



(Photo by Deepika G)

THE SALTWATER SCROLLS

The Research Scholars' E-Magazine

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Editor's Note

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The first quarter of 2026, is already proving to be a tumultuous time, not just out there in the world, but also, here in Goa. With the Section 39A protests in the backdrop, the unfolding of a series of tragic events here within our very own community over the last year, and the regular struggles and humdrum of the PhD journey, it is a truly exciting time for the third edition of *The Saltwater Scrolls* to be published. When the call first went out, I was not prepared for the range of articles and creative pieces that would find its way into this magazine. But over the last couple of months, with all the contributions that came in, the zine finally came together.

The theme for this edition, “Life”, “Living” and the “Pursuit of Dreams” has emerged from the contributions themselves. This edition is diverse, and probably a bit autobiographical, but that’s exactly what makes it an exciting read. From policy recommendations, to fieldnotes, to travelogues and personal reflections, this edition has it all.

To be able to create, or turn our talents toward our creative pursuits is a privilege in a world where metrics, and quantifiable variables decide the worth and value of our outputs. But humans are not tied to their outputs. This magazine has been a growing space for all of us here, who have chosen to voice ourselves, creatively.

I am thankful to every contributor, for trusting me with their creative capacity. I am truly grateful for the faith that Prof. Rayson Alex placed in me, to edit this magazine. Moreover, I am also very thankful to have the entire team at the media lab. of BITS Goa, behind us. Together, we hope that you enjoy this edition of *The Saltwater Scrolls*.
Happy reading folks!!

Utsarjana Mutsuddi

Life



(Photo by Raina Thomas)

A Report on Young Researchers' Conference (YRC) 2026

Aranya Laxmi Shekhawat
From the organising committee of YRC '26



(Photo by Aranya Laxmi Shekhawat)

The Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) Research Forum of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences hosted its second annual Young Researchers' Conference (YRC) 2026 on 19th and 20th February at Birla Institute of Technology and Science Pilani, K K Birla Goa Campus. The conference was titled "From Conflict to Thriving: Critical Responses on Re-thinking Marginalities." It was conceptualized and executed entirely by the doctoral scholars of the HSS Research forum, but it would not have been possible without the scholarship and financial contributions of the key stakeholders, namely, the HSS Department, the Participants, and the Expert panel.

In academia, we often work within focused spaces with our data, our theories, and our texts. Conferences like these remind us that knowledge is fundamentally collective. YRC 2026 was envisioned as a space for discourse on marginality across social, cultural, political, and organizational contexts. The aim was to examine texts, communities, methodologies, theory, and praxis in ways that make research more reflexive and responsive to the representation of marginalized groups and to the concept of marginality itself. This was achieved by bringing together early-career doctoral scholars and interdisciplinary researchers for two days of reflective dialogue and intellectual exchange. We observed that participants were not limited to

PhD scholars but also included bachelor's students, a distinguishing feature of the conference that created an enriching academic environment where researchers at all stages of life engaged directly. We were fortunate to have a few attendees who came to broaden their perspective on the topic. The conference aimed to rethink how marginality is conceptualized, represented, and addressed across academic disciplines.

The conference featured Panel discussions on both days, 28 research paper presentations, and 3 expert plenary sessions. It was truly interdisciplinary in scope, covering areas like gender studies, psychology, film studies, climate studies, international relations, English literature, non-human forms of marginality, and methodological interventions to understand and respond to marginality.

Day One: 19th February

Day 1 started with an immensely powerful panel discussion with three academicians and practitioners of research: Prof. Shilpa Pandit, Associate Professor at the School of Arts and Sciences, Ahmedabad University; Prof. Jenia Mukherjee, Associate Professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the IIT Kharagpur; and Prof. Chandan Bose, Associate Professor in the Department of Liberal Arts at the IIT Hyderabad. The panel was moderated by our very own Mythreyi Kumaraswamy, and her powerful introduction set the stage for a discussion of the ontological and epistemological aspects of marginality research. In the introduction, she began by highlighting her own positionality as a moderator, which was highly appreciated by the audience. We believe that acknowledgment of positionality is essential when researching marginalities of any kind.

Professor Bose's response, which came through his experience with research and practice, to a question around the philosophical underpinnings of marginality research that resonated with most of us was this powerful and grounded line: 'The goal was to make a dent in the discourse.' Professor Chandan's work expands on critical conversations on heritage, identity, and contemporary social life in India and thoughtfully bridges craft production with emerging inquiries into queer sexuality, intimacy, relationality, and transgender health. Professor Jenia's field experience for the ENGAGE4Sunderbans project showed that 'coping because of lack' is not to be misunderstood with 'thriving in adverse circumstances.' The panel discussion was an enriching experience for an interdisciplinary audience. Moreover, it demonstrated the growing depth of research in this field.

The day was followed by research presentations that were thematically mapped over the following themes: researching reflexivity, critical theories, and methodological interventions in researching marginalities, precarious eco-relations foregrounding resource vulnerability and non-human marginalities, the depiction of socio-politically and culturally marginalized groups in literature, cultural studies, and film studies, violence, silencing, delegitimization, and the available tools to address these issues, and the national unfolding of marginality.

We were fortunate to have sessions with experts, including Prof. Shilpa, a trained psychologist whose work lies at the intersection of psychology, culture, and social transformation, who bridged current topics of importance, such as indigenization in research, individual health and science, AI, and the way forward. The day ended with a talk by Prof. Chandan on his case-study experience, process, challenges, and way forward.

Day Two: 20th February

After a successful day 1 of the conference, day 2 began with an opening session by Prof. Jenia, who gave the audience a visual walk-through of her research team's work on one of the islands in the Sundarbans. She highlighted the challenges and solutions that arise during the process of doing participatory research work. Prof. Jenia is a transdisciplinary scholar of water-society relations, bridging urban environmental history, political ecology, and hydrosocial transformations across deltas, wetlands, and coastal regions.

The day continued with research presentations by the participants around themes such as caste, language and structural marginalities, marginality in gender dichotomies and space, migration/displacement and border politics, digital spaces and new forms of exclusion, epistemic justice, and marginality representation in literature and visual culture.

The closing ceremony comprised of a panel discussion underscoring that “re-imagining” is not merely theoretical but a call to rethink methodologies, voices, and the ethics of representation in research. It featured Prof. Anu K. Anthony, Asawari Nayak, and Utsarjana Mutsuddi. The main highlight was the contrasting reflective view because of the varied nature of fieldwork: “Not all data is research data.” The diversity of approaches demonstrated how marginality intersects with identity, geography, class, and institutional power. The discussion led the researchers in the room to reflect on methodological challenges, ethical dilemmas in fieldwork, and the responsibilities of working with marginalized communities. The discussion piqued the interest of a budding

researcher in her bachelor's who wanted to know an applied way of doing research in English Literature without parting ways with her field. The Q&A sessions over the course of two days were particularly dynamic, marked by thoughtful questions and collaborative discussion. Tea breaks and lunches became focal points for extended conversations beyond formal presentations and panels.

As our concept note explained, “marginality is along a spectrum: from dispossession, oppression, and invisibilization on one side to resilience, agency, and creation of new forms of life on the other. The continuous cycle of those pushed to the edges of dominant systems and the shifting power relations that continue to create such edges. Marginalities may be social, cultural, political, economic, spatial, or epistemic. It is not a static category; it is lived, contested, and redefined through histories of exclusion. Scholars in the Humanities and Social Sciences increasingly recognize that understanding these realities requires moving beyond universalist, elitist, and homogenizing paradigms. We need to instead adopt research tools and frameworks that are intersectional, inclusive, and accountable. This widened their lens to include non-human and more-than-human forms of marginality.”



(Photo by Aranya Laxmi Shekhawat)



(Photo by Aranya Laxmi Shekhawat)

Conclusion

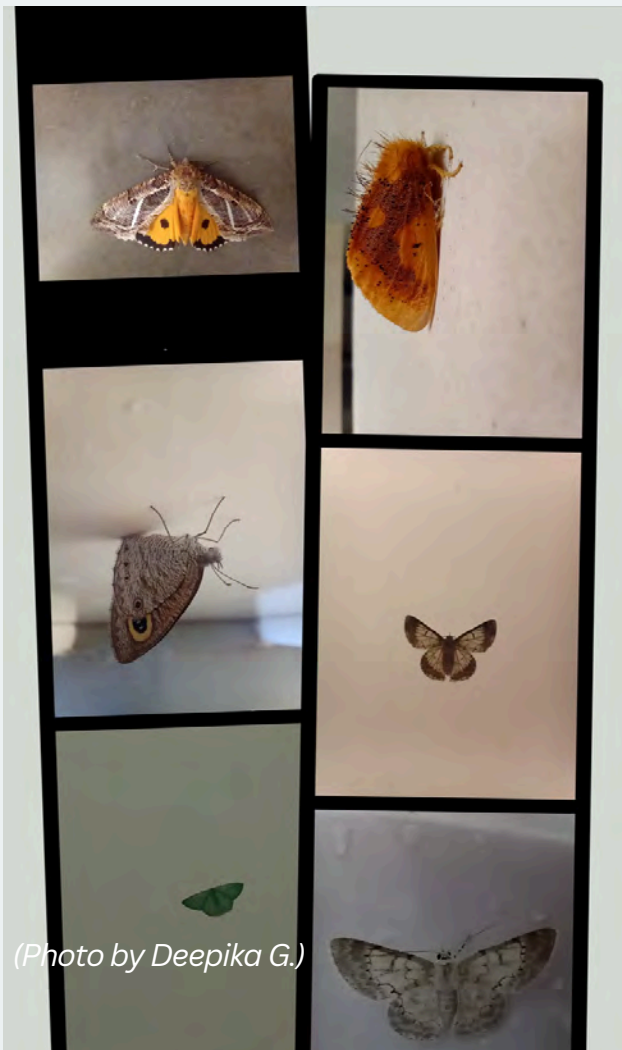
YRC 2026 successfully created a platform for dialogue, exchange, and learning. The enthusiasm and engagement of participants reflected a shared commitment to advancing the field. We received almost 200 abstracts, a number that far exceeded our expectations, but we could shortlist only 50 due to various constraints. We received 32 final submissions of papers from our participants, with most of them gracing us with their intellectual contributions and exchanges on the 19th and 20th of February. As a member of the organizing committee, it was a heartwarming and satisfying experience to witness months of preparation culminate in two days of academic engagement and knowledge exchange. We are encouraged by the positive feedback on the organization and management of the conference and look forward to building on this momentum in future editions. Special appreciation is extended to the participants for trusting us as their platform to showcase their research work; the departmental support; experts from other institutes; HSS faculty members for being session chairs and reviewers; department scholars for volunteering; and the audiovisual team for their continued presence. Their collaborative labor was instrumental in delivering a seamless experience for everyone present. The conference fostered meaningful conversations across generations of scholars, reaffirming the conference's objective. It was our privilege to help facilitate this all-important conversation.

Visit by Fulbright Fellow, Ms. Mayukha Dyta

Utsarjana Mutsuddi

On the 26th of April, 2025, our department hosted a lecture by Ms. Mayukha Dyta, titled, *The Fulbright: My Project and Journey*. Mayukha was visiting Goa for her fieldwork in a research project that focuses on how medical socialization differs in India from the US. Prior to her Fulbright journey, she published a groundbreaking paper on the presence of BK channels in exosomes. She is a Bachelor's student in the US, at the Ohio State University Wexner Medical center, where she is pursuing pre-medicine and sociology/anthropology degrees. She is interested in understanding how medicine is approached or taught in different cultures. Her work, unique as it is, felt like an innovative revelation to us who had the privilege of listening. There are certain cultural practices that we never interpret as unique to us, until a non-native cultural observer points it out to us. Her work did just that by focusing on how doctors in India have to be trained to deal with alternative indigenous medicine practices.

Her talk was structured into two parts, her project and her journey. Her project, in her words, was about developing a deeper understanding of how medical socialization works in India. To outline this, she told us the story of the 5 mysterious herbs. The story went something like this. In a remotely located medical camp, somewhere in Goa, a doctor was approached by a patient. The patient had a mouth ulcer, but was in the process of chewing a bag of herbs. The doctor made him spit that lot out, and an amalgamation of five mysterious herbs popped out. When asked why he was chewing them, the patient replied, saying that his village medical practitioner had advised him to chew them. A heated debate followed among the students and the medical staff about what exactly the five mysterious herbs were, but to no avail. Mayukha used this as the hook, to explain how she was approaching her topic whereby she was looking at how pluralistic medical socialization works in different cultural contexts. She outlined that she was trying to understand the impact of such medical socialization, whereby alternative medicine practices have to be respected by doctors practicing scientific medical practices, and what such socialization looks like. She spoke to us about the number of interviews she took, how she was approaching her interviewees, and her post-fieldwork practices like entries into her codebook.



(Photo by Deepika G.)

This was all part of her Fulbright Project, where she is focusing on an anthropological-ethnographical research project to understand how pluralistic patient populations affect diagnosis and treatment/continuum of care.

The talk also focused on what inspired her to do what she is doing, and how she arrived at the topics she is working with. Her Indian origin had played an important role in her capacity to formulate this understanding because she grew up hearing stories of epistemically diverse patient populations where alternative medicine was practiced and widely accepted. She allowed that background to inform her scientific temperament and came up with a unique gap in knowledge that she is very well suited to fill in. Before her Fulbright journey, she has also served as a youth delegate to the UN UNITE2030 programme, and is the president of multiple clubs and student organisations. These milestones helped her in her journey to landing the Fulbright Fellowship.

For us at the department, this lecture was a peek into what it takes to become a Fulbright scholar, the league that the fellowship is looking to attract, and the kind of projects that are prioritized in the funding. To me personally, the lecture left me ruminating on what medical socialization really is, and how the lack of qualified doctors in remote areas, probably adds to the pluralistic medical practices in India. This talk was uniquely positioned to enable a better understanding of the kind of work funding agencies like the United States India Education Foundation looks to support. For scholars in the department that aspire to be Fulbright Fellows, this talk served as a goldmine of an opportunity to learn positioning, pitch, and the deliverables required at this league.

Financing the Future: Reforming Green Credit Mechanisms for India's Net-Zero Vision

Jestin Johny, Vaishali Ojha, Vimal Mistry, and Hiren Gohil

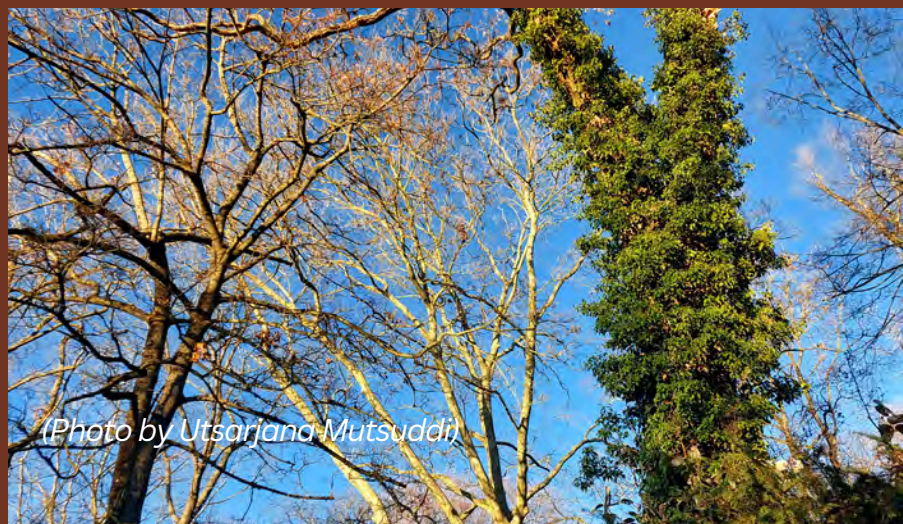
1. Introduction: Finance as the Fulcrum of Sustainability

India's commitment to climate action is both ambitious and urgent. As articulated in its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), the country will require an estimated INR 11 lakh crore (~USD 170 billion) annually through 2030 to meet its climate goals. Yet, beyond this financial magnitude lies a deeper challenge, the systemic integration of green finance into India's financial architecture.

The transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy cannot be driven by policy and technology alone. Financial institutions, especially banks, must step up from being passive facilitators to proactive enablers of sustainable development. The shift demands a fundamental reimagining of green credit, aligning banking operations with environmental goals and embedding sustainability into the core of credit allocation decisions.

According to a recent Survey on Climate Risk and Sustainable Finance conducted among leading Indian banks, regulators increasingly expect financial institutions to anchor the green transition. Banks must not only redirect finance toward low-carbon sectors but also integrate climate-related risk assessments into their decision-making.

However, this transition is far from straightforward. India faces a complex landscape marked by regulatory gaps, market hesitations, and institutional capacity constraints. As we reimagine green credit for a sustainable India, we must first understand the state of play, the barriers, and the pathways forward.



2. Where Do We Stand? India's Green Finance Landscape

Despite the challenges, India's sustainable finance ecosystem is evolving rapidly, with significant momentum in green bonds, renewable energy lending, and sustainable debt issuance.

Key Green Finance Statistics (as of 2024–25):

Sustainable Debt Issuance in India

Indicator	Total cumulative sustainable debt issuance	Share of Green Debt in total issuance	Annual investment needed to meet NDC targets	Outstanding bank credit to renewable energy	Green loans disbursed by IREDA	Green bond issuance in India (cumulative by 2023)	Number of ESG debt issuances (YTD 2025)
Value	USD 55.9 billion	83%	USD 170 billion/year	₹5,404 crore	₹16,320 crore	~USD 21 billion	9023
Source	Climate Bonds Initiative (2024)	CBI (2024)	Government of India	Reserve Bank of India	PIB (2023)	SEBI/IBEF	SEBI

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While these numbers indicate significant progress, they also underscore the mismatch between capital availability and climate ambition. India's financial system remains largely oriented towards conventional credit models, lacking the institutional maturity and frameworks necessary for scalable, inclusive green lending.

3. Challenges in Mainstreaming Green Credit

Reimagining green credit requires a structural shift in defining, assessing, and supporting sustainability within credit systems, particularly for Indian banks facing multiple challenges. Policy and regulatory gaps include a lack of standardised green credit taxonomy and a green rating framework, which fosters greenwashing and undermines investor trust, alongside regulatory reluctance to relax capital requirements without proper climate risk metrics.



Institutional constraints are evident as many banks have not evaluated their climate risk exposure, while training gaps hinder effective appraisals by credit professionals. Market barriers, such as high initial costs and extended project payback periods, render green projects less bankable, compounded by the absence of clear Key Impact Indicators (KIIs) for environmental benefits and limited domestic ESG performance data. Lastly, social and financial inclusion issues are prevalent, as green credit seldom reaches micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), rural businesses, or marginalized communities, with a notable absence of decentralized green financial solutions limiting wider participation in sustainability efforts.

Recent Initiatives to Promote Green Credit in India

While challenges persist in mainstreaming green credit, India has taken several notable steps toward building an enabling environment. Both government ministries and regulatory institutions have introduced new frameworks, policies, and financing programs aimed at embedding sustainability into financial decision-making. These efforts represent early but important movements toward reorienting the Indian financial ecosystem toward green objectives.

The table below highlights some of the most significant initiatives introduced in recent years, outlining their scope, implementation mechanisms, and institutional leadership.

Table 1: Initiatives to Promote Green Credit in India

Initiative	Description	Year Launched	Key Features	Source
Green Credit Programme (GCP)	Market-based mechanism to incentivize voluntary environmental actions (e.g. afforestation, water conservation, waste mgmt.)	2023	Tradable green credits- Focus on individual, community, and corporate participation- Supports India's LiFE mission	MoEFCC (2023). Green Credit Programme Notification
EcoMark Scheme (LiFE Labeling)	Product eco-labelling system to promote sustainable consumption	Recast in 2023	Labels for environmentally friendly products- Rebranded under "LiFE" (Lifestyle for Environment)- Supports responsible consumerism	MoEFCC (2023). EcoMark under LiFE
RBI's Climate Risk & Sustainable Finance Framework	Framework to integrate climate-related risk into financial regulation	Initial paper in 2022, updates through 2024	Climate stress testing- ESG risk governance- Discussion on green lending thresholds (like PSL norms)	RBI (2022). Discussion Paper on Climate Risk
SEBI's ESG Disclosure Framework (BRSR)	Mandatory ESG disclosures by top listed companies	Phased from 2021; made mandatory in 2023	Top 1,000 listed firms must file BRSR reports- Enhances transparency & ESG compliance- Supports sustainable investing	SEBI (2023). BRSR Framework
IREDA Green Lending	Dedicated green credit institution for clean energy & infrastructure	Operational since 1987; major scale-up in 2022-23	₹16,320 crore disbursed in FY 2022-23- Focus on renewable energy, energy efficiency- Plays a catalytic role in project financing	IREDA (2023). PIB Press Release
SIDBI Green Finance for MSMEs	Green lending programs to support energy-efficient tech adoption in MSMEs	Ongoing	Concessional loans to MSMEs- Supports sustainability tech adoption- Aligns with SIDBI's role in inclusive green growth	SIDBI (2023). Green Finance Schemes

These initiatives reflect a shifting policy paradigm where sustainability is no longer viewed as an externality, but as a core strategic priority. For instance, the Green Credit Programme introduces market-based incentives for environmental stewardship, an innovative approach in the Indian context. Meanwhile, the RBI's sustainable finance roadmap signals that climate risks are now being treated as systemic financial risks, warranting integration into stress testing and credit risk evaluation.

However, these efforts are still evolving, and their impact will depend on how effectively they are implemented, scaled, and linked with broader institutional reform. This makes it imperative to not only support these initiatives but to accelerate structural reforms that can address deeper systemic issues and unlock the full potential of green credit.

5. Reimagining Green Credit: From Policy to Practice

A comprehensive reimagining of green credit in India necessitates systemic changes rather than mere pilot projects. This reimagining includes six key solutions designed to tackle identified challenges effectively.

1. Development of a National Green Taxonomy: Establishing a legally recognised green taxonomy that aligns with global standards such as the EU Taxonomy and ICMA Principles is essential. This will standardise the definition of a green activity, enhance investor confidence, and mitigate the risks of greenwashing. A centralised classification system will aid banks and rating agencies in accurately labelling loans and bonds classified as green.

2. Creation of a Green Rating System: Similar to conventional credit ratings, India should implement a Green Rating Framework to evaluate the environmental performance and sustainability of various projects. Such a transparent system would incentivize impactful projects while filtering out less credible or misleading green claims. Administration of this framework could involve organizations like CRISIL or ICRA, in collaboration with regulatory bodies such as SEBI and RBI.

3. Mandating Green Lending Quotas: Introducing minimum green lending targets within the existing Priority Sector Lending (PSL) framework is crucial. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) could initiate this through a phased approach, starting with a 5% target for green lending, which would gradually increase. This will facilitate the integration of green finance into the mainstream operations of banks.

4. Building Capacity within Financial Institutions: As green finance is a relatively novel area for many Indian banks and Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs), launching a Green Finance Capacity Building Programme is necessary. This program, supported by RBI and prominent banking institutes like NIBM and CAFRAL, would include training on climate risk assessment, ESG analysis, product innovation, and impact measurement.

5. Incentivizing Green Financial Products: Banks should be encouraged to develop and market various green financial products, such as green home loans, sustainable infrastructure financing, and green credit lines for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Offering tax incentives or risk mitigation guarantees via entities like SIDBI and NIIIF could further spur this initiative.

6. Fostering Public-Private Partnerships and Blended Finance: It is important to establish platforms that enable blended finance, which combines concessional public funding with private capital. Initiatives such as green municipal bonds can be promoted, allowing state governments to secure funds aimed at enhancing local climate resilience and



infrastructure. Public finance institutions like PFC, REC, and IREDA can play a pivotal role in de-risking these projects.

These solutions hence provide a comprehensive approach to the integration of green finance within India's financial system, promoting sustainable development while addressing both environmental and social needs.

6. India in the Global Green Finance Landscape

India's push toward sustainable finance is not happening in isolation. Across the globe, financial systems are being reshaped to align with Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles, with green credit becoming a central tool in climate finance.

Emerging Global Norms

- The EU Green Taxonomy, Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation (SFDR), and Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) have become the de facto global benchmarks for climate-related financial governance.
- Institutions like the IMF's Resilience and Sustainability Trust (RST) are channeling capital into low-carbon development, especially for emerging economies like India.
- Central banks, under the Network for Greening the Financial System (NGFS), are incorporating climate risks into monetary and financial stability frameworks.



India's Strategic Opportunity

India has the regulatory momentum, market potential, and global credibility** to emerge as a regional leader in sustainable finance. By aligning domestic frameworks with international standards and pushing for robust implementation, India can:

- Tap into global green capital pools
- Attract long-term ESG-focused investors
- Position itself as a South-South knowledge hub for green credit and taxonomy development

With platforms like the International Solar Alliance, India already leads global conversations on clean energy. Green credit reform can further elevate its role in shaping the financial contours of a sustainable global economy.

7. Conclusion: From Green Intent to Green Impact

India's financial institutions stand at a critical juncture. As the country accelerates its climate commitments, aiming for net-zero emissions by 2070, the transformation of credit systems will be central to achieving its goals.

The current landscape shows both promise and gaps. While sustainable debt markets and regulatory frameworks are gaining traction, banks and NBFCs still face structural, operational, and capacity-related challenges. The lack of a green taxonomy, absence of a rating system, and limited green financial product development restrict scale and inclusion.

But the path forward is not a blank slate. India already has the building blocks: regulatory interest, market experimentation, and an emerging body of green finance data. What it now requires is coordination, clarity, and courage.

Policymakers must prioritize:

- A national green finance roadmap with clear lending targets
- Taxonomies and incentives for green projects
- ESG-aligned public finance institutions that can de-risk green investments

Banks, in turn, must:

- Invest in climate risk assessment tools
- Redesign credit models for green projects
- Shift toward long-term value creation, not just short-term returns

Lastly, there is an urgent need for a robust green rating framework to ensure transparency and combat greenwashing. Without it, the sector risks losing credibility before it gains scale.

Green financing is no longer a niche, it's a necessity. In the face of a rapidly changing climate and global financial norms, India's ability to reimagine its credit system could determine whether it leads or lags in the 21st-century economy. The seeds of this transformation have been sown, what we need now is the will to nurture them into systemic change.

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Of Self and Sound: Subhash Y. Kamalkar on Ghumat and the Goan Identity

Deepika G.

The resonance of the Ghumat, Goa's heritage instrument, is more than just a rhythmic accompaniment; it is the heartbeat of the land. The Ghumat, as both an art form and medium, transcends religious and social boundaries, through shared auditory history.

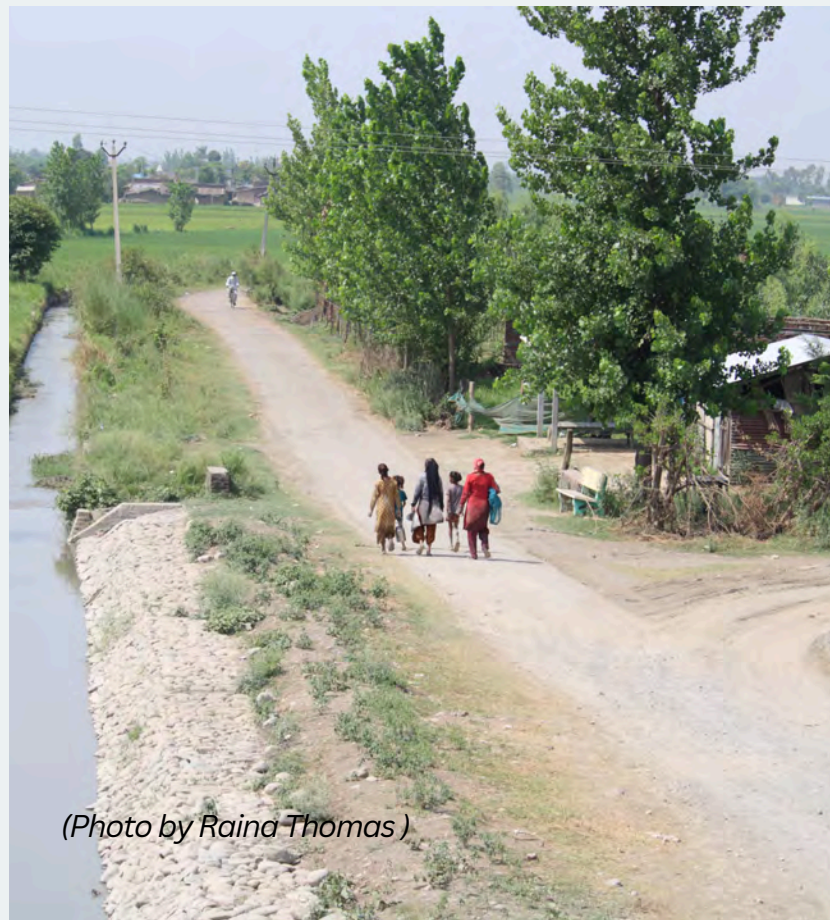
Watch the podcast:

[Click here](#)



or Scan here

Subhash Kamalkar, a dedicated practitioner of this traditional percussion instrument, shares his take on how a clay pot became the definitive symbol of Goan identity. We discuss the intricate process of its creation—from the shaping of the earthenware to the evolution of the membrane—and its vital role in everything from the Ganesh Arati to the soulful Catholic Mando. Kamalkar shares his thoughts on keeping traditions alive in a fast-paced, changing world and reflects on the instrument's power to unite through music. Tune in to this podcast to hear Subhash Kamalkar demonstrate the "thak" that defines the Goan spirit.



(Photo by Raina Thomas)

Living



(Photo by Raina Thomas)

A Pinch of Mixture

Mythrei K.

Arriving Nowhere

My fieldwork roots me in this land and its people through schools. I had been looking at the UDISE+ (Unified District Information System for Education Plus) map of government schools in Goa and comparing it with development parameters mapped on amche.in, when I noticed this school on the map, remotely set, away from both the beaches and the Western Ghats. It lay somewhere in the hinterlands of Goa, a place no stereotypical tourist would deliberately visit, on the upper reaches of the Zuari River, in a small village that primarily based its income on agriculture. A primary school, interestingly Kannada medium, catering to the children of migrant labourers from the driest and poorest regions of Northern Karnataka.

I shall not name the village or the school to preserve confidentiality, or use any real names. This story, I hope, will blossom beautifully from anonymity and crystallise into theoretical reflections.



(Photo by Raina Thomas)



(Photo by Utsarjana Mutsuddi)

My intent was to hunt down school nutrition gardens in Goan government schools. As I parked my bike on the dusty footpath beside the rusty school gate, my first glance at the dilapidated tiled-roof building told me to perhaps set aside my research motives and simply lend myself to learning. The headmistress (HM), a petite, no-nonsense kind of woman, briskly inquired into my purpose there. I introduced myself, explained my research topic, and indicated my willingness to help the school in any small way I could.

“I’m from BITS Goa”, I said, while watching her eyebrows rise to meet her hairline. “How did you even know this school exists?” she asked. “What school garden did you hope to find here? Look here! The school building is so small that we conduct classes for grades 6–8 in the mornings and grades 1–5 in the afternoons. There are three teachers and we are particularly short-staffed today. On top of everything I have to upload some nonsense school data on an online government portal that is way moodier than I am. What do you want here?”

I watched in wonder, as her Konkani mannerisms flowed into the English tirade. Always energetic about teaching, I immediately volunteered to

substitute for the missing teacher if she were willing to trust me with the children. The involvement of the public in public schools in India is quite common. Always short-staffed and struggling for resources, any street-smart HM will quickly and efficiently allocate work to those willing. My volunteering attitude on this first visit was informed by such experiences spanning a decade of visits to government schools across the east and west coasts of our country.

She took in my studious glasses and glaring red bindi and asked me, “Aapke bacche hain kya?” To which I responded with, “Nahi ma’am, agar aap manzoor karein to aaj ke liye ye bacche mere ban jayenge.” (Translation: No, but if you permit, these children will become mine for the day) She took a prompt decision and handed me a chalk and duster and told me to engage Section A.

Onwards to Bedlam

Section A was beautifully decorated with charts, posters, and art projects; sunlight filtered down from a glass patch in the tiled roof, dust motes dancing on the heads of little ones. Amidst this aesthetic, the children reigned in chaos. Soon enough I realised that the chaos appeared to be centred around a pink backpack with a Barbie doll image plastered across its surface. This instance of commodity fetishism among six-year-olds had turned quite violent. There were two boys pulling the bag in different directions and a girl, whose hair was spilling out of her little braids, was in tears, hiccupping intermittently. Behind this ever-so-chaotic scene were other children, some of whom were yelling their support to those pulling the bag, while a few others crowded around the crying girl, unsure of what to do. My presence went almost unnoticed until a boy came running to me yelling in Kannada, “Miss... miss... look, they are fighting!” He used a wooden stool to reach above a metal bookshelf and groped atop it until a two-foot stick manifested in his little hand. Supple casuarina, still green, ideal for a quick lash that would cause a burning sensation rather than open bruises.

He got down and tried to hand me the stick.
“Hit them, miss! Hit me too if I do wrong things!”

My heart shattered on many levels. First, a strange adult was immediately assumed to be an authoritarian figure. Second, corporal punishment had been so deeply internalised that the student was sure submitting to it was better than waiting for authority to initiate.

I gently took the stick away. The whipping sound of its potential lash echoed a memory from two decades ago, when my grandfather would make us find, pluck, and de-leaf the perfect stick for a beating. If it were anything less than perfect, the one “he” chose would really hurt. Hence, we would always run to a nearby Casuarina, plucking a supple green branch, assuring ourselves a few minutes of burning rather than a few hours of pain. I placed the stick back on the bookshelf.

Several others in the class had begun to notice my presence and were starting to distance themselves from the central fight. Two girls even took the crying one to the back of the class. She broke away and came back to the bag yelling,
“It’s mine, ma’am! It’s mine! They are ruining it!”

I knelt beside the bag and placed both my hands on the children’s tiny warm ones.
“Will you give me the bag now? Please? I’ll give it back soon. I just want to know what’s happening. We will all take the bag and put it on the teacher’s table till we sort this mess out, shall we?”

A reluctant chorus of “Yes, miiiiiss...” made the three musketeers drop the bag. Two dissolved into tears while the third huffed angrily.

“What happened?” I asked, turning to the boy who had tried to hand me the stick.

“Oh miss! Kittu got mixture today to eat with lunch. She showed it to all of us and kept it in the bag. Sujan wanted to steal it, but Karthik is Kittu’s brother, so he wouldn’t let anyone steal it. Kittu thought they were both fighting about the bag and came to pull it, but the handle hit her head and she started crying,” he wheezed in one breath.

“Oh! Sujan, did you really want to steal the mixture?”

“No, miss. She showed it to everyone. That means she wants to share it later, right? I just wanted some now because I’m really hungry. I asked her, but she said she wouldn’t give it to anyone. Before I could say anything, Karthik came running and hit me. Look, he hit me on my back. My shirt is all dirty.”

His shirt was indeed dirty, and several others nodded. Playground dust on Karthik’s hands, knees, and bare feet corroborated the narrative.

“Miss, miss...” called Karthik. “He pulled Kittu’s hair when she said no, and she yelled for me. That’s why I came running and hit him.”

More children nodded, and Sujan suddenly looked down, caught in shame.

“Did you pull her hair?”

“Yes, miss,” he mumbled.

“Do you think it hurt her?”

Suddenly, almost like he was hit by a sudden realisation, he turned to Kittu.

“Sorry, kane. Did I hurt you?”

Kittu’s sobs stopped.

“No. I just got startled.”

Sujan patted down her hair and placed the stray bangs behind her ears.

“You are like my sister, no? My sister is smaller than you. I won’t pull your hair again, okay?”

One problem down. With a simple acknowledgement of honesty, and empathy displayed by a seven-year-old who knew he had made a mistake.

I turned to Karthik.

“Do you think it was okay to hit him?”

“Yes, miss. He attacked my sister.”

Soon, we moved into a collective discussion making mode. Stick figures on the blackboard, tallies of yes and no, hesitant children glancing at the invisible stick, assurances from me that no one would be hit, and I watched as reason slowly unfolded. Anger, protection, retaliation, safety, all discussed, debated, and soon we were moving towards addressing the actual problems.

Karthik eventually admitted, “I got angry that Sujan was hitting Kittu and wanted to hit him back.” “And did that anger protect her?”, I asked. “No, miss,” he replied. Suddenly he was crying, so I held him and said to him, “It’s okay to be angry. But if you want to protect your sister, you have to first make sure she is safe. Revenge won’t make her safe.”

After things had started cooling down, the apologies followed. Muddy shirts were forgiven. Hair-pulling was acknowledged. However, interest in the discussion was waning, because conversations are boring, and conflicts are fun to watch. Entertainment for all ages, 3 to 103. So, I decided to steer the conversation somewhere more reflective.

“Now raise your hands,” I asked, “who all think we can protect by being angry or hitting?”



(Photo by Raina Thomas)

The entire class, without hesitation, raised their hands.

This is where I am going to step up as a writer, and stop telling this story because my growing scholarly brain is desperate to meta-analyse, intellectualise, and reflect.

Notes for the self and the other (You dear reader, you)

Democratic reasoning among children aged 5-8 (I learnt later that classes 1-3 had been clubbed into one section for the day to help with management) is often assumed in educational discourse to be both feasible and desirable, grounded in the belief that young learners can participate meaningfully in dialogue, shared decision-making, and moral deliberation. However, Piaget's developmental psychology theory complicates this assumption. From a Piagetian perspective, children in this age group are transitioning from the preoperational stage to the early concrete operational stage, a period characterized by emerging but still fragile logical reasoning abilities, persistent egocentrism, and difficulty coordinating multiple perspectives simultaneously (Piaget, 1952). Thus, theoretically there is a tension between normative democratic aspirations and the cognitive-moral assumed abilities of early childhood. Further, Kohlberg's theory of moral development reinforces this interpretation, locating most children in this age range within the preconventional level of moral reasoning, particularly Stage 1 (obedience and punishment orientation) and Stage 2 (instrumental-relativist orientation), where moral judgments are guided by avoidance of punishment or pursuit of personal benefit rather than concern for fairness, rights, or collective welfare (Kohlberg, 1984). From this standpoint, the assumption that young children can reason democratically in a fully normative sense risks projecting adult moral capacities onto developmentally constrained agents.

It is true that I did slightly project my moral capacity in the way I framed my questions. Yet, this does not render democratic practices in early childhood education illusory or misguided. For each prompt made them think and arrive at their own actions. Similarly, both Piaget and Kohlberg imply that moral and cognitive development is constructed through social interaction, conflict, and guided participation. Piaget emphasized that peer interaction and cooperative problem-solving are critical conditions for the gradual emergence of autonomous reasoning, as children encounter differing viewpoints and learn to negotiate rules through reciprocity rather than authority (Piaget, 1932). Kohlberg too argued that exposure to moral dilemmas and participatory social environments can stimulate upward movement within moral stages, even if children cannot yet fully articulate principled justifications (Kohlberg, 1984).

The reality of democratic reasoning amongst 5-8-year-olds, therefore, is not in expecting mature deliberation, but in cultivating the developmental preconditions for it. Creating opportunities for voice, sharing rule-making, and guiding dialogue that scaffold children's emerging capacities, as evidenced in this narrative. Democratic reasoning at this stage is biological and relational rather than abstract and principled, serving as a formative process through which children gradually move from authority-bound compliance toward reciprocal understanding. Recognizing this developmental reality allows educators to reconcile democratic ideals with psychological realism, framing democracy in early education not as an achieved state but as a developmental trajectory intentionally nurtured over time.

Post-Script

Amidst everything, Kittu and Sujana did not forget about the mixture. Kittu gave me the mixture at the end of the class and said, "Miss, you take it. I don't want to fight."

I told her maybe she could put it back in her bag and take it home. She wanted it gone. She pressed it into my hand.

I gave it to the HM, who laughed at my story and lovingly served every student a pinch of mixture during the mid-day meal.

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Of Home and Belonging

Parul S.

Watch Parul's original recitation of her poems.

[Click here](#)



or Scan here

After a long period of mild illnesses traversing through, I sat down this January, a slight nip in the air, and finished reading 8 books in 20 days. Something I would have expected my 16 year old self to accomplish forgoing everything else. Perhaps in months of languishing away, all this intention and force of being was being harboured. The 8 books, not by design, were about women—women and domesticity, home, a sense of belonging, place attachments of mothers and daughters, of women fighting, resisting—in silence and with fervour. I sit here and wonder about all these narratives: women and homes they create, rear and belong to.

A little bit of space. A room of one's own. A window, a yard with seemingly perennial rose bush, an almond grove slowly perishing in want of water, mango trees laden with fruit, the town of your childhood. Maybe some of it is nostalgia for a sepia tinted past or a hunkering for something simpler. Or maybe it is a big gaping wound floating rootless into a world navigated via currency. The common career goal of a generation almost - a farm in the foothills of mountains, is symptomatic of an identity slipping away. A loss of words (and language) when I am asked where am I from. Takes me to Susan Abulhawa's Nahr looking at a room full of people akin to family and thinking "This was where I belonged, but so much of me was still scattered elsewhere." (*In Against the Loveless World*)

That's a place 'Bougainvillea' is from. It is a memory of home - not even my own memory. I moved away from that bougainvillea laden home long before my own memories could carry its remnants. The spot where that creeper laid roots, over the years it has stood barren and I haven't ached for the loss. Only now, I keep a pot of these bright pink paper flowers in my balcony. After my failed attempts at planting a cutting, my mother happened to pick an orphan twig on one of her rare evening walks. It has sprouted into this wild, thorny, unruly bush that I can't even bring myself to trim or tame it to be ornate. The verticality of a potted existence, far away from the possibility of an existence sprawling roots in fertile ground, is pruning enough. This, alone, is a loss of home and a bonsai attempt to belong.

You can access the referenced poem at HSS Media Lab [<link>](#) and Muse India [<https://museindia.com/Home/ViewContentData?arttype=feature&issid=97&menuid=9463>](https://museindia.com/Home/ViewContentData?arttype=feature&issid=97&menuid=9463)



(Photo by Parul S.)

"KaBhumM!!!"

Athira Manoharan



(Photo by Athira Manoharan)

How often are you hunched by the weight of the Albatross hanging around your neck? I could feel him, his almost-dead weight increasing with each second as I sat awkwardly on the bench balanced on the top of two cut bricks, listening to the abject yet unspoken realities of tidal flooding, which affected more than twenty thousand households in Kochi. Ringing in my ears, along with the haunting poetic backdrop of the water installation by Radha Gomaty with verses by Guru composed and sung mellifluously by Kalamandalam Sudheesh, was Dr. Sreeja's affirmation that each Newton I consume enters the coastal homes as a tidal wave. Albatross was 10% alive. He sighed as he listened, and his feathers fluttered softly.

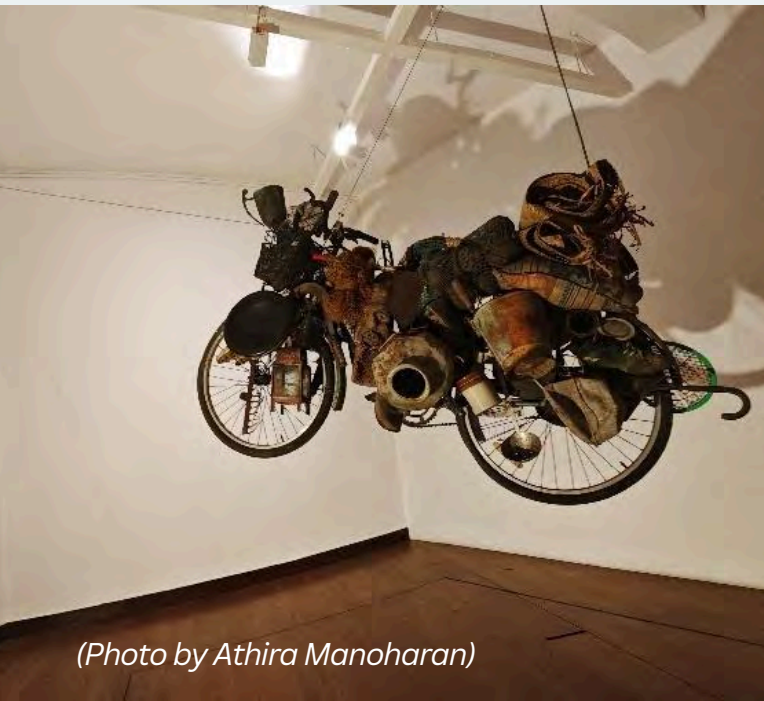
I walked in, and the differently abled Garbie from the box of visiting cards followed me. "Tea break", she said. Garbie, Albatross, and I walked the red carpet with no option to skip or turn a blind eye to the jars of pickled lives. Titled 'Welcome to Kochi', S.Hariharan's works rightly captured the essence of the show. There were no hidden concoctions of abstract meanings. The installation simply screamed from the rooftop, the irony of tidal flood mitigation through sluices made of cast iron. Moving to the left, you find the results of an AI prompt - "explain tidal flooding to me as if I am an eight-year-old", in the form of graphs, maps, and an astonishingly potential sandbox. Contrary to the popular altruistic tendencies to 'speak for the subaltern' the acoustics of the show were perfected to



(Photo by Athira Manoharan)

echo the speech of the subaltern through community mapping, representation, and futuristic mitigation strategies. Can you imagine marking your routine into little square spaces of a calendar following the 'divine' tidings? How democratic is free will, then?

Garbie was chased around by a little ball of black fur, which I later recognized as Bhumkat, martyr&spiritual mascot of "KaBhumM!!!". Now, we must walk through the rest of the show as a colloquium of intra-species speakers. An upcycled doll, a black kitten, an almost dead bird, and a human, the most quintessential audience for the surrealist monotones of Jayasree P G. With AtelierSL25, we walked past the lonely, flooded houses to the inside of a lonely, flooded house. The statistical, alienated giant numbers assumed a skin, smell, and a tongue through the installation. BhumKat sprinted through the moist bricks to perch on the top of a silenced radio. I had my eyes fixed on the clock, where the time was eternally ten to seven... Dear Albatross, that's what I want for you. Still the time. Sweet Albatross, Breathe swiftly till I end my song...



(Photo by Athira Manoharan)

I followed the little black ball of fur upstairs to find myself staring at climate eviction – airborne, and ensembled in action. How many times must a life be packed into the parallel rubrics of a cycle? How long can you survive in the borders of uncertain geometric shapes? Sunil Vallaradam's installation hung in mid-air, soaking in the emergency and helplessness of tidal flood-induced evictions. Contrasting the motionless clock in the *Flooded House* downstairs, time was flying here, with everything considered irreplaceable. I was lost in the performative rendering of Guru's *Ardhanareeswarasthavam* sung by Deepa Palanad and performed by Kathakali Artiste & Social Work Researcher Aarcha Gowri, daughter of the pioneering founder of the first All Women Kathakali Ensemble in Tripunithura, when I noticed that my companions were missing. Panicking, I searched around and caught a glimpse of black fur and white feathers before they disappeared into

the 40-foot world of Maggie. Mounted along three sides was Babitha Rajiv's accordion format magical illustration of J.Devika's Kadalkutty. BhumKat and Albatross made friends with the many characters of the novel whose habitats are equally affected by climate change. Albatross looked more alive than ever as he soared among Diplumari and Vellachi Gladis. The illustration had a rare sense of motion in it, just like the ever-flowing spirit of the ocean. Rest assured, I left them safely with Kaliyapooppan and Albedo to search for Garbie. I found her meditating in front of a large fish.

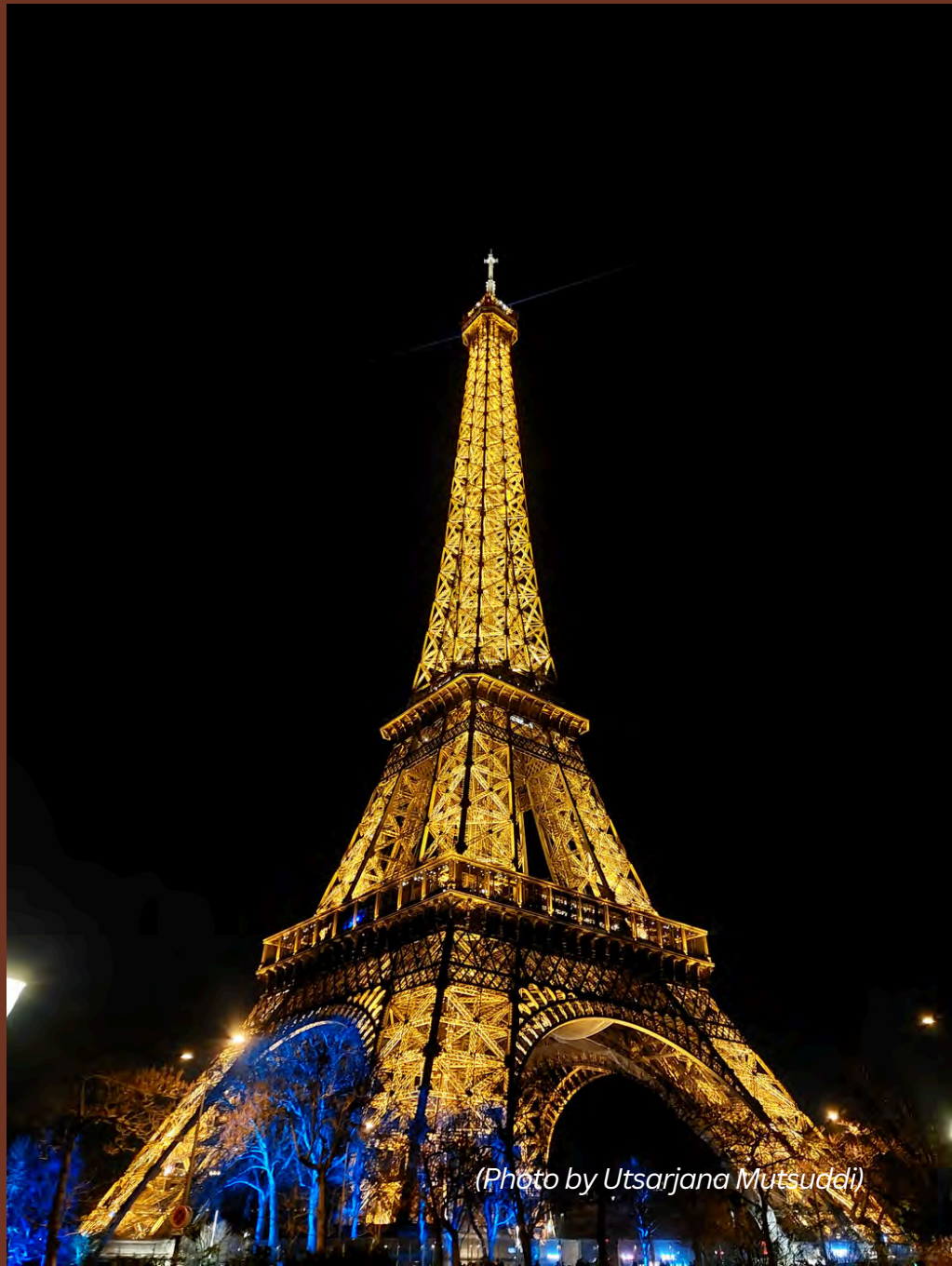
The fish, the crocodile, and the eternal urge to regenerate from ashes dominated the space with an unsaid supremacy. I sat down with Garbie to meditate in front of the fish, making a mental note to thank Anju Acharya for doing what she is doing. The tea break was done, and we had to move on. I sat down at the entrance, deliberately placing myself in the vicinity of the haunting, poetic backdrop again. BhumKat and Albatross joined. They were drenched, and Albatross was 10% alive again. He settled on my lap, probably taking his last breaths, listening to the last song in Chevittorma, their haunting lines penned by Anitha Sreejith and soulfully rendered by Pushpavathy Poypadathu...

"Sweet Albatross... Breathe swiftly till I end my song..."



(Photo by Athira Manoharan)

Pursuit of Dreams



(Photo by Utsarjana Mutsuddi)

A Wedding Dance in Penha de França

Mavis Rodrigues

i turn away from you
and there, through slants of light,
is the darkling river,
spinning and shimmering.

you turn away from me
and there, in the spring of song,
is a widening sky,
making and memorising.

you turn to me and
there, through a forest of faces,
is the inventing promise,
glitter-lined and glowing.

i turn to you and
there, in the blush of day,
is our unfolding future,
hope-sure and heartening.



(Photo by Mavis Rodrigues)

Artworks by Deepika G.



éclatant

This painting is a striking exploration of color and layers, with each colour separate and defined by a thick black outline. This transforms a traditional landscape into a structured, almost cartoonish version, reminiscent of those drawn when one is a child. It captures a moment of transition, of either the radiance of the rising sun or the glow of a dusk that refuses to go quietly. It is a mixed media, acrylic on canvas.

The Breach

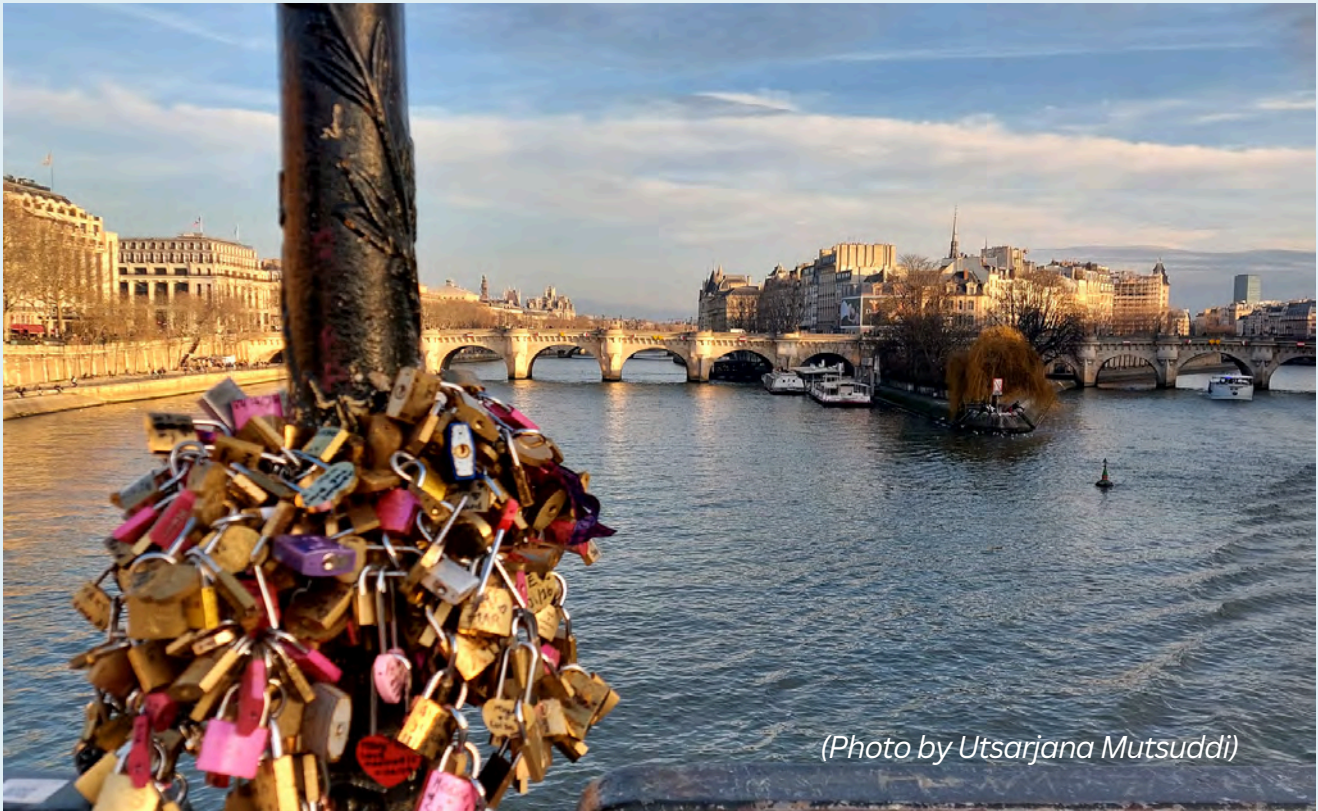
This is an oil pastel painting of a breaching humpback whale. It is an ode to my love for whales, one among the many I've drawn/painted. The very nature of pastels allows for textured layering of colours and definition. For example, most of the painting is filled with different shades of blue but at the bottom, you can see white, messy contrasting strokes made to look like water crashing and spraying everywhere as the whale breaks through the surface, shattering the stillness of an otherwise serene moment. The painting is inspired by various photographs found on social media platforms.



Utsarjana's Travelogue

Utsarjana Mutsuddi

I went to Paris, I liked it



(Photo by Utsarjana Mutsuddi)

*"Ve mai saara jag chhad mahiya,
Te mein aap malang ho jawaan"*

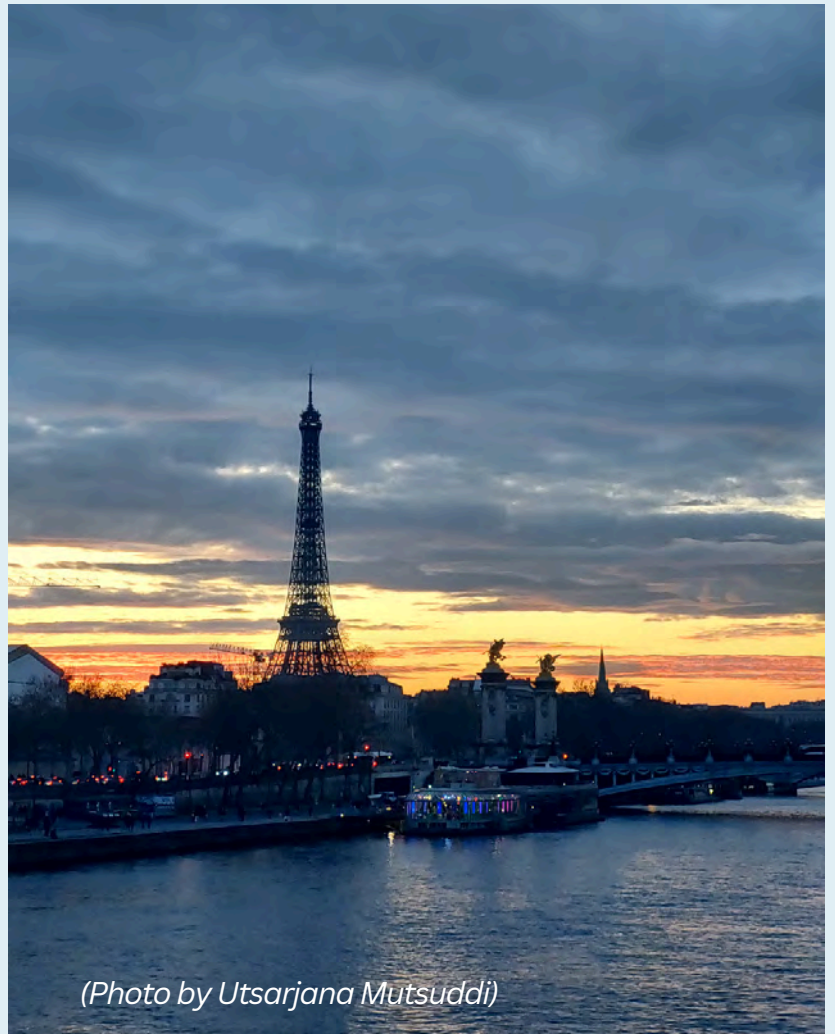
Translation by Jasleen Aulakh (whose version I was listening to): Sometimes I feel like I should renounce this world, this whole wide world, and become a wandering ascetic, because it means nothing without you by my side.

As I was leaving India, for my Visiting Scholar Exchange to Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, generously supported by a SPARC project here at BITS Goa, this was what was playing on my Spotify account on repeat. Luckily, I was a lot less anxious about this trip than I was when I left for Heidelberg a few months earlier. The flight I was going to take was the exact same flight I took earlier, so I knew what to expect, my body was prepared for the 9-hour flight, and boy was that a comfortable flight, in an albeit not-so-comfortable seat. Habit memories are reliable assets for us who treat our bodies as repositories of knowledge and memories. Travel for me is one of my many habit memories, and definitely my favourite one, given how rewarding my journey has been. I planned nothing for these 36 days. I committed to editing this magazine, I committed to doing a project, and I planned absolutely nothing, and I suppose blank canvases are ideal for masterpieces, and the only way I can describe my trip to Paris, is as a masterpiece, a crown jewel, a triumph in all senses, not because it was meticulously planned in advance, but more because I could stay in my element and do what I do best, live instinctively. No plans-no roadmap, just the open roads, and a thirst to explore.

If I had a phrase to describe my first afterthought of Paris, it would be, “a dollhouse with a dirty basement”. Disembarking from my Deutschebahn ICE train at 10.30 in the morning, google maps, led me through the most unconventional, off the charts route with zero-crowds, to my hostel. At the hostel I realised I was 4 hours too early to check in, so I put my bags into the €3 locker, and out came the city map, and soon enough I was walking down the streets towards the Tour De Eiffel, which was 9.4 kms away. It was still early in the day, so I really did believe I would be able to walk that far. Moreover, I'm not one to shy away from a workout with good views. To be entirely honest, my budget in Europe could not have afforded taxis, and it always takes a day, at the very least to get used to public transport in another language.

My day began with a 2.5 km walk through the parts of Paris that don't make it to travel itineraries. The parts where homeless people camp out, and survive winter inside tinfoil mattresses. This is a story of a journey. All journeys go through ups and downs, and most importantly well-meaning breaks. When my feet were finally too tired, I took a break. A pizza, the most endearing Paris makeover, and a swollen foot later, I managed to make it to Place De la Concorde. The historical square, where democracy as we understand it today, had its ever-so-bloody beginnings. Of course, now it is just a large square with an Egyptian Obelisk in the middle of it. I crossed the Seine, and found myself a nice little café to have my lunch and get some comfortable reading done. I returned back to my Hostel, determined to be well versed with the metropolitan routes of Paris. In the evening, I took a train from Place Du Colonel Fabian, to Bir Hakeim, the metropolitan stop closest to Tour De Eiffel on my route. My first view of a lit up Eiffel Tower was exactly as I imagined it would be, when I was first reading about it, in my class 5 Geography book, grand, breathtaking, and larger-than-life. A true marvel of architectural brilliance, seeing it up close and personal, does lead one to wonder, if humans can build that, how is it that we fail so terribly at humanity. I spent the evening, in awe of the tower, walking around it, and inspecting it, with the eagerness of a child with their first Nintendo. Soon enough, I decided that I had enough, and called it a day, but not before walking two stops away from my Hostel, to explore the vibrant nightlife in my neighbourhood, and slurping down a bowl of hot soupy noodles, on a cold winter night.

The second day of this phenomenal trip, began with me spending some time in bed, figuring out the public transport system, from maps, apps, and other urban travelogues. Knowing your map is an essential travel skill, and knowing the public transport system in a multi-layered underground like Paris, is the most important time-saving skill that you can pick up along the way, especially considering that this was a last-minute trip with zero preparation or planning. So, in-bed, early morning preparation had to work. And work, it did. Day 2, started off with a visit to the famous Place De La Bastille, the site which once held the Bastille Prison, a structure that no longer exists, but an area, which now honours its history, with the most vibrant and lively Sunday market I have ever seen. Right out of the metropolitan, the rows of shops, with knick knacks, jewellery, antiques, cameras, etc, caught my eye. Suddenly, I was taken right back to my childhood, when I was reading Tintin Comics, and the images of the markets where Tintin found The Unicorn flashed across my memories, and I realised I was standing in one such market. So, I spent the better part of that



(Photo by Utsarjana Mutsuddi)

morning, checking out everything that was for sale. I gleefully meandered through replicas of comic characters, rows of old cameras, analogue and digital, amulets and jewellery of various kinds, exhibited by families, who were present, and were running the makeshift stalls, and explaining the worth of each piece to potential customers. So, I spent all morning, exploring the market, having my first taste of paella, from a South Asian Vendor, who happily discounted my portion, from €5 to €3, bought myself some dried mango slices, for the road, and set out to walk towards Notre Dame. On my way, I suddenly noticed that the Victor Hugo Museum had an ongoing exhibition. Without a plan, and €12 to spare, I continued onwards, exploring the house where the French Romantic Poet, Playwright, and Author once lived.



(Photo by Utsarjana Mutsuddi)

Museums are homes for ghosts, or whatever is the closest thing to ghosts that are possible. They house artifacts that were part of living memories in a different era. Everything within the apartment that Hugo once lived in was exquisite, but the highlight of the Victor Hugo Museum for me, was the death-bed. Poignant, impactful, and surreal. Lit in candlelight, and very dim lights and whatever residual natural light was coming in, the red upholstered room inspired me enough for me to sit for an extra hour, admiring every detail on exhibit. Once I had my heart's fill of the place, I moved out towards Notre Dame, but it was late in the day, so I had to make do, with just passing through. I closed that day by having an artisanal Chocolate Dome Mousse with a passionfruit filling and a shot of espresso. Cracking the dome open was a unique experience. I have seen thousands of influencers, actors, travellers, do it on reels, food vlogs, Masterchef episodes, etc, but the passionfruit filling inside, really caught me by surprise, and I cannot say, it was a good one. Yet another thing in the never-ending bucket list was ticked off that day.

The third and final day, aka, the day I was to leave Paris at midnight, I planned what I call a Certaudian Walk. A day where I don't look at maps, I just walk, all day, to wherever I want, leisurely, taking pictures of whatever catches my fancy. However, before the walk was to begin, I had an important place to tick off, the Louvre. I reached the Louvre and realised the museum had been shut down, because the workers were protesting against their work conditions, post the infamous Heist. So, I had to make do, with a walk around the museum, instead of through it. That is where I began my Certaudian walk through Paris. Unlike Germany, Paris is easy to get lost in. Whyever not? It's a city, which has entire lanes dedicated to art galleries and workshops dedicated to the creation of artists' essentials like paints. The people are welcoming, and warm. In one instance, I sat down to have a caricature of myself done, while I was posing. Soon I had random strangers look at the caricature being made, and give me their feedback on how ugly the artist was making me look. They made expressions that said, 'not good'. People in Paris have a way of communicating that feels very warm and endearing. But Paris is a blend of High Culture and Popular Culture, and nothing embodies that blend better than the metropolitain. The ride from Place Du Colonel Fabian, to Place De La Concorde, often reminded me of Chistopher Nolan's version of Gotham. Where the trains pass through dingy undergrounds and overpasses, cutting through entire neighbourhoods. My daily journey would be one of moving between the lives of everyday workers, to the lives of those who get to enjoy the city from their place of respective privilege. A Paris that looks like a dollhouse, and a Paris that could in essence compete with a ghetto in India. Admittedly the ghettos in Paris are far more organised, but a ghetto is a ghetto all the same. It is this daily journey that haunts my memories of Paris the most.

That day, I did not have to return to the Hostel, but I did have to go to the bus stand, for my bus back to Karlsruhe. Tired, from exploring the city, walking through rows of galleries, media houses, designer storefronts, cafes, and street cultures, I called it a day, and went over to the FlixBus stand at Bercy De Seine. At Bercy De Seine, I was confronted with the realisation that budget travellers everywhere deal with the exact same circumstances. As a frequent budget traveller in India, I did not find any difference between waiting at Ahmedabad railway Station or Delhi Kashmiri Gate Bus Stand, or the Madgaon Bus stand and waiting for my nightbus back to Karlsruhe at Bercy De Seine. The crowd, the tired eyes of the waiting travellers, the queues, the dirt, and the discoloured seats. It all remains the same, everywhere. The realisation that borders only exist to serve the interests of those attempting to govern, and have no meaning for the rest of us, is a highly discomfoting one.

Travelling, I have realised, makes it very difficult to hate others. When you travel, you barter, negotiate, and exchange stories to survive every day. Travelling helps one to admit to the simple facts of life. That we are all the same. Most importantly travel helps us dispel all the myths we hold dear about the grandeur and greatness of other cultures. It helps us experience unity in a way that can only ever be embodied, but never dictated to us.

“Kya leke aayo jag mein, Kya leke jayega, O Bandhu”

Translation: What have you come to the world with? And what shall you leave with, O Friend?

That was the song that was playing, as I left Paris. In a certain sense, reflecting on the transient nature of life, is a beautiful way to say goodbye to a place that leaves a mark in our memories. I wrote about Paris, because it left me with memories that are hard to pen down. So, I did the best I could.



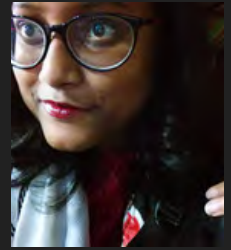
(Photo by Utsarjana Mutsuddi)

Achievements

Sl. No.	Name	Accomplishment	Additional Details
1.	Aranya Laxmi Shekhawat	Won the 'Happiness Hackathon' at IIT Roorkee for the idea of enhancing connection amongst students in residential higher education institutes. The Hackathon was part of the conference: HOPE 2025	https://www.linkedin.com/posts/aranya-shekhawat_hope2025-happineshackathon-iitroorkee-activity-7401094134742228993-4Z82?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_android&rcm=ACoAADaEuD0B6QHOb3_gZGn_UsfZ5ToDa5uNpXQ
2.	Joyal Arya	Awarded the "ClimateWorks Foundation Travel Grant" to attend and present at the 18th IAMC Annual Meeting (2025) held in Armação dos Búzios, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in November 2025. Presented the research titled "Modelling Land Demand Pathways for Rice Cultivation in India using the AFOLU-B Model."	https://www.iamconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Final-programme-iamc-2026.pdf#page=44
3.	Shashwat Vikram Singh	1. Selected as 2025–26 Urban Affairs Publishing Fellow by Urban Affairs Association 2. Completed Writing urban India fellowship by Urban Studies Foundation	https://www.urbanstudiesfoundation.org/funding/grantees/writing-urban-india-2024/

Bionotes of the Contributors

Utsarjana Mutsuddi is a Researcher, and Poet who works at the intersection of Cultural Studies, Gender Studies, and Indigenous Studies. Her research interests are varied and interdisciplinary in nature. She has received funding for her work, from multiple agencies including RUSA 2.0 and SPARC. She has an M Phil in Women's Studies from Jadavpur University has presented her research at many conferences including the European Conference of South Asian Studies, at University of Heidelberg, IIIT Hyderabad, English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, and is also a Life Member at the Indian Association for Women's studies. Her PhD work focuses on the self-representation of history through cultural texts by Denotified Communities. She is the author of the poetry volume titled, Stardust and Wildflowers: Susegad Observations of the World.



Athira Manoharan is a research scholar working on the intersection of art, heritage, tourism and regional identities. An avid reader and a crocheter, her published works span a diverse range of topics, from heritage walks to Stranger Things. She can be seen trodding through the streets of fort kochi during odd days and having the occasional hot chocolate from Kashi.

I am Deepika G. A lover of literature, art and anime, I'm a Ph.D. scholar working in the area of Ecocriticism and Japanese manga. I love experimenting with different art forms and media, from watercolours and acrylic to pastels and crafting. I finds inspiration from random everyday events and also wildlife/nature photography.



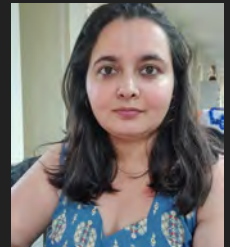
Aranya Laxmi Shekhawat is a Counseling Psychologist and a second-year doctoral scholar at BITS Pilani, Goa Campus. Her research explores emotions at work, with a particular focus on men's mental health. When she's not immersed in research, she can be found oscillating between quiet solitude, exploring new places, seeking adventure, and socializing

Mythreyi K., is a jack of many trades, always eager to experience and learn new things (perhaps with the exception of attempting to brew good tea). Education is a way of life for her, through which she shares her passion for all things raw, wild and free. She is into her third year of research on Environmental Education Policy at BITS, Goa.



Mavis Rodrigues is an Assistant Professor of English at Government College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Khandola, Goa. Her research at BITS Goa, focused on literary geography and cartography, often bleeds into her creative writing. She enjoys narratives of all kinds, including (but not limited to) fiction and poetry, television series, audio dramas, mobile video games, and sports. Her short fiction has previously been shortlisted and published by the Fundação Oriente Short Story Competition.

Parul is a PhD fellow at the HSS department working on urban literature and space. She co-parents a very orange cat. The priorities are, however, not always in the given order



Jestin Johny is an Assistant Professor at N.L. Dalmia Institute of Management Studies and Research. His teaching & research interest include global supply chain management, international business, and free trade agreements.

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