirley Fry 2. Shah Rukh Khan 3. Ankit Keshri 4. Mexico 5. La Chaux-de-Fonds in Switzerland 6. Carl Jung 7. Uganda 8. Soups and meats

Picks of the day
1. Saugata Roy 2. Tanuja 3. Devashish Makhija 4. Gulzar

This week's winner is SW Swer

Send in your answers to sundayshillong@theshillongtimes.com. Names of the first five persons with all correct answers will be published next week and the first entry with all correct answers will get Rs 200. You have to collect the prize money from The Shillong Times office after providing proof of your identification.

Change or evolution

By Varsha Sinha

Well, can you tell me if you think in pictures or in colours? Or do you simply delve into your dungeon of endless thoughts? There are certain situations in our lives that we go through, which feel like poetry — some make sense, some don't, and some, even if they do make sense, we simply cannot fathom the intensity of it. Now that's the beauty of it all. There's something in the chaos that we all live in.

Most of us, without even knowing, seem to lose ourselves in this chaos. The cacophony sure does make you believe that you are working hard while we are actually sustaining — our love, family, friends and everything else that comes with it. I was watching a talk show lately where I heard the celebrity say, "Winning is an old habit of mine." And since then, I started wondering what 'old habits' are.

Speaking of 'winning', what's the first thing that comes to your mind? Well, for me, I was like, "Aaah, she must have sacrificed and compromised so much in order to be what she is today."

Here, I would like to emphasise upon the words 'sacrifice' and 'compromise'. They have always seemed to be narrow and overrated concepts for me. Why not use the word 'adjust' instead? Balance also is a good option. Because in order to get somewhere you need to begin somewhere through massive adjustments in case of your time, your deeds, thoughts, temperament and the baggage that comes with these.

Winning is not always sweet and monotonous. It cannot be monotonous. It is not like you achieve something

ESSAY

People don't change, they evolve. It is basically upon us how we let this evolution guide us — do we want it to take us to 'only' places, or do we want it to take us to a hell lot of places? This evolution, my friend, is a weird thing. It makes us question ourselves, sometimes, and everything that goes on with us.

great this Friday and then to keep up with your 'success' and your 'habit' of winning, you wreck your brains, lose all your hair to win something in the upcoming week too. This is not called winning. It is called chasing a mirage. Winning is consistency. We need to know how to proceed softly, yet hard enough to guard what we love and want to win.

People don't change, they evolve. It is basically upon us how we let this evolution guide us — do we want it to take us to 'only' places, or do we want it to take us to a hell lot of places? This evolution, my friend, is a weird thing. It makes us question ourselves, sometimes, and everything that goes on with us. Change is inevitable but in terms of evolution, we can actually limit and aggravate the rate

of it. And that's where our power lies — to not chase a mirage, to not be blinded by excessive joy or miseries.

Now I've seen, through this whole, never-ending process of evolution, we are taught self-sustenance — to be whole within oneself, not to be in a relationship, just for survival. To not constantly want somebody to cling onto. And that's a huge deal in this current age. We tend to succumb absolutely to this hormone called dopamine. 'Instant gratification' is the new cool where we don't need to go on looking for things that we need. All we need to do is take out our debit card from our wallets and just scroll through! So what will you call this? A change or an evolution?

While pondering over this, I also thought about where in this world, surrounded by utter cacophonies, can you fetch yourself love, happiness and peace at the same time? Sounds like utopia? Come on. Be a bit more optimistic! It's home. Home, always. Now, it sure does depend on where and in whom you find your 'home'. I apologise for the sheer webbing of my words and meanings! To be precise, home is actually where and from whom you need no validation, yet you've got the freedom to be your most vulnerable self. That's probably you'll find your peace, love and happiness.

So now, why not take some time to think what change and evolution, particularly, have managed to do to us? Is change a narrower idea than evolution? Or is it simply a twist of thoughts? Or, is it basically a game of ups and downs to make our introspection better? What do you think?

(The author is pursuing master's degree in Sociology at NEHU)

ESSAY COMPETITION: Pen is mightier than sword and words are louder than scream. So Sunday Shillong is giving readers between 14-16 years of age the opportunity to write not more than 600 words on 'Burden of school bags'. The best essay will get Rs 200. The winner will have to collect the money from The Shillong Times office after providing proof of identification.





Their voices, their views

On the occasion of Children's Day on Thursday, we asked our young readers to express their thoughts on canvas or through words. This is what they have to say & how they perceive their special day



Devraj Mohapatra, Class VI, Kendriya Vidyalaya NEHU

There is no seven wonders of the world in the eyes of a child. There are seven million.

Children are God's gift to every parent. They make life more beautiful, bringing a smile to every person's face. They are innocent and fragile, which is why they are celebrated on Children's Day. This day symbolises the way childhood should be experienced — with toys, magical storybooks, school, and friends. On this day we celebrate the rights of every child and the importance of giving each one a happy childhood. The principles and disciplines learned as a child are responsible for what he or she becomes

in the future. Thus childhood should be celebrated. This day is a reminder to all the adults about children's right to enjoy their childhood without any boundaries and to be given basic education for a better life. A happy childhood nurtures confidence, talent and creativity, helping children excel in their adult life.

Early experiences in a child's life play a vital role in chiselling his or her personality. Their talent should be nurtured, good habits should be cultivated and fears should be allayed by proper guidance and care so that they can be ready for the future. We all agree that children are the future and only they can

shape the world of tomorrow.

As a society it is our moral duty and obligation to ensure that each child gets an ideal living environment. Children want to be heard, understood, loved and educated. Communicating with them can help them overcome their fears and differentiate between right and wrong.

All they need is a sense of security, love and encouragement. If guided, they will choose a path in life that can make this country great like Jawaharlal Nehru or Mahatma Gandhi. After all, "the children of today will make the India of tomorrow".

— Devraj Mohapatra

Learn to live like a child

By Sanskriti Singh

It was a week back on Monday. My friend and I had just returned from our practice session in school. As we reached our classroom, a few girls called out, "Minder, can you please help us untie our laces?"

The first thing that you would think of would be 'how difficult is untying shoelaces?'. But what you do not know is that the two girls had tied each other's laces for the three-leg race. One of the partners ties her left leg with the second one's right leg and they both run.

Though the knots were difficult to open and we could not help, a sentence my friend spoke struck me. She said, "Dude, do you realise this is the biggest problem of this life? Unlike us!"

We laughed but while recollecting the words, I found a deeper meaning in her joke.

Children's Day for many has a simple meaning — it is the birth anniversary of Jawaharlal Nehru. But it has another meaning too. Before elaborating that, let us first see what comes to our mind when we talk about Children's Day. It is sweets, celebrations for little children, going to school in coloured dresses and a day of freedom.

As we grow up, the day turns nostalgic. We remember those moments in school when life was simpler and days were merrier; those moments of happiness when we saw our teachers perform for us; those days when our biggest fear was being yelled at by our teachers and parents and our happiness was in getting a piece

of candy; when a stern look would make tears roll down the cheeks and a word of affection would brighten our days. "Someone took away my chocolate," was a serious issue to resolve.

Today, those trifles seem foolish but the most beautiful side of it was innocence. It is surprising how we lose innocence over time. A child's innocent smile vanishes as she or he grows up.

we stop living, life becomes a struggle. Living does not only mean to breathe but also to be happy with what we have and what we are.

It is necessary to be happy with what we have. It's fine if we make a fool of ourselves once. We have to learn to laugh at ourselves and our mistakes. The most important thing is to satisfy our need

We should stop complaining about everything and defeat our dragon-sized ego. Remember, the bigger the dragon, the more destructive it is.

So Children's Day is also about awakening the child within that is nearly dead. That child is innocent and can help us live happily and in peace. It is a day we should all celebrate.

Coming out of a self-created shell of unhappiness, discontent and ignorance is important as nothing can come to us if we live in the dark. Let light find us. This light is of satisfaction, love and life.

Children's Day is the day when we celebrate a new life, the future. It is a celebration of embracing the possibilities we offer to the world. It is about celebrating every human being of all age groups and from all walks of life.

Rishi Jamadagini attained knowledge even from an ant and a cow. Why can we not learn from a child?

Always remember the "doha" that Rahim wrote — *Rahiman dekh baaden ko/laghu na dijiye daari./Jahaan kaam aawe suyi, kaha kare tarbari.* It means when a sword cannot help it is the needle that does. Hence learn from a child, how to live. Learn to live like a child.

(The author is a student of Class XII-Humanities, Loreto Convent)



Lidzusa Besu, Class XII (Humanities), Loreto Convent

Every small event builds up stress and the fear of losing makes us blind and disabled.

Now, even as a child's biggest problem is untying the laces, she will smile through it. As we grow we forget that a smile can make life easier.

Being a teenager, my struggle may revolve around career, performance, admissions. But if

Why celebrate?

By Tanish

I was walking through GS Road one day when I noticed that four or five children, one a toddler, were playing with a thermocol box, probably discarded by one of the shops. It was a simple game. The children were taking turns to hop into the box, easily managing to squeeze in their malnourished bodies into it, and the others were pushing the box down the sloping footpath. Since my mother was busy inside a shop, I got some time to observe the children. The toddler was lucky.

He had more numbers of free rides.

Then I saw a man coming from the other direction. He was eating something from a paper wrapper. When he came near the children, he asked them whether they would take the remaining food and they happily accepted it, without even thinking that it was half-eaten by a stranger. I would have never done that.

Later, when my mother came out of the shop, I told her about the incident

and expressed my displeasure about the fact that those children's parents do not take care of them. "Fine, they are poor but should not their parents be more careful," I said.

My mother did not say much. She only nodded in agreement. "True."

A few days later, I watched a news being flashed on one of the national channels. It said something about a school serving chapatti and salt to students when they were entitled to nutritious food provided by the government. And

the children accepted it? "They were hungry," said my father.

These two incidents, or rather experiences, made me think why these children have to face such difficulties. I agree there is class difference in our society but why shouldn't the society take responsibility of its children? Why one has to live through such nightmarish childhood? I wanted answers but none of the adults could explain these to me. "This is life, full of conflicts," said one. But life is supposed to be beautiful. So why have we accepted such injustice and lie?

In a few days, we will celebrate Children's Day. We will get gifts in school, our teachers will treat us with cakes and other snacks and we will be wearing our best dresses to school. There will be no strict rules for a day. It will be a different day for us. But what about those children? Will they get half-eaten food or roti and salt on the day? Will their hunger continue? Is there any meaning of celebrating the day when we cannot include these children?

I think we, the students and our schools, should invite at least some children from poor families on the day and include them in the celebrations. This will make them happy for a day. I think the adults should encourage every privileged child to help poor children. I am sure this will make some difference. I am also sure that one day I will get answers to all my questions.

(The author is a student of Class IX)



COOK UP A STORM

Flowericious

Golden shower blooms in summer but only a few know the flowers of the tree can be used in several recipes. It is a tropical tree and can grow up to 40 ft tall. **Dr Anjana Kannan-kara** shares some of the unique recipes with golden shower flowers as a key ingredient.

Golden shower crispies

Ingredients

- A handful of fresh flowers
- 3 cups of gram flour
- 4 finely chopped green chillies
- 1/2 teaspoon of ajwain (caraway seeds)
- Finely chopped onion
- 2 tablespoons of lemon juice
- Water for batter
- Salt to taste
- Oil for deep frying



Direction

Wash the flowers thoroughly. Mix all the ingredients into a thick batter. Heat oil in a pan and drop small portions of the batter into it for deep frying till golden brown and crispy. Serve hot, preferably with green chutney or ketchup.

Herbal tea

Ingredients

- 10-12 fresh or dried flowers
- 1 cup of water
- Tea leaves optional
- Honey
- 1 teaspoon of lemon juice



Direction

Boil water in a pan. Turn off the heat and add flowers and tea leaves if opting for that. Pour the contents into a glass pot and cover with a tight lid. Let it sit for 10 minutes. Strain and add lemon juice and honey. It can be served hot or cold.

Fresh flower salad

Ingredients

- 1 cup of fresh flowers
- 1 cup of diced mixed fruits or vegetables
- 2 green chillies
- 10-12 mint leaves

For dressing

- 4 teaspoons of sour cream
- 2 teaspoons of lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon of honey or sugar
- 2 teaspoons of olive oil
- Salt to balance the taste



Direction

Place the diced vegetables or fruits of your choice with the cleaned flowers in a glass bowl. Add crushed or thinly sliced chillies and mint leaves. Prepare the dressing by mixing all ingredients well into a smooth paste. Add the dressing to the salad and toss well. Serve immediately so that the flowers are fresh.

The golden shower flowers can also be used for making perfume. So add a new home-made fragrance to your beauty care collection.

Ingredients

- 2 cups of fresh golden shower flowers
- 2 cups of distilled water

Direction

Wash the flowers thoroughly. Pour distilled water into a heavy-bottomed pot and heat till just below the boiling point and then add the flowers. Let it simmer for around two hours, checking periodically to make sure that the pot has not run out of water. Turn off the heat and cool the contents. Strain contents through a fine cloth to remove the solid pieces. Pour the clear liquid into an empty perfume bottle.

(The author is director, TGL Foundation, & Editor, Anthropology Today — The International Journal)

Gritty green crusader

BOOK REVIEW

By Vishnu Makhijani

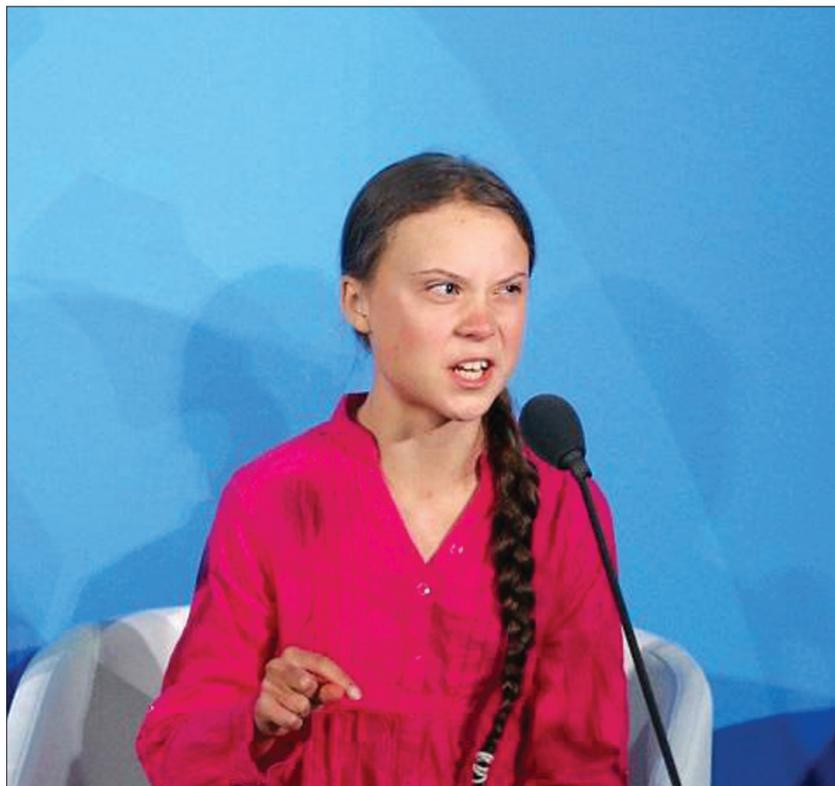
There was much hope when the Paris Agreement on Climate Change was adopted in December 2015 to keep the increase in global average temperatures well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to limit the increase to 1.5°C to mitigate the risks of global warming.

Since then, the issue has merely chugged along, with the US even exiting the agreement, till, in less than a year, Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg electrified the world in a series of 11 speeches culminating in the UN Climate Action Summit earlier this month, bringing the issue right back on track.

“There was something... about Greta that set her apart from her schoolmates, other than her strong interest in the environment,” writes Valentina Camerini in an unofficial biography titled *The Schoolgirl Who Went on Strike to Save The Planet*.

At the age of 11, she was diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome, a condition in which those afflicted “become interested in a particular issue and think about it obsessively without being able to let go. This is exactly what was happening to Greta,” Camerini writes in the book, translated from Italian by Moreno Giovannoni.

On August 20, 2018, Greta “tied her long hair into two plaits, put on a checked shirt and a blue coat and walked out of the house where she lived with her parents. Under her arm



The girl who kicked the hornet’s nest: For her, the world is black or white, there are situations that are right and others that are wrong, writes Camerini in the book. Google Images

she carried a wooden placard. Handwritten at the top were the words *Skolstrejk for Klimatet* (School Strike for Climate). She had also made some pamphlets to distribute, with some very important about climate change that she thought everyone should know about, Camerini writes.

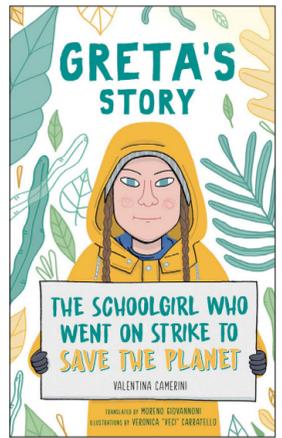
Climbing onto her bike, she headed for the Riksdag (Parliament) to begin the Friday’s for Future — or School Strike 4 Climate — movement that millions around the world have

now joined. “Her brain works in a slightly different way than (that of) most people’s. For her, the world is black or white, there are situations that are right and others that are wrong. You can’t just decide that pollution is terrible and then keep on polluting the planet in your everyday life,” the book states.

With newspapers and magazines writing about her, Greta’s fame spread far and wide.

She addressed the European Economic and Social Commit-

tee in February, a gathering to 25,000 at Berlin’s Brandenburg Gate in March, EU leaders at the European Parliament in Strasbourg in April, the Austrian World Summit in May where she met with Hollywood star Arnold Schwarzenegger, United Nations Secretary General António Guterres and Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen, the US House of Representatives Select Committee on the Climate Crisis September 18 and the Global Climate Strike in New York on



September 20 before attending the Climate Action Summit two days later.

US President Donald Trump tweeted a video of her opening remarks and commented sarcastically, “She seems like a very happy young girl looking forward to a bright and wonderful future. So nice to see!”

Greta paid him back in the same coin, changing her Twitter profile to describe herself as “a very happy young girl looking forward to a bright and wonderful future”.

Essentially a book for children, with chapters explaining global warming for youngsters, detailing what can be done to mitigate this, a glossary, a timeline and suggestions for further reading, the biography will appeal to people of all ages as it states the issues involved in layman’s terms sans the jargon.

To that extent, it’s a winner all the way. (IANS)

Book: The Schoolgirl Who Went on Strike to Save The Planet; Author: Valentina Camerini; Publisher: Simon & Schuster; Pages: 129; Price: Rs 199

Time to go back to Chanakya Neeti

What are you up to?” “Kush is a symbol of purity, you should not end up being angry with it.”

“Anything that causes pain does not have the right to survive. Ending the root cause of pain is Dharma.”

“But Kush never dies, whenever it has the ability to grow, the roots of the plant spread out to help the plant grow back.”

“No! I will not let it happen. I will end every possibility that will help it grow back. I believe in eradicating the very roots of my enemy.”

The child was stung by the tip of Kush grass. The grass has a really sharp end which is capable of making one bleed profoundly if you accidentally step over it. When the grass stung the child he ended the very root of the plant so that it could never grow back or hurt anyone else. He kept digging the earth till every small root of the plant was out and then he collected the roots and burned it all.

The Rishi had witnessed the possibilities that the child had within. The confidence and will power that the child had are the two major pillars of greatness. Along with this if the individual also has affection then he creates history. This is what happened. About 2,000 years ago a man stood up to fight against the threat looming over this country, to be called

Chanakya. This incident dates back to the time when there was no trace of various countries present today on the map of the world but the culture and development of India was enjoying the full bloom of adolescence. India attracted the world towards itself because of the knowledge it imparted, mathematics, medical sciences, astronomy, philosophy, politics, Vedic literature are some of the fields that it excelled in.

Where there is wealth, there are invaders! We all know this, and at that time the greatest threat to India was Alexander III, the king of the ancient Greek kingdom Macedonia. The prevailing threat of an invasion took Chanakya to Dhana Nand, the king of Magadha. Dhana Nand had murdered his half-brothers to become king. He was deeply engrossed in attaining the bliss of alcohol and young maidens and did not care about the well-being of his kingdom or people.

The “sura-sundari” loving Dhana Nand threw Chanakya out of his palace. Chanakya was thrown out by the king’s soldiers, who held his tuft of hair and pushed him out of the grand palace. Chanakya swore outside the gate say-

ing, “I will tie this tuft now only when I demolish all your pride and exterminate your entire progeny.”

This was the same man who had said the root cause of pain must be destroyed. He made Chandragupta Maurya the king of Magadha. From building the economy to the formation of an army that was strong enough to conquer the greatest kingdom ever, Chanakya’s skills and brain worked wonders. His *Arthashastra* led to the formation of one of the largest empires in the Indian subcontinent.

Arthashastra contains the nature of government, law, civil and criminal court systems, ethics, economics, market and trade, the methods of screening ministers, diplomacy, theories on war, nature of peace, and the duties and obligations of a king. The book includes philosophy, ancient economic and cultural details on agriculture, mineralogy, mining and metals, animal husbandry, medicine, forests and wildlife. It explores every field that concerns the nation’s welfare. Chanakya Neeti comprises the deepest secrets of human nature.

Chanakya’s only dream was to build up a nation, the ‘Aakhand Bharat’, a nation

that was not divided by religion, community, cast, enmity, a nation that worked together to strive towards perfection and development.

Now coming back to the present we must question ourselves that are we not dreaming of an ‘Aakhand Bharat’? Two thousand years ago one man alone changed the course of history to build an ‘Aakhand Bharat’. He gave up everything he could, time, energy, intelligence and everything else.

Today the entire nation needs to give up its enmity and come together as one so that a nation can be built back: the same nation that India had always been: a centre of learning that it had been, the golden bird it was and the peaceful place it was. Our concern is to build today’s ‘Aakhand Bharat’ where there is peace and integrity. Finally, ending with a well-known Sanskrit shlokas from Chanakya Neeti —

Yatha chaturbhiih kanakam pariksyate / Nigharsanacchedanatapatadanaih / Tatha caturbhiih purusah pariksyatei / Tyagena silena gunene karmama. (As gold is tested in four ways by rubbing, cutting, heating and beating, so a man should be tested by these four things: his renunciation, his conduct, his qualities and his actions).

(Contributed by Sanskriti Singh)

ESSAY

QUIZ

1. Which Bollywood actor has been selected for the ‘Icon of Golden Jubilee of IFFI’ award?
2. Women soldiers will be inducted into the Indian Army by which year?
3. Which neighbouring country of India is suffering from the outbreak of ‘African Swine Fever’?
4. India recently signed a memorandum of understanding with which country in the field of prevention of marine litter?
5. Which Indian Institute has recently prepared Indian Brain Atlas for first time in the country?
6. Erik Solheim resigned as the head of which UN programme, amid audit on his travel expenses?
7. In the Ramayana, the monkey kings lived in an area called Kishkindhya. In which state is this place located in modern India?
8. Who was the first Indian actress to receive the Padma Shri award?

PICKS OF THE DAY: IDENTIFY THE PERSONALITIES



Last week’s answers: 1. Leo Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* 2. Chile 3. North Wales 4. Shakib Al Hasan 5. Lebanon 6. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi 7. 27 EU MPs 8. Gandhinagar

Picks of the day: 1. Vinod Kumar Shukla 2. Sara Ahmed 3. Jon Hamm 4. Aditya Thackeray

This week’s winner is SW Swer

Send in your answers to sundayshillong@theshillongtimes.com. Names of the first five persons with all correct answers will be published next week and the first entry with all correct answers will get Rs 200. You have to collect the prize money from The Shillong Times office after providing proof of your identification.

Burma's political turmoil

Satisfied with the effect he had achieved, the general and his junta then embarked upon an economic policy that was to have severe consequences for the country, its people and the foreigners who had elected to settle down in Burma. The general announced to the country that he was introducing economic reforms for the betterment of the country. The national economic programme espoused by the regime as 'The Burmese Way to Socialism' was ostensibly to distribute the wealth of the nation amongst its citizens. In reality, it meant dispossessing foreigners of their property and businesses with immediate effect.

'The Burmese Way to Confiscation' saw former landlords and proprietors of businesses subdued and humbled for a change on the streets of Rangoon, which most thought was justifiable punishment. Landlords and moneylenders who were unmerciful with their victims were discreetly begging and borrowing now.

'Damned good! The fellows deserve it, Murray,' remarked Stanley while discussing the subject with his neighbour one evening, returning from work.

'Mostly your chaps, Stanley,' said Murray with a grin.

'It would appear so, Murray,' conceded Stanley. 'But I'm sure the Indians are not the only ones; they have their own, you know.'

The lieutenant who had taken in Stanley and his men during the war as prisoners had remained in post-war Burma like some of his countrymen, and had settled down, marrying a Burmese lady and spawning the last generation of Anglo-Burmese. Murray now worked as a journalist for a local English newspaper called The Burma Star.

'It's a good thing that you're not a businessman now,' commented Murray. 'The loss would have been more mournful.'

'Quite right, Murray,' replied Stanley grudgingly, recollecting that the total personal wealth he could have ever claimed as his own had become ashes in his memory now.

But Stanley was indebted to the

lieutenant, for it was him who had helped Stanley set up a canteen for the soldiers until the evacuation with the approval of Colonel MacIntyre, retired since in the United Kingdom. The great irony of his life, Stanley reflected. It was the British who imprisoned him, and then helped him after the war to start a business; and when the business had suffered a disaster, it was the Japanese again who had given him a job until he found better opportunities with an American company, for which he was now working.

'It was bound to happen,' Murray commented.

'What?' asked Stanley, recovering from the wistful knowledge that fate had denied him success in becoming the prosperous businessman that he had wanted to be.

'The disparity in wealth is too visible,' Murray said.

'Oh that! Yes, Murray. Most of the country's commerce is either in the hands of the Chinese or our chaps,' agreed Stanley.

'Yes,' observed Murray. 'Few Burmese have any say in the economy of the country.'

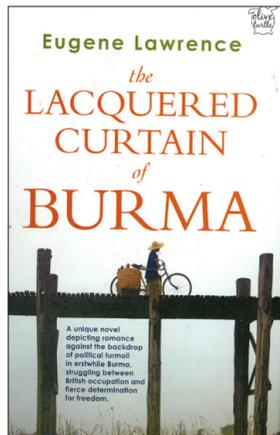
'I realized that and I do sympathize with them,' Stanley said.

'But not any more from what I see,' said Murray. 'It appears to me that the Burmese are going to have the only say now.'

'Oh! The general's doing okay, Murray,' Stanley responded. 'It's only natural that he restores a balance of some sort.'

Stanley himself had detested the greed of his countrymen who had little regard for the honour of the Burmese, and he saw the general's policies as a natural consequence. He had no sympathy for the moneylenders, the land-grabbers and the building owners, whether they were countrymen of his or not. There had to be the question of honour and fairness in life which he cherished, and he was not about to surrender his beliefs despite the looming threat of his own survival in the political atmosphere that was getting more and more unpredictable.

'I'm afraid I won't be here long enough to find out,' informed Murray. 'The family and I have decided to move far away, to Australia, in a



BOOK EXCERPT

month's time.'

'Why not the UK?' enquired Stanley.

'I believe I'll have better opportunities in Australia, Stanley,' replied Murray. 'Britain's pretty beat up at the moment, you know; what with practically giving away the empire and all that!'

'Ha! Ha!' laughed Stanley at Murray's wisecrack.

The war had left them with a sense of humour and they enjoyed sharing it between them. It also reflected the strength of their relationship.

'Oh no, Murray, what about the wealth of the colonies you chaps have drained from them?' Stanley rebutted.

'Ha! Ha!' It was Murray's turn to laugh. 'You don't expect to get the railways, the telegraph, the postal services and a whole administrative service for free, do you now?'

'And I suppose you'd say we got it cheap?' chided Stanley in rebuttal.

'Yes, believe me, Stanley,' Murray said, seemingly serious. 'Yes, you have, unless you folks want to carry on with bullock carts. We'd charge you the sky for every motor car or locomotive you import from

us, you know?'

'Very imperialistic, isn't it? Or is it capitalism? Anyway, quite soon you are going to see a whole lot of us in Britain, returning the favour,' Stanley said.

'It's strange, isn't it? We give you the independence to leave you alone so that you can enjoy it, and what do you do? You land in England and take away our jobs, not allowing us to enjoy our memories of having been your masters,' Murray remarked with a wide grin.

'That's the way of the world,' answered Stanley. 'It's karmic, you know.'

'Ah! You keep saying that. Karma! I'm inclined to believe in the here and now ... in what you sow and reap in one lifetime. Not in something a few births away which I won't recognize. Anyway, what about you, Stanley?' asked Murray, returning to the topic of the general's junta. 'Plan to stay on here?'

'Yes,' replied Stanley confidently. 'I'm sure things will level down once the general's through with the balancing act.'

'In that case, you'd better do something about your citizenship,' advised Murray. 'I don't think it's going to stop here. There's an ill wind blowing, as the saying goes, but take it from me as a newspaper man, it'll get worse.'

'Oh, it won't be that bad, Murray,' Stanley answered. 'It's principally just the matter of trade and labour that has to be resolved and after that, I'm sure things will be just fine. I'm married to a national after all.'

'Sure. But she's a Karen. You would be quite stupid to ignore it,' cautioned Murray.

Stanley was certain that once the economic balance was restored in the country, life would return to normalcy again. He was wrong. In the following months, he was to see how wrong he was, and began to feel disturbed by the zealous extent to which the general's policies were implemented.

*** THE ECONOMIC REVOLUTION Kamayut A Suburb of Rangoon**

8:00AM

Mohamed Ibrahim was a second-generation Indian in Burma. Belonging to a community called the Kha Khas, his ancestors came from a southern state in India commonly known as Malabar. Surprisingly for a Kha Kha, he spoke Burmese fluently and, but for his skin, was as Burmese as the locals. He went to a local school with the Burmese and wore his lungi as the Burmese did. He read the news in Burmese and wrote his accounts in Burmese. His nativity in India was as remote to him now as it was to many of his kind who had settled in the country and practiced a business in which the community excelled. They ran utility and provision stores all around Rangoon and its suburbs, and provided a service that the native Burmese were yet to perfect. Credit without interest.

The store he owned was his pride and, like his father who started the business, he was known to be fair in his dealings. His dream was to find someone capable of looking after the business, which would allow him an opportunity for a holiday and passage to India, where he would seek a wife and bring her back with him to this land of abundance. Little did he suspect that morning when he woke up that his dreams would end prematurely, and that in a few months' time he would be on-board a refugee ship on a one-way journey to his ancestral home.

That morning, Mohamed Ibrahim saw his provision store sealed and numerically marked. I had a new board in place of the old one, and was now identified as 'People's Stores No. 178'. He panicked and couldn't understand what had happened. He had heard a rumour that the government had plans to abolish private enterprise in the land, and he had presumed it meant the big private sector. His was a small business; far too small for the government to take an interest in. He went about the neighbourhood to determine the facts.

Book: The Lacquered Curtain of Burma; Author: Eugene Lawrence; Publisher: Olive Turtle, Niyogi Books; Pages: 223; Price: Rs 495

ESSAY

True justice

The country was recently shaken by a rape case that happened in Hyderabad. Dr Priyanka Reddy (Disha) was raped by four men (truck drivers), who came up with an offer to help her mend a puncture. She was then raped and burned alive.

This heinous crime was something we must be ashamed of. Today everyone is talking about how development is slow in our country but not about safety of women.

And again this time the so-called human rights activists who are champions in defending terrorists and rapists came up to defend the rapists. It was not surprising because it is something that happens every time an accused is about to be penalised.

One question that comes to my mind is that if a rapist has human rights then do these people think that the victim has no human rights? If a heinous criminal much worse than an animal has the right to remain alive then I surely think that animals have the complete right to live. Hence, animal slaughter must be banned.

I was told by a woman that killing a rapist and killing an animal are two different things. Really? A rapist is better than an animal? I do not think so. It is easy for activists to protest against every punishment given to rapists, but do they really understand the pain of those more than 4 lakh women who were raped? Those women who are raped are ruthlessly burned and ripped of their right to live and walk freely. Do these activists even know what the girls go through if they are unlucky enough to live? All the mental trauma, physical pain and emotional agony she goes through every day and every moment of life.

The major question is what are these activists even thinking about? Instead of protesting for the victim they are defending the accused. When a man looks towards women in an unhealthy manner, when women go through teasing or any kind of assaults, it leads to serious mental trauma and here we are talking about rape. Do we not know what was the condition of Nirbhaya who was in such a state that her body could not even accept even a drop of water to drink? Have we forgotten about Damini who was raped in the Capital? The Unnao case, the rape in West Bengal and all those rape cases which have been reported in the previous week are something that tell us that there is no fear in the minds of the rapists.

The rapists do not fear punishment. They do not think that if try to rape a woman they will be punished. The problem is that rape is not even considered a non-bailable offence in our country, forget a strict punishment for it. The rapists are arrested and after some time are out on a bail, why? Because they have human rights. An attempt to murder the Unnao rape victim was made on December 6 by those who were out on bail.

And then politicians come up with theories that rape is a mistake. They come in to insult the pain and plight of the victims. Adding to that we have those who question the attire of women. Now the question is when a two-year-old is raped then what dress code should be confirmed for them? Saree or a salwar suit? Or whatever they feel is an anti-rape dress.

This is the time that we cannot rely on candle marches and some kind of stupid political agenda. We all know that these were the politicians who were even against the triple-talaq law. They were the ones who used the West Bengal rape case as a political weapon. Not taking names of those politicians who think that rape cases can help them achieve their political agenda. It is time that the country requires strict laws that ensure capital punishment for rapists. Fast track courts cannot give justice to the victim. We have already seen what kind of justice was given to Nirbhaya.

When Sita was abducted by Ravan, Ram had punished him with death. Today the country which used to worship women is witnessing the dreadful situation of the same women. It is saddening that we are still debating over capital punishment, after all those lakhs of such crimes happening. Today if the rapists were allowed to escape, the entire media would question the police force about their integrity of work and now that they have done their job people are coming up to say that it was a breach of law!

How do you even expect us to believe the law? How do you even think that women can remain assured about them getting justice when we know that a whole life time passes away but the victim dies without justice? People's happiness over the killing of the Hyderabad rape accused is an indication that the public want capital punishment for rape.

The laws that were made in 1950 were for the society of 1950 and not for the society of 2019. This is the time that the leaders stop coming together for politics and work for the improvement of the country and its safety.

It is high time that the human right activists stop fighting for those who cannot be considered humans. It is also high time that capital punishment should come up for such heinous crimes. It is time that rapists have to get severely punished. Because justice delayed is justice denied.

(Contributed by Sanskriti Singh, Class XII)

Memories don't just go

By WL Hangshing

No! I didn't go to Chinagate, the Chinese restaurant at Bandra, as it brings eye-welling memories of the table where we sat, Randhir, Navin, Geeta, Rani and I. I had come to Mumbai in response to a court summon in a CBI prosecution case in which I was the sanctioning authority, as the Commissioner of Service tax, almost a decade ago.

I remember the fine-dine table that was Randhir Kapoor's favourite. The waiter had knowingly ushered us there. Around the table was Randhir's best buddy, Navin Nischol and his wife Geeta. Geeta and my wife Rani had become the closest of friends. They confided with each other even in their most personal of matters.

Randhir, whom I never felt close enough

to till then, to call him by his pet name of Daboo, took regular swigs of his pet bottle. Ninny (Navin) was on his usual Greygoose, the ladies on wine and I was on rum, being a rum bum whenever the choice was available.

As we got a little tipsy and on to table drumming mood, we began attracting glances from the other tables in the restaurant. By and by, the rum must have taken hold and I began humming... *Ae Dil Hai Mushkil Jeena Yahan...* and in the same beat the rest of us at the table followed in with... *Zara Hat Ke, Zara Bach Ke, Yeh Hai Bombay Meri Jaan*. By the next verse, the whole restaurant had joined in and at the end of the song, there was high-spirited applause all around.

There were a few more rendezvous at that table. It never fails to evoke fond memories of happy carefree times together, days gone by, days that won't come back.

Geeta was the first to go. We had just landed from Delhi and she had called for Rani to come over the same night. Since she was tired, having just landed, she promised to visit her the next day. It was not to be, as early the next morning, Navin called up to say that Geeta was no more. We, and now I, still rue the night before when we didn't respond to her call to visit her. Navin was the next to close his eyes a couple of years later. Now, from that table of five, there remains only Daboo and I, trodding our separate ways, I on a lonely one, on this planet called Earth.

I don't like to go to Chinagate because it has eye-welling memories of happy days that won't come back.

(The author is retired Chief Commissioner, GST&Customs, NE Region)



QUIZ

1. What is the name of the Asian-American who is running for the presidential election in the US?
2. Which alliance won the just concluded Jharkhand Assembly elections?
3. Who is the author of sci-fi novel *Stand on Zanzibar*?
4. What is the name of the common currency recently announced by western Africa?
5. Which nation has decided to lower import tariffs on over 850 products, including frozen pork, from January 2020?
6. Who was named the captain of Cricket Australia's ODI team of the decade?
7. Which country recently declared emergency in Galapagos Islands?
8. Which South African cricketer has announced his retirement plan from all forms of cricket?

PICKS OF THE DAY: IDENTIFY THE PERSONALITIES



Last week's answers:

1. Marathi 2. Akshay Kumar Singh 3. IAU 4. 112
5. India 6. Second runner-up 7. Lahore and Wagah 8. Five

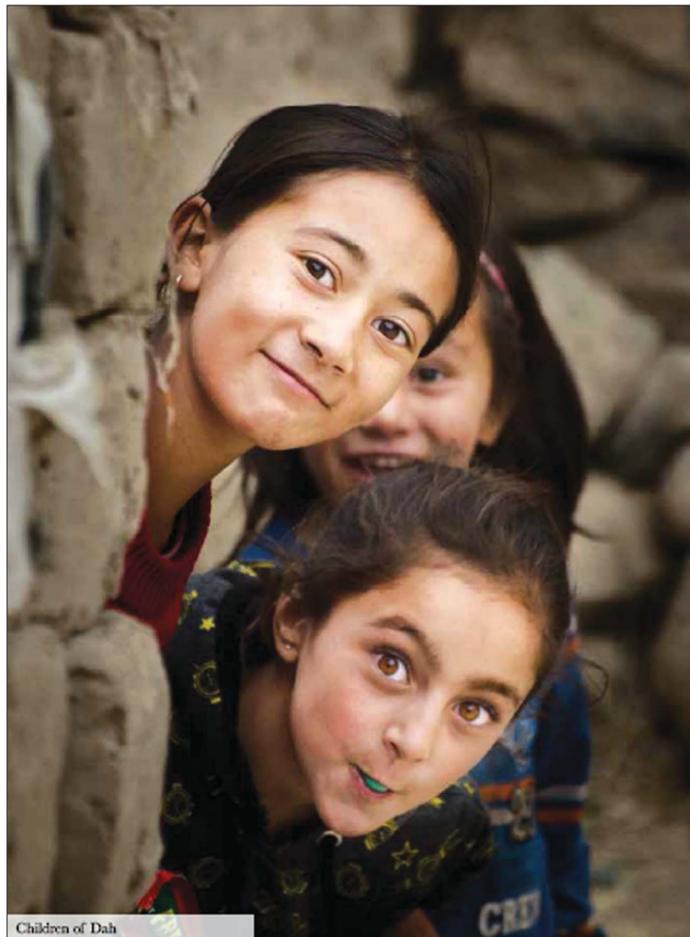
Picks of the day: 1. Adam Driver 2. Boris Johnson 3. Joe Biden 4. Kenny Lynch

This week's winner is Madhusmita Nayak

Send in your answers to sundayshillong@theshillongtimes.com. Names of the first five persons with all correct answers will be published next week and the first entry with all correct answers will get Rs 200. You have to collect the prize money from The Shillong Times office after providing proof of your identification.



'The old world does not meet the new'



Children of Dah

The Oracle

Hidden behind the flailing shopfronts, past the narrow gully through a consenting orifice, through the dusty lanes with billowing juniper and dung plumes, beyond the staccato sheds of mud plaster and hollow bricks, a leap across the canal carved out of the Indus for sustenance and amusement, like a vagrant whisper a flat-roofed tenement betrays a quiet hum of activity.

Choglamsar is like a gnawing laceration on the face of Leh. On the Manali highway a few miles south of downtown Leh, abutting the model village of Saboo, Choglamsar is a bottleneck before the pit stop of Karu and Upshi. It is more Saharanpur than it is Leh. Amidst the detritus of truck-sized boulders left behind by the flash floods that thundered down from Saboo one night after a ten-minute cloud burst and tore apart everything that came in its way, a contiguous chain of wood and mud plaster buildings jostle for space with glass and chrome upstarts flanking the sides of the highway for about a mile. Not an inch has been spared, not an elbow room given. Here, the old world does not meet the new, they sneer, gnaw and confront each other, where each trying to outwit the other, appear to be caught in a time warp.

Each of this macabre congregation of building blocks of varied shape, size, colour and architecture; houses and stores selling everything from motor spares to goat meat

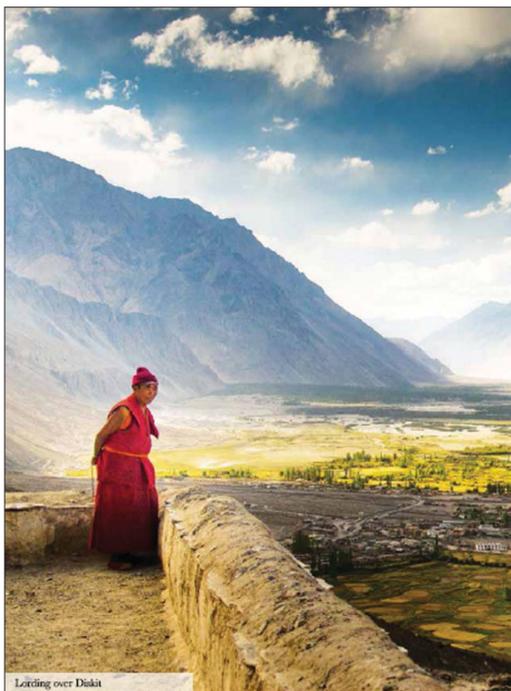
and alcohol to plastic mugs. When the wares on display cannot be contained in the cubbyhole shops, they spill over the doorways and rest on the pavement, proudly flaunting the innards of the store. The pavement and the road is a heave and swell of frenzied shoppers, honking cars, bejeweled women, and dazed and contented jaywalkers. It is as if everyone is out for a doomsday bargain, every day. The gut-wrenching come-ons of food stall owners and bleating goats straining to escape the butchers knife add to the re-velution that Choglamsar easily engenders without much of a fuss. In the land of high passes, it is here that for once, even the mountains bow to human intervention.

Five O'clock in the evening, two hours before sundown, the expectant assortment of men and women who had assembled under the square awning in the courtyard of the tenement has grown in numbers. The deep aquamarine entrance to

the inner quarters frames a fierce looking Buddha and is firmly bolted from the inside. The bounded courtyard swept with white clay, which can hold at most twenty odd people, now looks crowded. People have spilled over from under the tarpaulin awning and have occupied every available space, making an effort

not to stamp on each other's toes; while the luckier ones, mostly women and children, sit on their haunches in one of the projections of the irregularly shaped yard. In Ladakh, almost everybody has a nodding acquaintance with each other, or knows someone who is a mutual friend or a relation; civility therefore comes easy. While the men and women engage in small talk, the children attempt to run around or play Tag, only to bump into someone's back or topple over an extended foot, fall flat, get

chided, sit still for few uneasy seconds and repeat the drill with the same diligence. It has been a long and uncomfortable wait, yet none of the men and women betray despondency; no one even looks at the entrance for it to open, let alone anyone even thinking of jumping queue, for there is no queue in the first place. A lot of people here have come from far off places, even as far as Phyang and Taroo, a lot of them from Hemis, Stakna, Thiksey, Matho, Murtse and all the three Chuzot villages, quite a few from Leh; travelling most of it on foot, carrying apple-cheeked children over their shoulders.



Looking over Diskit



Every minute of delay would bear like a cross on their shoulders on their return leg. Even if they can afford it, finding a wheeled transport after dusk would not be easy. Yet, even after a wait of two hours, it's

a cherubic gang that greets Ayu Lhamo as she walks into the courtyard from the narrow lane by the canal, apologizing profusely for the delay in a sing-song, whispery voice. Apparently, it was a stubborn spirit in her neighbour's house, which she had gone to exorcise, that was to blame for the delay. She looked tired and was already half panting, only to find herself with a courtyard full of seekers to attend to in the failing light, each with their unique afflictions, problems and propositions.

(Excerpt being published with permission from the publisher)

Book: Ladakh: A wanderer's spectacle;
Author & photographer: Nabarun Bhattacharya;
Publisher: Niyogi Books;
Pages: 146; Price: Rs 595

A talent lost too early

By Nirmal Kanti Bhattacharjee

Born in 1970 at a tea garden near Silchar at his grandfather's place, Nabarun Bhattacharya was brought up in Shillong where his father worked in the AG office. His early schooling started at All Saints' Cathedral School. After a brief stint in Bhutan where his father was posted on deputation, he returned to Shillong and was admitted to Laban Bengalee Boys' School from where he passed his HSLC examination. After that, his father was again posted out in Imphal on deputation. So, he passed his Higher Secondary Exam from DPS, Imphal. As his studies were frequently getting disrupted, it was decided that he would be sent to me in Kolkata where I was working in those days. I put him in Narendrapur Ramakrishna Mission College from where he graduated with Honours in English. Unfortunately, his father succumbed to cancer in a hospital in Kolkata when he was a final year student. So, he decided not to pursue his Master's and started writing competitive exams. That is how after a couple of years he got a job in the Customs Department and was again posted in Shillong for a few years and later transferred to Guwahati.

While preparing for competitive exams in Kolkata he perfected his natural aptitude for computers by taking a course in NIIT. Later, he turned out to be quite a wizard in computer. Once he told me that if he had wanted, he could even hack into anybody's email account. He used to do all his writing directly in computer and was well versed in photo-shopping and other multi-media activities.

While in Shillong, he earned quite a reputation as a school cricketer. He was an ace fast bowler and also a dependable middle-order batsman. He represented his school team in many inter-school tournaments and also played in inter-district competitions. Every cricket lover in Shillong in the mid and late eighties would remember him well, of course more as 'Pappu' (his nickname). While staying in Shillong again during 1995-2007 as a customs officer, he revived his cricketing activity and took regular part in Saturday-Sunday cricket matches.

In Imphal, there was not much scope for cricket. So he took up table tennis as a regular sport and honed his skill further in Narendrapur college. He was the table tennis champion of his college.

After his father's death, he took care of his mother with exemplary fortitude and affection. She was a widow of just 43 years and needed support and care. Young Nabarun stood behind her like a rock and since

his posting in Shillong in 1995, she stayed with him. In 2002, he married a Guwahati girl and fathered two children. For the last 12 years in Guwahati (from 2007 onwards), it was a happy family. Nabarun was a loving husband and affectionate father. I have noticed that as an employer too, he was quite generous and would take care of his cook, maid-servant and driver. That is why they worked with him for years together.

Nabarun died of a rather rare disease called Acute Pancreatitis. Doctors say it is caused by very long neglect of one's diet and irregular food habit. Yes, he was a sparse eater and often fastidious in his choice of food. His regular smoking habit also did not help. On April 26, 2019, he came home from office with complaint of severe pain in the stomach. Their house physician examined him and suggested immediate hospitalisation. On the fourth day he went into a coma and was put on ventilator. I rushed from Delhi on getting the news. After 4-5 days' observation and consultation with doctors, I shifted him to Delhi with full ICU simulation within the aircraft. He breathed his last on May 5, 2019.

As the book on Ladakh tells you, he was an ace photographer and a regular trekker. He specialised in landscape and wildlife photography but was also interested in portrait photography of people in remote places. Apart from visiting Manas, Kaziranga, Pobitora and other sanctuaries a number of times, he would

come to Delhi every year with a group of like-minded friends and proceed to Garwal Himalayas for combined trekking and photography expeditions. In the North East too, he was a regular trekker in the eastern Himalayas, especially in the Sikkim range. I have noticed that he was a meticulous planner and would pack everything — not only suitable clothes and equipment, but also essential medicines and other props — before undertaking a journey.

Nabarun was an avid reader with a special interest in the War History. Often, he would request me for a book on war, not available in Guwahati or in Amazon. I have noticed in his shelf at the Guwahati residence an eclectic collection of books including *Liberty of Death* by Patrick French, *Sacred Games* by Vikram Chandra, *Arushi* by Avirook Sen, *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini, *Muffled Dawn* by Saadat Hassan Manto, *Many Lives, Many Masters* by Dr Brian Weiss, *The Sirens of Baghdad* by Yasmina Khadra, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* by Mohamed Hanif, and others.

(The author is the uncle of Nabarun Bhattacharya)



India & its mysteries

ESSAY



Pexels

India, which is considered the oldest country to have a well-planned city with the oldest civilisation in the world, has some hidden truths that not many know about. This country has created wonders in every field, including science and arts.

All of us know that India was the country to establish the first mahaviharas or universities namely Takshila, Nalanda and Vikramshila. The entire philosophy of having a well-planned education system had already emerged in India even before universities came into existence. Also, these universities taught subjects that the world came to know about much later. We are all aware that zero was invented in India, which means the very base of mathematics

was founded here.

In *Hanuman Chalisa*, composed by Saint Goswami Tulsidas in Kashi during 1532-1623, a particular *shloka* consists of the approximate distance of the sun from Earth. The *shloka* is — *Yug sahastra yojan par bhanu/Leelyo Tah madhur phal Janu*. The first line consists of a mathematical calculation which, when simplified in the following way, gives the distance.

1 Yug = 1296000 (duration of Treta Yug, the time when Ramayana actually happened); 1 Sahastra = 1000; 1 yojan = 7.64 miles; 1 mile = 1.6 km. Now when we calculate this we get;

Yug * sahastra * yojan = par bhanu (bhanu is the Sanskrit word for the sun). That is, 1296000 * 1000 * 7.64 miles

= 9,901,440,000 miles. One mile is 1.6 km, and hence, 9,901,440,000 miles would be 15,931,416,960 km.

The distance that has been stated by NASA is 150 million km, which is close to what the *Chalisa* has stated. It is surprising that how our scriptures have given such meaningful contents which can help us attain the knowledge about our universe. It is quite unfortunate that it is hardly recognised and accepted. The worst is that any research provided in the present time by scholars consisting of such scriptures is considered supporter of fundamentalists.

If we start considering our scriptures as research books and historical texts, we might be leading the world towards an entire new scenario of de-

velopment and help our country grow alongside. When NASA recorded the vibration of the sun the sound created was OM! OM is the sound that the universe produces, and hence, it is used while performing yoga. Some people make it a religious issue and restrain themselves from performing Yoga.

Let us not bring religion into everything and let us not be divided in the name of god. Because I strongly believe that God can never divide, he can only unite. Let us not be deceived by the irrational scenario presented to us and once again become that one incredible India that we always were.

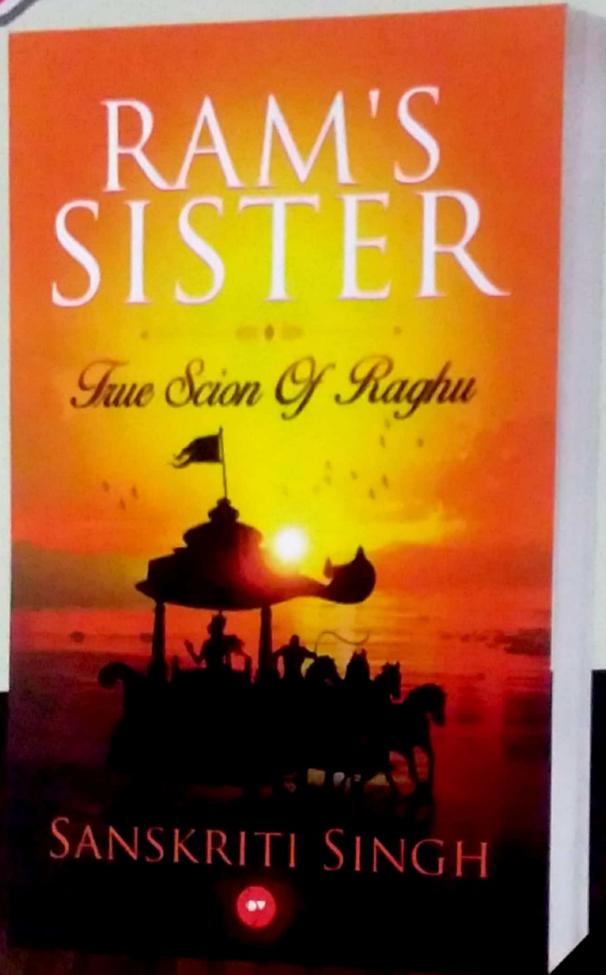
(Contributed by Sanskriti Singh, Loreto Convent)



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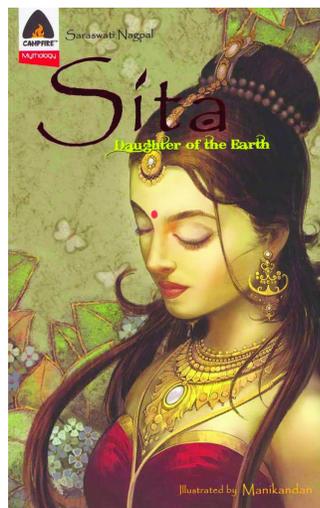
amazon.com

Retelling the story of Sita



Book Review

By Sanskriti Singh



The book written by Saraswati Nagpal is a beautiful outline of the Ramayana and is an easy and convenient method to understand the essence of the epic.

The story starts by explaining the details in the Ramayana. It has an image of Sita explaining treta yuga and the structure of Bharat land and then the novel begins with an explanation of King Janaka's life. It begins with the generous and kind behaviour of King Janaka and Rani Sunaina.

Sita has been depicted as Bhoomija (lady born from the earth). A girl who grew up amid luxury and love of her family is married to the prince of Ayodhya. Sita shines like Lakshmi in heaven rejoicing in the love of Ram. This love only grows with trust.

But happy days end with Ram's 14-year exile. Sita and Lakshman accompanies him to the forest. Then comes the abduction of Sita by Ravan and also her anticipation, after which comes her second exile.

The story is a simple outline of the Ramayana depicted with a pictorial explanation for young readers.

The book did not give me the inner essence of Sita's character. But I must appreciate the splendid graphics. The depiction of the story of Sita and Ram has given an enchanting effect to the book.

(The author is a student of Archaeology at Maharaja Sayajirao University)

Book: Sita: Daughter of Earth; Author: Saraswati Nagpal; Publisher: Campfire; Pages: 91; Price: Rs 275

Going back to THE ROOTS

Young professor starts local language challenge on social media to safeguard indigenous identity

Language is not only a medium of expression but also a person's identity. This is the reason why Dairaris Rummong has embarked on a mission to safeguard that identity of the indigenous populace that has witnessed unrestrained influence of western culture, especially in the North East, over decades.

The young assistant professor of English at St Mary's College started Speak Your Roots Challenge on Instagram (@speakyourroots2020) on August 3 this year. Rummong manages the social media page alone and throws up frequent language challenges for social media users.

The @speakyourroots initiative has its genesis in a casual conversation among Rummong and her friends, Sasha S Laloo and Laurette Dikhar.

"We talked about the various challenges on Instagram and we wanted to do something that would engage the young and the old alike on social media in a meaningful and productive way. That is how I came up with the Speak Your Roots Challenge. It is a linguistic, literary, cultural and social exercise with a purpose to document anything related to indigenous language," Rummong told *Sunday Chimes*.

"How well do you know your native language? Do you ooze depth and eloquence while speaking your roots? In an increasingly globalised world, it is easy to slip into using English to communicate," was the introductory note on the Instagram page.

The first challenge was on the occasion of International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples on August 9. "Post a word or phrase of your choice in your native language (with the definition/ meaning) using the hashtag #speakyourroots #talklocal," said the challenge.

In Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's words, "the limits of language" is the limits of one's world, and Rummong sets the limits. Every chal-

speakyourroots2020

bawanshwa_syiemlieh
Meghalaya

THREE PILLARS OF OUR LIVES

"Khamai is ba hah"
This is a Khasi precept which means to perform the duty well, to live justly and work honestly.

"Im Tip Brier Tip Bli"
This Khasi precept means Know Yourself, Know God, I.e recognize and understand who you are in order to fully comprehend and connect with the Great Divinity, God, U Bli.

"Tip Rar Tip Kha"
This precept stresses the importance of knowing both Matrilineal (Cognates) and Patrilineal (Agnates) lines, i.e. to know his Kith and Kin.

There are posts on Assamese, Tangkhul, Ao Mongseng, Ao Chongli, Bodo, Kokborok, Mizo, Punjabi, Konkani, Nepali, Khasi, Jaintia and Garo languages. One challenge called for participants to submit a local word denoting an indigenous jewellery or cloth while another focused on local games

Winter means two things, chill in the air and the beginning of the wedding season. When it comes to a winter wedding, we assume that winter weddings are fuss-free. No humidity so no frizzy hair, no sweaty makeup, no makeup meltdown during wedding functions. But the season brings along problems like itchy skin, chafey makeup, chapped lips, limp hair and pedicure running out too soon during wedding celebrations. Dry and patchy skin can be a nightmare when it comes to makeup application as everything you apply flakes off or creases.

Looking beautiful on the wedding day is not merely a matter of make-up and dress. It needs weeks of care. If a skin care programme is followed a few weeks before the wedding, it can really help. The skin type and the season should also be taken into consideration.

For your daily facial care routine, cleanse your skin twice a day. It is not just the skin on your face that's prone to dryness in winter but your hands are often left vulnerable to the same environmental elements as your complexion. Same goes for the rest of your body. Shahnaz Hussain will tell you how to bring back the glow on your special day.

Night-time cleansing is more important to remove pollutants and makeup before bedtime. Cleanse the skin daily at night and apply a layer of moisturiser before you sleep. You can also apply an all-night mask for your skin.

For normal to dry skin, use a cleansing cream or gel. Or, take half a cup of cold

milk and add five drops of any vegetable oil (til, olive or sunflower oil). Put this in a bottle and shake well. Cleanse the skin with it, using cotton wool. Keep leftover mixture in the fridge. If the skin is oily, use a cleansing lotion or face wash for oily skins. Oily skins also need deep pore cleansing. Mix rice powder with curd and apply on the face once or twice a week. Rub gently with small circular movements and wash off with water. Ready-to-use scrubs are also easily available.

In winter, oily skin may be prone to blackheads. You can clean up-even at a beauty parlour and have blackheads extracted. One of the easiest ways to prevent dry hands is by adding a hand cream to your skincare routine.

An oily skin may also feel dry in winter but when cream is applied, it can lead to pimples. So mix one teaspoon of pure glycerine with 100 ml rose water and keep in a bottle in the fridge. Use a little of this lotion to relieve dryness. It will soften the skin without making it oily.

Aloe vera gel or honey may be applied on all skin types to moisturise and soften the skin. Apply on the face and wash off with plain water after 20 minutes.

For all skin types, tone the skin daily with chilled rose water using cotton wool pads. Wipe and stroke the skin with them. Then pat briskly with the rosewater-soaked cotton wool pads. This adds a glow to the skin.

The daily nourishing of normal to dry skin can be done at night, with a nourishing cream. After cleansing, apply the cream and massage on the face with a few drops of water, with outward and slightly upward movements, for 2 minutes. Wipe off with moist cotton wool.

For the face, mix a mask at home and use it two or three times a week. For normal to dry skin, mix two teaspoons of wheat bran (choker) with one teaspoon each of almond meal (badaam), curd, honey and rose water.

For oily or combination skin, mix three teaspoons of oats with curd, honey and egg white or rose water. Mix everything together into a paste and apply on the face, avoiding the lips and area around the eyes. Wash it off after 20 minutes.

After applying face mask, soak two cotton wool pads in rose water and use them as eye pads. Lie down and relax. This is extremely relaxing and refreshing and a great restorer of both body and mind. Rose water has a relaxing effect, helps to remove fatigue and brightens the eyes.

The skin around the eyes is thin and delicate. It acquires lines and wrinkles easily. Apply an under-eye cream, wipe it off after 15 minutes with moist cotton



(Clockwise from above) Rummong is an assistant professor of English; posts in Ao Mongseng and Khasi

In Ao Mongseng, the word 'Ukhaleh' means the tiny puddle that's formed by rain drops falling from the roof. Such a simple thing and yet a very beautiful sounding word.

due to the cosmopolitan nature of the city. What should be highlighted is that it is commendable that local languages are being spoken and written in the state," she added.

The professor observed that Shillong is witnessing a return to indigenous knowledge, practices, language and folklore. At the same time, she acknowledged that more needs to do to preserve the indigenous languages not only in Meghalaya but in other states in the region.

"There needs to be a continued docu-

“The use of English may be attributed to the fact that it is easier to communicate in English in Shillong due to the cosmopolitan nature of the city.

Dairaris Rummong | @speakyourroots

mentation in written or audio-visual form, bringing them into the mainstream. As a consequence, translation also gains a critical position in presenting indigenous communities as repositories of historical and cultural memory.

"As for the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo languages and many other dialects which are spoken in Meghalaya, more books in these languages need to be published starting with children's literature so that children are made aware of the influence of indigenous languages. Research also has to be taken up in order for the languages to gain more relevance, especially among the youth who are otherwise mainly using the English language. Indigenous languages also thrive and are preserved through the genres of music, theatre and film, as has been done in recent times," she enumerated.

But the best way to preserve one's language is to speak the language with children at home so that they have a "strong knowledge of their mother tongue".

"Reading and writing in indigenous languages also have to be encouraged not only in schools but also at home. The same emphasis that one puts on learning English should also be done for the indigenous language. Having said that, my personal opinion is languages are to be treated equally, with each having its own importance," Rummong said.

Speaking Your Roots will continue its mission to protect and preserve local languages and literature that will, in turn, contribute to the well-being of indigenous communities striving to preserve their heritage in the 21st century," she concluded.

-NM

Get angel glow before D-Day



Shahnaz speaks



Don't stress. It can ruin all your winter skincare efforts. To deal with this kind of mental stress, it is essential to learn to relax. It has been proved that physical exercise actually helps the body to cope with stress. A few weeks before the wedding, start exercising, like going for a walk. Yoga and meditation are helpful

wool. Or, apply pure almond oil sparingly and massage lightly every day using only the ring finger for one minute under each eye. Massage in one direction only.

The skin on the lips is also thin and lacks oil producing glands. It becomes dry and chaps easily. Even if you are using the finest lipstick, you cannot apply it on your lips without a coat of lip balm or petroleum jelly. For plump looking lips, give them a base coat of lip balm. After cleansing, apply almond oil or almond cream on the lips daily and leave it on all night. Sun-protective lip balms are also useful.

Protect the skin from moisture loss during the day. Apply SPF-Friction sunscreen before going out in the sun. Ultraviolet rays are weaker in winter and you don't get tanned easily. But it tends to cause wrinkles, premature ageing, dryness and damage to the skin. Most sunscreens have built-in moisturisers. Moisturisers are available in cream and gel forms. For extreme dryness, use a cream. A liquid moisturiser should also be used under make-up. Keep the skin well moisturised.

During winter, opt for water-resistant sunscreens free from fragrance and parabens. This practice will make you glow on your wedding day and even before it.

In winter, the skin of the body also needs nourishing oils. In the olden days, 'ubtan' was made at home for skincare. First, the body was massaged with 'oil'. Then home-made 'ubtan' was applied. This usually consisted of wheat bran (choker), gram flour (besan), yogurt (dahi) or cream of milk (malai) and a pinch of turmeric (haldi). All these were mixed and applied on the face and

body before bathing. The 'ubtan' was washed off after half an hour while bathing. It helped to clear the skin of dead cells, leaving it smooth and bright with a translucent quality.

Another ideal way to get glowing skin is to tie ingredients in a clean cloth, wet slightly and then rub the cloth bag on the skin while bathing. Mix powdered milk, ground almonds (badaam), rice powder and rose petals. The ingredients work on your skin, gently cleansing it and leaving it soft, smooth and vibrant. It also leaves the body naturally perfumed and refreshed, feeling as smooth as silk.

In winter, the hair also needs to be hydrated and clear as well. Heat pure coconut oil and apply on the hair. Then dip a towel in hot water, squeeze out the water and wrap the hot towel around the head, like a turban. Keep it on for five minutes. Repeat the hot towel wrap 3 or 4 times. After shampoo, apply a creamy conditioner, leave on for two minutes



and wash off with plain water. Or, you can apply a leave-on conditioner or hair serum for shine and protection. Oil them every week and get a hair spa at least once a month prior to your wedding. Add a little olive oil to whichever oil you apply to give it a little touch of moisture.

You can also give your hair a quick conditioning treatment before shampoo. Mix one teaspoon each of vinegar and almond oil with one egg. Beat them together and massage the mixture into the scalp. Leave on the mixture for half an hour and then wash your hair. If you do not wish to use egg, add more almond oil.

You must keep yourself hydrated by drinking 8-10 glasses of water daily which will help flush out toxins, improve skin tone, healthy and glowing skin. You can add fruit juice, coconut water, watermelon, green tea and lassis in your daily routine. Make sure these do not contain too much sugar or sodium. Eating the right kind of food will help your skin glow even in the winter months. Have a small box of dry fruits when you are

travelling. Try to include regional and seasonal fruits, vegetables in your diet on a daily basis. Snacking on natural hydrating foods will keep your body hydrated. Opt for a diet that is rich in Omega 3 essential fatty acids.

All brides go through stress. Do not stress. It can ruin all your winter skincare efforts. To deal with this kind of mental stress, it is essential to learn to relax. It has been proved that physical exercise actually helps the body to cope with stress. A few weeks before the wedding, start taking a little exercise, like going for a walk. In fact, walking is good for both body and mind. Yoga and meditation are also helpful in terms of calming the mind and inducing relaxation. You must ensure eight hours of sleep daily to rejuvenate your skin. If you sleep late and are not getting enough rest, take mini naps between the day. Even a couple of 30-minute naps through the day will help you and your skin.

Photos: Pinterest

Biblio-File

Elegy for The East: A Story of Blood and Broken Dreams by Dhrubajyoti Borah

Before the relentless march of history, the lone individual is helpless. Yet it is men whose collective efforts give history its momentum and ushers in change of eras. *Elegy for the East* explores the despondency of man in the face of overwhelming odds. This novel is a work of fiction and yet the characters are real, in thoughts and dreams. The narrative is not far from truth, where an uncaring, anonymous and overbearing State creates situations of social and political strife. The sylvan countryside of Assam hides memories of bloodshed, death, rape and terror. But the story of man's quest for peace keeps hope alive. Published by Niyogi Books, *Elegy for the East* is another masterly work of a master storyteller. Borah's novels tell the stories of the youths in angst, of groups who struggle to bring about a more just society and of women who search for true meaning of life amidst trials and tribulations.

Dear Mama by Mohini Kent

The Prabha Khaitan Foundation recently announced the online launch of this book. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Dalai Lama, Cherie Blair, Sir Cliff Richard and other eminent personalities as well as common citizens have written personal letters to their mothers, especially for Kent's book. Mother is the guru and guide of the children. But some mothers betrayed their daughters, who were sold as slaves. The letters of those girls in this book speak of heartbreak, trauma, loss and betrayal.

Home Body by Rupi Kaur

From *The New York Times* bestselling author of *Milk and Honey* and *The Sun and Her Flowers* comes her greatly anticipated third collection of poetry. Kaur constantly embraces growth, and in *Home Body*, she walks readers through a reflective and intimate journey, revisiting the past, the present and the potential of the self. "I dive into the well of my body and end up in another world." It is a collection of raw, honest conversations with oneself.

Recapturing Shillong citylights

Book Review

Shillong is a sleepy hill town that remains unperturbed by happenings around it. The calmness is innate to its character but for one who witnesses the cantankerous rhythms of the city, the undercurrent of events are unavoidable. *Name, Place, Animal, Thing* captures that undercurrent of daily life in all its aspects through a child's lens that unwittingly captures the layers of socio-cultural and politico-economic fabric of the place.

Daribha Lyndem, an IAS officer, uses lucid narrative to depict the various facets of Shillong, encapsulating the essence of the bitter-sweet life of Shillongites. For instance, Bahadur, the obscure domestic help of an elderly but rich and cantankerous Bengali widow, Mrs Guha. He lives with his family in a decrepit house provided by the landlady and takes up odd jobs in the neighbourhood, not for extra income but out of goodness. He exists only when there are chores to do and remains invisible otherwise. Nonetheless, he rouses curiosity in an eight-year-old girl who observes him till the whole day.

Then there is Mr Baruah, the suspected "vampire" who runs a stationery shop at Barik. "It was a small shop with a weather-beaten pink front door which sealed in the warmth on cold winter days," describes the author. But time takes a toll on the small business that vanishes in the oblivion. And there is the graveyard, cloaked in the damp smell of wet leather, and the untold stories of the dead. The place has a character of its own, peculiar and pessimistic, which nudges the faculties of the narrator during her annual visits to her grandparents on the grave of her grandfather.

Lyndem's stories do not miss out on the subtleties. As she describes Bahadur's mundane life, she captures



Daribha Lyndem (right) chooses anecdotes from her childhood to portray a vivid picture of the city; (top right) the book cover. (Photos by MT, Zubaan & Google Images)

the class distinction and society's inhumanity. When Bahadur's son is mauled by stray dogs, none of the neighbours, who would often enjoy his service, comes out for help. The boy writes in pain and all he gets are curious and selfish glances from behind curtains which separate the two worlds.

Incidents like the assault of Mr Roy by local youths bring out the communal turmoil that has maligned the city's reputation forever. But Lyndem's narration, which at times is poignant, is not hindered by a particular event and ebbles round the monotony to capture the broader canvas. "Apart from these everyday occur-

rences of people being mauled by humans or animals, nothing other worldly ever happened in our lives. That's why perhaps people in this town were so mundane, I thought," Lyndem writes. The community's stronghold that would rarely allow outsiders like Bengalis, Biharis, Nepalis and other migrants, Lyndem writes. "The community's stronghold notwithstanding, social disturbances dislodged them from Shillong leaving behind remnants of their existence. The neon signs were gone and so was a part of history. What makes ripples in the sleepy city does not move the young narayatt. So when local groups declare their disconnection with the State, she finds

it difficult to fathom. "Khasi by blood, Indian by accident." The group made as little sense to me as the strange writing on the wall," she writes. *Name, Place, Animal, Thing*, which derives its name from a popular childhood game, lives up to its name as Lyndem picks up anecdotes from her childhood and strings them mellifluously to portray a vivid picture of the city and its people.

-NM

Book Name: Name, Place, Animal, Thing; **Author:** Daribha Lyndem; **Publisher:** Zubaan; **Pages:** 266; **Price:** Rs 300

NAME PLACE ANIMAL THING



national perspective, for archaeology is the most global of all sciences. The driving force of this subject seeps into few hearts and I must say it is as challenging as trying to become Einstein. Archaeology is a handmaid of history, but I truly feel quiet far away from it. It is logical for sure, it requires proofs and yet it needs true commitment. You cannot take it as lightly as you take history; and please don't say I don't take history lightly. Almost everyone does, and passionately gets bored of the subject's history.

The proper goal of Archaeology is to study a human that vanished from Earth lakhs or millions of years ago. It connects the past to the present developing the future and adding new chapters in your history books. It is a more logical side of history in simpler words. You cannot expect to go out one day and dig a pit and find the greatest discovery. It will never work like that because as I said earlier, no one can predict the adversities of the subject itself. The unpredictability is at its extremes and if you are wondering it might not be difficult, I must say it is a difficult subject if you are not ready for the bumps and ditches. Your passion for the subject will decide your future here and if you are deeply passionate about this, I must say you will live for it.

It might seem challenging to choose what you have dreamed to be all your life but not all decisions will be wrong. You will be happier with a subject that means the life to you.

(The author is a student of Maharaja Srijayrao Institute)

Waking on the untrodden road

VOX POPULI

By Sanskriti Singh

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, / And sorry I could not travel both / And looked down one as far as I could / To where it bent in the undergrowth.

When Robert Frost wrote these lines, I wonder where he had been and how the one decision might have changed the course of events in life. The poem holds a special place in my heart as I look back at my life today. I have not reached the point where "I shall be telling this with a sigh / I took the one less travelled by, and that made all the difference". I must say the first part makes all the sense to me.

The world has its pre-conceived notion of life and career and the latter has always been in the spotlight. The most travelled roads around me were trodden black and for sure I can be confident enough to say, any of those career paths would have been easier for me. I know my abilities.

I am stubborn and I proudly say I chose something that was so remote to people in society that I am close to be treated like an alien around me. I chose Archaeology.

Doesy
Lilies
White lips,
And red eyes,
Narrow hips,
And stormy nights,
An avalanche of emotions,
Turmoil of secrets,
Wrapped up in the blanket with which I sleep,
Long ankles,
And lilies,
Lilies, Lilies, Lilies,
Surround my dreams,
As morning pulls me out of my world.
My world, My world, My world.
I am not crazy, I will tell you,
My world, My world, My world.
The morning pulls me out and I lie.
I lie, I lie, I lie in my bed.
And I, I lie, I lie in my bed.
I love the thought of me,
But who is me and who am I?

Alisha Chandranath

Pen in hiding
Crumpled papers, scribbled writings,
Become a part of rusty me.
A thought for unusual sightings;
Catch hold of them and be free!
Tied tightly, I'm controlled,
As memories unfold,
Set me free to the land.
Open it, footprints on the sand.
The thoughts, Oh! So grand.
They will not remain just memories,
Build up, I will restore.
My pen, in hiding,
After all the searching,
Finally found you,
Forever, stay true.

Dainishira Kharsati

Bleak fortune
They governed, thus did reign;



Believe me when I say I have been asked this question a thousand times and I have not even completed my first semester.

"Are you planning to dig the earth all your life? Do gardening, it will be more fruitful than digging people's graves." This is what I hear from people when I tell them my very brave choice to follow the path of those few people who dared to take up a subject that holds little importance in the world of engineers and doctors and brimming MBA graduates. And now I have come down to answer the question "Why Archaeology?" in the simplest sarcasm they decide to take, "I took

it up to dig the earth all my life."

The truth is that the romance is not always there, however romantic the subject may seem to be to some people. The first question I answered in my Archaeology class was again, "Why did you take up Archaeology?" I admit I did not have a proper answer to that at all. I knew I loved history, I loved the idea of creating something out of nothing and finding answers to questions yet unsolved, but is that enough? No it is not! I only chose to keep my answer simple. But if now I have to answer, I would say, "As un-romantic as the subject is, I love it still. It is not only fascinating but is everything I have looked for, for so long, I love studying the human mind and for that I could have easily taken up Psychology but I love History, Biology and Arts as well. I have looked for a subject that gave me everything, and I found it in Archaeology. A writer can never have asked for a subject that was less practical and artistic at the same time. It is unpredictable and I love that unpredictability."

I have already taken the road less travelled and I know in future I will not regret it. I will never regret one moment of life as a student because I know how beautiful it is to get up every day and know that this is my life to do.

Taking a different road is not easy! It was more difficult to stay true with my decision than becoming an author at the age of 17. No one in my family could have thought I would change course so dramatically as well. And I am sure many still feel I am a retard.

Archaeology is a subject with an inter-

All too young to die
We are all too young to die
When a malignant virus
Comes unseen
Stealing health, promise and life.

Erwin K Syiem Suringa

Potato head
Potato turned French fry,
Forever gone her innocence,
Her integrity
Slowly slipping away,
That needle doesn't scare her anymore.
Pretty hurts and pain is beauty.
She accepted that a long time ago,
She slowly goes blank flying down on the table
Quietly waiting for her doctor.

Jessica Tochi

Too young to die
A man of God died
From Covid
He stayed at Keatinge Road, Shillong
Now his widow cries
In shock
He was too young to die.
A child died from Covid
His door a little laughing boy
Life's never really opened
He was too young to die.
A young man
Saying "I'm immune!"
Lost the battle
Covid won.
Too young to die.
A man of 86
Healthy and loving life
Lonely and alone
Becomes a Covid statistics

Sonny L Khryrim

They snatched, and so did gain;
Paths, limbs are but sinking ship;
Of aching body, spinal disc slips.
Ill-gotten gains widen near and far;
Mansions, resorts and fleet of cars;
The tenure will soon end and break,
Wonder what hide-out, they'll take.

As the world equipped for growth,
Patriotism hindered barely an oath;
Loads of years, boundary a dispute!
And the land of Gods, a pure retreat.

What's amassed, yet to leave behind;
What's imperative, simply to be kind;
What's simplicity that a peace of mind.

We are all too young to die
We are all too young to die
We are forced to about
"We are all too young to die."

Sonny L Khryrim

Wild geese
You do not have to be good,
You do not have to walk on your knees
For a hundred miles through the desert,
repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours and I, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles
of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,

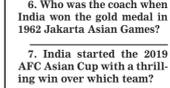
Roderick Theodore Rynjah

Photos: Pinterest

QUIZ

After a long hiatus, India is finally witnessing a sporting event. *Indian Super League* is here and a team from the North East is also playing. Health protocols are in place and football lovers have no other option but to enjoy the game on television. For quiz this week, *Sunday Chimes* chooses football in India as the subject. All you cheering fans, take some time out to answer the questions.

- Which Brazilian footballer played in the Indian Football League in 2002?
- Footballing legend Pele once came to India in September 1977 with his club and played against Mohun Bagan. Which club did Pele come with?
- Who was the first awardee of the ISI's best emerging player, despite his team not reaching the playoffs?
- Who were the Champions in Santosh Trophy tournament when it started in 1941?
- Who is the first Indian woman footballer to play for a professional team in Europe?
- Who was the coach when India won the gold medal in 1982 Jakarta Asian Games?
- India started the 2019 AFC Asian Cup with a thrilling win over which team?
- With which ISL team would you associate a supporter base called 'Manjapada'?
- Baichang Bhutia became the first Asian player to score a goal in the Football League (England). Which English club did he play for?
- All India Football Federation is the organisation that manages the game of association football in India. when was it formed?



Mary Oliver

(Courtesy: *Ode To A Poetess*, www.odestopoetess.com)

Pictorial
This Northern Irish dribbler played for ManU and is regarded as one of the greatest players of all time. He died on the same day as Maradona in 2020. NAME HIM.

Answers for Nov 22:

1. Seducing and falsely promising to marry them; 2. Town Police; 3. Aristotle; 4. Trouser; 5. Sturgeon; 6. 2004; 7. North Dakota; 8. BR Ambedkar; 9. Lord Cornwallis; 10. 14 years

Pieces

Yet! Once again, time repeated itself
To moments I dreamed,
No not of ones isolation
Nor of hate, but of hurt,
Of pain which reverberates
To this circle of a life.
That cuts down to the throat.

Roderick Theodore Rynjah

Photos: Pinterest

The North East India Archive, an audio-visual archiving initiative by the Department of Mass Media at St Anthony's College, took on board 32 creative youths to document the pandemic. In the process, Khlam stories of distress, survival and sustainable measures were unearthed and presented in the form of poems, essays, paintings, photography and audio-visuals. Sunday Chimes, in collaboration with NE Archive, will publish one presentation from Archive Khlam every week to draw a holistic picture of the pandemic. This is the seventh edition of pandemic stories, this time told by a young photographer through a collection of black and white frames.

ON THE COVID WAR FRONT



Vignettes of frontliners' life during the lockdown. The photographs were taken at Shillong Civil Hospital and Shillong municipal office

'Want to focus on sound studio'



LAMBOK THANGKHIW worked as a wedding photographer and sound designer before the pandemic. The 22-year-old alumnus of St Anthony's College also wanted to go abroad for higher studies. But all plans were stalled last year and Thangkhiw decided to chronicle the stories of the pandemic for NE Archive. In fact, he started documenting the changes during the lockdown even before he started working on the Khlam Archive project. Thangkhiw is colour blind and captures his stories in black and white. "Colour is important in photography but I do not think I have a big disadvantage," he says. In an interview with Sunday Chimes, Thangkhiw speaks about the experience of visiting Shillong Civil Hospital and meeting the workers of Shillong Municipality Board (SMB).

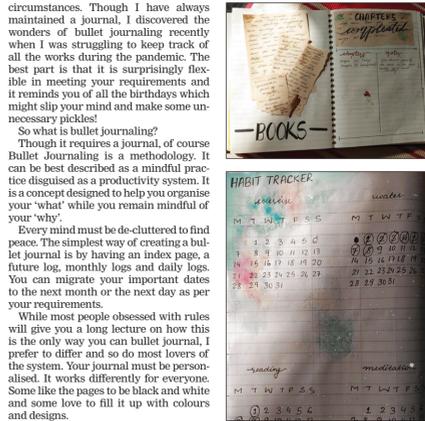
How was your pandemic experience? I started documenting from Day 1 of the lockdown. I started with shooting my community and how people were affected. There was a change as the locality river was cleaned up. Then in April-May, I started shooting for NE Archive. I got access to the national health scheme and spent around a month at the Covid centre in Civil hospital. I spent about two weeks each with Meghalaya police personnel and the municipality workers. How difficult was it to get access to the hospital and SMB at the peak of the pandemic? I went to the chief minister's office and people there guided me (about necessary permission). Even after getting all the permission, I had problems entering the hospital as everyone was scared. But gradually things fell in place. I started visiting the hospital a week or two before I started the Archive project. I explained to the staff there everyday about my project and what exactly I was planning to do and my whole process of working. For two weeks I was mortifying both for the woman and her family. But the village was determined to overcome the crisis together and it did. It set an example by extending support to the patient and the petrified family at a time when reports of stigmatisation of frontline workers and patients in the state as well as from other parts of the country were making headlines daily. Eight months on, villagers at Mawtharia have accepted the fact that the pandemic is here to stay for some more time but there is nothing to be afraid of Covid-19, "which is just another affliction". The black-topped road that branches out from the national highway and leads to Mawtharia, located about 22 km from the city, is in a decent condition. The air feels fresh as one reaches Pomlakral. Another 2km and the destination is reached. Like many villages in East Khasi Hills, Mawtharia is clean and eerily silent, with no human being in sight until peeked at houses through the ajar doors. But that day was different. There were guests in the village and a gang of cackling children broke the silence. They were running on the street, without masks and oblivious to the virus that is now showing its many faces in the form of mutants. It felt like the old normal. The headman's wife, Matilda Kurkalang, was seeing off her brother and his family who had come from Shillong after about 10 months. "I could not go to Shillong last year. We are meeting after a long time," said Kurkalang as she bid goodbye to the relatives and settled down to prepare kuzi and betel leaves. She looked askance and smiled when asked to share last year's experience elaborately. "The shmong (village) did not allow anybody to enter during the lockdown. Then the positive case was detected. Initially, all of us got scared and all the village-elders met at the community hall to discuss their course of action. But not for once we thought of discriminating

Need to get organised? Try Bullet Journal

VOX POPULI

By Sanskriti Singh

The secret of getting ahead is getting started. When Ryder Carroll, a digital product designer, created the concept of Bullet Journal, he never thought how it would become an obsession for most who actually use it every day. Though the concept he came up with was quite different from what it looks today, it is a wonderful way for every art lover to stimulate the mind and it is also delightfully useful. Carroll was diagnosed with learning disability early in life and through years of trial and error, he developed a methodology that went far beyond just organisation. Organisation is something we all lack when we have so much going around us. With numerous mails flooding my mailbox each day, it is difficult to keep track of the most important ones and which ones to reply to. And with the pandemic, the tests and assignments filling up my days, I would have gone crazy if not for the journal. Not only aesthetically pleasing, it also is the best way to keep one sane in insane



circumstances. Though I have always maintained a journal, I discovered the wonders of bullet journaling recently when I was struggling to keep track of all the works during the pandemic. The best part is that it is surprisingly flexible in meeting your requirements and it reminds you of all the birthdays which might slip your mind and make some unnecessary pickles! So what is bullet journaling? Though it requires a journal, of course Bullet Journaling is a methodology. It can be best described as a mindful practice disguised as a productivity system. It is a concept designed to help you organise your "what" while you remain mindful of your "why". Every mind must be de-cluttered to find peace. The simplest way of creating a bullet journal is by having an index page, a future log, monthly logs and daily logs. You can migrate your important dates to the next month or the next day as per your requirements. While most people obsessed with rules will give you a long lecture on how this is the only way you can bullet journal, I prefer to differ and so do most lovers of the system. Your journal must be personalised. It works differently for everyone. Some like the pages to be black and white and some love to fill it up with colours and designs. Your requirements might differ from the one who developed the system and so you have to make the system suit yourself. The set-up I create might be useful to me but not to others and so I cannot make it a hard and fast rule but it is important to make it look pretty, though online inspirations can be very intimidating. Second, it keeps everything organised. It will get you out of sticky notes kept in so many different places that it finally gets lost. It lays everything out in the same place. Third, it will always inspire productivity. I hate seeing a task incomplete. If I see that task not struck out, I get it done so I can finally strike it out at once. It is also wonderful to see at the end of your week that you have completed all the work and a Sunday is actually a Sunny-day! Fourth, you get to do everything faster and better. Now that will always leave a good impression on everyone you meet. The actual benefit of bullet journaling is mental. It helps you remove the unnecessary things which cause you trouble. A common question asked is, should you have two different journals, one for work and the other for personal stuff? I would say it is always better to have one journal as the main idea of the journal is to bring together different parts of your life and organise all you "cut the clutter". The time you spend on setting up the



beneficial it can be, let me tell you some serious benefits of the set-up. One, it can be customised as per your need and budget and it is easy to set up. It might feel intimidating to look at the blank pages knowing you have to fill it up but it is not important to make it look pretty, though online inspirations can be very intimidating. Second, it keeps everything organised. It will get you out of sticky notes kept in so many different places that it finally gets lost. It lays everything out in the same place. Third, it will always inspire productivity. I hate seeing a task incomplete. If I see that task not struck out, I get it done so I can finally strike it out at once. It is also wonderful to see at the end of your week that you have completed all the work and a Sunday is actually a Sunny-day! Fourth, you get to do everything faster and better. Now that will always leave a good impression on everyone you meet. The actual benefit of bullet journaling is mental. It helps you remove the unnecessary things which cause you trouble. A common question asked is, should you have two different journals, one for work and the other for personal stuff? I would say it is always better to have one journal as the main idea of the journal is to bring together different parts of your life and organise all you "cut the clutter". The time you spend on setting up the

(The author is a student of Archaeology at Maharaja Sayajirao University)

Sunday Chimes

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MEGHALAYA TIMES | SHILLONG | SUNDAY | JANUARY 10, 2021

The silent worker & steps ahead of time | 2



CommUnity against Covid



Mawtharia remembers being the first contained village in the state & how it remained united

Last April, Mawtharia village under Mylliem CARD block came to the media light after the state's second Covid-19 case was detected there. The entire village, comprising about 100 households, was contained. Micro containment zones were unknown at that time. The 31-year-old woman, then highlighted in news reports as an anonymous patient, had just joined work in Shillong as a domestic help. The experience was mortifying both for the woman and her family. But the village was determined to overcome the crisis together and it did. It set an example by extending support to the patient and the petrified family at a time when reports of stigmatisation of frontline workers and patients in the state as well as from other parts of the country were making headlines daily. Eight months on, villagers at Mawtharia have accepted the fact that the pandemic is here to stay for some more time but there is nothing to be afraid of Covid-19, "which is just another affliction". The black-topped road that branches out from the national highway and leads to Mawtharia, located about 22 km from the city, is in a decent condition. The air feels fresh as one reaches Pomlakral. Another 2km and the destination is reached. Like many villages in East Khasi Hills, Mawtharia is clean and eerily silent, with no human being in sight until peeked at houses through the ajar doors. But that day was different. There were guests in the village and a gang of cackling children broke the silence. They were running on the street, without masks and oblivious to the virus that is now showing its many faces in the form of mutants. It felt like the old normal. The headman's wife, Matilda Kurkalang, was seeing off her brother and his family who had come from Shillong after about 10 months. "I could not go to Shillong last year. We are meeting after a long time," said Kurkalang as she bid goodbye to the relatives and settled down to prepare kuzi and betel leaves. She looked askance and smiled when asked to share last year's experience elaborately. "The shmong (village) did not allow anybody to enter during the lockdown. Then the positive case was detected. Initially, all of us got scared and all the village-elders met at the community hall to discuss their course of action. But not for once we thought of discriminating

against the affected family. It could have been anyone among us," she said in an affectionate tone. The village took fast decision and resolved to help the family as its earning member was infected and taken to Civil Hospital. The headman, Borlick Suhtung, said after praying together in the hall, the villagers felt "a bit relieved". "The girl was in the Shillong house for only three days and this happened. She was anyway not liking it there and longed for home. So she came back as soon as Dr Sallo (Dr John L Sallo Rynthiang was the first victim of Covid-19. He died on April 15. The woman worked as a domestic help in his house) died. She was panic-stricken, crying and the village elders had to calm her down. The next day she was taken to the corona centre," said Borlick, who is a "supplier" at the stone quarries located on the periphery of the village. On the day Sallo died, Chief Minister Conrad Sangma announced that six more persons — family members and helpers of Sallo — tested positive. Among them was the woman from Mawtharia. "We felt pity for her and her family and there was no question of stigmatising. However, the virus was a new thing for us and we did not know what to do," he added. Borlick was at work when the reporter went to meet him. He was with his friends, all from the same village and dorbar members. His friends nodded in agreement when he narrated the plight of the woman's family that was already affected by the lockdown. The woman is also no nameless. She is also not apprehensive about sharing her experience as she was when the reporter had tried to contact her eight months back. Datiplang Sohtun now takes up odd jobs as a casual labourer and sometimes works at the quarry. She lives with her 55-year-old mother Ebika Sohtun and a niece. She was not at home on the day of the lockdown. "I really did not feel any change in my body. I felt as healthy as before the detection of Covid-19," she said. But the fear was intense and the mental pressure was unbearable. "She was worried that she would meet the same fate as Dr Sallo," said Kurkalang. Datiplang's mother was busy with household chores. There was a small concrete house, the cemented walls were colourless. The stench from a nearby pigsty was corrupting the fresh air in the area. "We got so much affection from everyone & all were so concerned. It gave us strength at that time of the crisis. There was help from the government too in the form of supply of essentials," said Ebika. She was still unsure whether to reveal the facts to a stranger, Kurkalang, who is related to the family, assured her that there would be no trouble if she spoke out. The villagers collected money and donated Rs 20,000 to the family. One positive case made the villagers alert and they decided neither to allow locals to go out of the village nor to permit outsiders enter, at least till September. The local Presbyterian church is also closed and is scheduled to open by mid-January. For Ebika, the fear of Covid-19 is yet to recede and she does not want her daughter, who is her second child, to work in Shillong. "She can work in the shmong. And the stone quarry is not bad. It does not affect her health," said the worried mother. Borlick too does not want to go back to Shillong. "No, no, I don't (want to work in Shillong)... I am not really afraid of coming to Shillong but just that I do not have time to visit. I am so caught up with my work in the village," she said when asked about returning to Shillong for livelihood. She informed that her employer's family never called her after she left. Borlick said the village got instructions from the district health officials and nurses at the Covid centre and the villagers acted likewise. "We were asked to quarantine anyone who came in contact with the primary contact (Datiplang) of Dr Sallo and we followed every instruction. In the beginning, government support was not there and the villagers arranged everything. It was a challenging task. Later, we got help. It was a traumatic experience last year. We are looking forward to a peaceful and prosperous new year," said Borlick. Datiplang too has learned to live without fear and reposes her faith in the divine being for any consequence. "It is only God who can take care of us every day. We all are his children. We can only support each other through prayers. It is only through God's miracles. We should never let fear take control of us. He is with us every step of our way," she said.



(Clockwise from top) The young gang runs around the village; the stone quarry where many villagers are casual workers. (Photos MT)

'We still miss him terribly'

The death of Dr John L. Sallo Rynthiang was a great loss for Bethany Hospital. The veteran doctor reportedly got infected from his son-in-law, a pilot who had returned from the US. Following his demise, several questions were raised on public forum about the government's intention in hiding the identity of the primary contact. While in the beginning, the authorities were reluctant to give out the names of the affected persons fearing stigma, they became more liberal with information as months passed by. As eight months pass by and a new year begins with the hope that a vaccine with high efficacy will finally be obtained, Sunday Chimes speaks to Dr Kyntiewlang Sammit, quality manager and spokesperson at Bethany Hospital, about the void left by a senior mentor, the vaccine and the year ahead.



Almost a year on, how do you all as Bethany family remember Dr Sallo? You know our Sir was such a wonderful boss and an individual to work with. All of us in the hospital has risen to the challenges - with flexibility, resilience, courage and a caring heart. As we welcome 2021, first of all let me thank each and every one of my Bethany family for what they have done to weather the pandemic crisis. I would like to recognize in particular our frontline heroes - their commitment and discipline are highly appreciated. It is in times of crisis that heroes are born. In this new year of 2021, as a Bethany family, we want to continue our hospital values of compassion, care and commitment in our service to the community with courage and love. Smooth functioning and delivery of healthcare services is essential to people's lives. In moments like these, as the pandemic continues, our values matter a lot to the people and communities we serve. Any special message you want to convey? First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our patients, well-wishers, families and friends who had stood by us during the pandemic crisis when it first hit us in the state. And my message to all citizens, on behalf of Bethany Hospital, I cannot stress strongly enough how important it is to maintain yourself and your family's health care during the pandemic. We have seen many patients with serious, advanced conditions and illnesses that could have been mitigated had they come to the hospital at the first sign of symptoms. I urge everyone not to delay care, and to maintain preventive and early diagnostic appointments and emergency visits as needed.

A testimonial section featuring two photographs of women. The first is Ebika Sohtun, Mother of Datiplang, with a quote: "We got so much affection from everyone & all were so concerned. It gave us strength. There was help from the government too". The second is Borlick Suhtung, Mawtharia headman, with a quote: "She (Datiplang) was panic-stricken, crying and the village elders had to calm her down. The next day she was taken to the corona centre".

We have an OPEN CANVAS and all you have to do is fill it with your imagination. So send in your paintings, sketches and photographs of handicrafts to sundaychimes mt20@gmail.com. Do not forget to mention your name, age and school/college/institution. The best pick of the week will get Rs 100.

THE FLAWED GOOD MAN



SANSKRITI SINGH

An Ethical and a just man.
A Strong and a brave warrior.
A Radiant and a pure soul.

A true king.

Born to an unwed mother, he was an unwanted child who was pushed away like trash. When you are neglected from birth, there is nothing in your life but misery. He struggled each day to gain respect and recognition from society. He fought the frustrations and ridicule with grace. His life was a living hell, but still he survived. Through all the odds, he fought like a warrior and lived with dignity and honour.

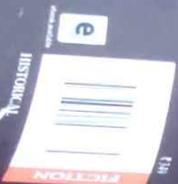
Every door that could lead him to a happy life was shut. He was stuck with people whose ideology he did not agree with, still he kept his promise and did not let them. No one could make him break his promise to Duryodhan. He did not let any friends or social status that could give him some opportunities. His only possession was his talent, he made it his treasure. He lived to become the best archer but died to become the most tragic hero the world ever had.

This story has the hidden details of Karma's childhood, his love for his second wife Supriya, and how he became a student of the most learned men of that era, and much more. This is the emotional saga of the right man on the wrong side.

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