



*(Photo by Mythreyi)*

# THE SALTWATER SCROLLS

The Research Scholars' E-Magazine

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When we released the first edition of *The Saltwater Scrolls*, we were overwhelmed by the love and encouragement it received. That first issue, with its ocean theme, was our shared wave of creativity, every article a ripple in the same sea. This time, we've left the shore behind and opened the horizon to all kinds of ideas, voices, and colours. In these pages, you'll find a vibrant mix of audio-visual pieces that speak in many tones but share one thing in common: they're made with heart.

This edition has been crafted in between lectures, research deadlines, and the everyday whirl of our Ph.D. journeys. Every step took time and effort, but it never felt like work, because we were building something together. We are deeply grateful to everyone who made this possible—our contributors, who poured their imagination into each piece; our team, who shaped the raw ideas into a finished magazine; and you, our readers, whose curiosity makes it all worthwhile. A very special thanks goes to Prof. Rayson K. Alex, the backbone of this magazine, whose vision, guidance, and tireless efforts have made it possible from the very beginning.

We hope you'll read, watch, and listen with the same joy we felt while creating it. Here's to inspiration, to connection, and to the smiles we share along the way.

Happy reading, happy viewing!

Anupama Madhusudan  
Athira Manoharan

# Editors' Note





# CONTENTS

- 1.** How I became an AirBnB superhost in 2 months! - Utsarjana Mutsuddi  
*Page 4*
- 2.** "La Vie en Rose" - A Spontaneous Musical Collaboration  
*Page 7*
- 3.** Interdisciplinary Approaches to Understanding the Global South - Shashwat Vikram Singh and Aranya Laxmi Shekhawat  
*Page 8*
- 4.** The Gendered Kitchens: My Kitchen Stories from India and the US - Divya Ann Abraham  
*Page 13*
- 5.** Iridescent bloom - Deepika G.  
*Page 19*
- 6.** On the Art of Getting Lost in Vienna and Re-searching through play - Shona Lynn Desilva  
*Page 20*
- 7.** The Podcast: A Conversation with Mayukha Dyta  
*Page 24*
- 8.** Beyond the Stars - Sushmita Bhattacharjee  
*Page 25*
- 9.** A Lookback : Issue One  
*Page 26*
- 10.** Awards and Recognitions
- 11.** Bionotes of Contributors

# How I became an Airbnb Superhost in 2 months!

by Utsarjana Mutsuddi

Travelling is among the most capital-intensive hobbies one could pursue. Yes, there will be many influencers, vloggers, bloggers, youtubers and lifestyle enthusiasts who will peddle the under-a-dollar-style of travelling (I myself identify as such a person), but the truth is that we all know that travelling is a capital-intensive hobby, even when we pretend it's not. Vibes, and willpower do not pay bills. Our jobs, lives and the opportunities that come our way, pay and reimburse the bills. So, how do travellers travel, when they are struggling with bills? They host other travellers.

As a traveller, I have experienced the kindness of many strangers, built life-enriching bonds and lived hundreds of stories that make it to the list of unique experiences. So, when an opportunity arose, to curate experiences for other travellers, I took it up in a heartbeat. Sometimes, we pass through the shadows of trees, pausing, resting for a while, and sometimes become the tree that travellers pause at to rest. When I travelled, I came across hundreds of stories, and when I hosted, the stories found their way to me. For a tiny window in time, I hosted over 14 people who were passing through Goa. This was a tremendous learning experience for me and has equipped me to consider entrepreneurship if I ever want to do so in the future.

**Let's get the what and how out of the way first.**

**What:**

I ran a short term AirBnB for two months after trying my hand at couchsurfing. Couchsurfing is a well-known trick that budget conscious travellers (in the West) utilise to plan their travels. One is supposed to enlist their space for others in the community, while they look for places to travel through. I stay at your place when I am passing through and vice versa. This model works great for the digital nomads, and those that are frequently travelling. Needless to say, this format is not ideal for families looking for a vacation. If you are looking for a pool and room service, this is not your jam. But if you're looking for a place to crash after a long day of venturing around, this is ideal.

Utsarjana is a Superb Host.

The stay is memorable because of her. Though a little away from Vasco, the property was nice.



**Manisha, Chennai, India**

December 2024

Utsarjana is such a good and helpful host. she did all the possible help, she could do it for me.... she made me feel right at home. the place was quiet, peaceful and very near to the airport. this place is such a gem for





The bunk hostels, homestays and off the books travellers, have often used this format in order to circumvent the tourism industry. This is not a tourist's preference. It's a traveller's preference. And yes, most of us in the community are quite high-nosed about this. And AirBnB is one of the safer ways to participate in this travel sub-culture, in India.

### **How:**

Back in September, 2024, a friend of mine who knew that I was struggling to find the right flatmate, suggested that I turn my spare room into a BnB. Initially, I was a bit hesitant, but as I researched the opportunity well enough, I realised that this may just be feasible. I filed the necessary paperwork; I made the necessary arrangements and put my years of experience as a traveller into becoming a host who offers all the amenities that I have often enjoyed on my journeys across homestays and hostels. From international charging portals, to a tiny tea corner, I did my best. Like all service-based industries, and digitally managed businesses, AirBnB has a rating system and I am glad to report that I was rated five star by all of my guests.

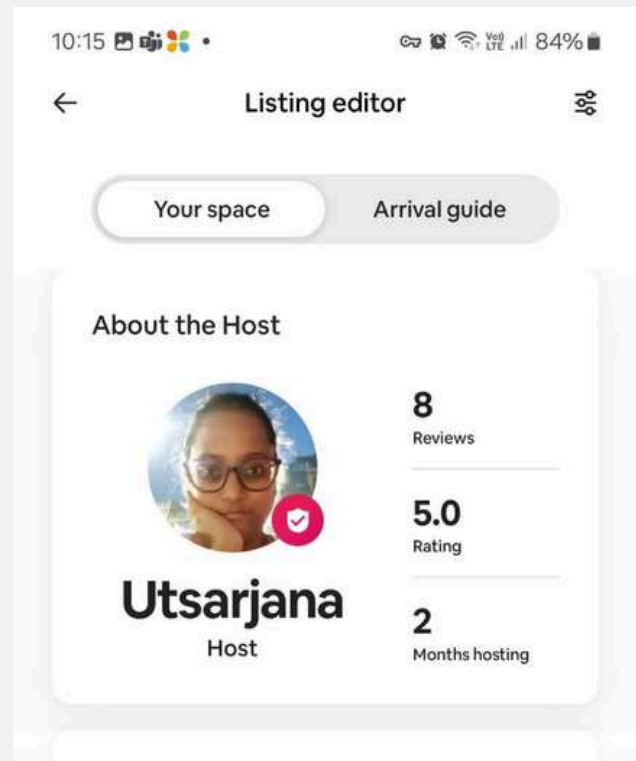
Unlike the tourism sector, whereby amenities are conditional to payments, in the travelling scene, kindness, integrity and personal presence make all the difference in the experience. In this format, the host takes on the responsibility of their guests. Their lives, safety and experience are our responsibility and I took great pride in having been entrusted with the responsibility of curating experiences according to their needs. I hosted digital nomads, globe-trotting eco-feminist travelogue writers, retired/senior businessmen, young couples and a rowdy bunch of people who had no clue what they signed up for that I had to report to AirBnB in order to get them to leave. An exhilarating medley of good, funny, enriching, upsetting and beautiful memories were created in these two months.

### **Now we get to the who and a second how section.**

As a traveller, one never notices just how much our hosts are adapting to us. I learnt that each guest comes with their unique personality, perspectives and habits. And as a host, it is my responsibility to adapt to each and every one of them. If a guest asks me to go down and break a foot long twig from a tree at 6.30 am because they need it (this is precisely what happened), it is not my job to question why he needs it, it is my job to arrange for it. I initially disagreed (like any reasonable person would), but my guest needed it, so later that day, I arranged for it (while gritting my teeth and cursing my luck). I learnt an important lesson that day. I learnt that as a host, or a small business owner, we must learn to check our ego out at the door. Our ego will not serve us well, but our ability to adapt will. Thankfully, that is a lesson I learnt earlier on in the journey and it served me extremely well to live by that lesson.

Some guests will insist on your time, some guests will insist on being served a home cooked meal, some guests will insist on making the kitchen their own, some guests will bring you flowers, but every single guest will leave you with a story to tell. That has been my experience.

The first guest who ever booked my listing turned out to be a globe-trotting Bengali language travelogue writer who has a few awards to her name. She came with a friend that she met on a trip across central Asia back in 2019 who she has been travelling with ever since. They are both septuagenarians and I hereby announce that if I ever live to be seventy, they are what I want to grow up to be. To me they are living proof that life only ends when and if you want it to. Because if you plan well enough, you might land up travelling the world and finding friends at seventy. I curated a few experiences for them and they shared their life's worth of tales. These women had travelled everywhere and by that, I mean they even travelled to Antarctica. Talking to them made me realise that sometimes, you do not have to go looking. Inspiration can walk into your home and make a place in your heart.



Personally, the ones that I really did not need to adapt to but just instinctively got along with were the young couples. They were closer to my age, they insisted on helping out around the house and they all belonged in our lifestyle. With them, it felt effortless, because they were on this journey from the same place that I was.

To know that there are those, decades ahead of us in life, doing the same things that we do today, was very reassuring. The will to see the world, the need to explore and wanderlust, is not something that one can or even needs to explain. That there are spaces where these subcultures evolve through exchange of ideas, life stories and experiences, was something new that I learnt on this short but life-changing stint. I know now how to be a better and more responsible traveller. Every time in life I am travelling or passing through I shall hold on to these memories dearly and draw from them to inform my choices as a traveller.

If there is one important lesson that I am walking away with from this journey, it is that, there can be no alternative to integrity, honesty, kindness, and decency. In an increasingly polarised world, the travelling scene offers a lot of hope and reminds us that decent human beings continue to thrive no matter how much negativity surrounds us. As a researcher with a primary focus on nomadic communities this was an interesting experience, where I confronted how the same lifestyle that was stigmatised by colonial intervention in the 19th century has evolved and survived in the 21st century.

Finally, I'd like to conclude this ode to the AirBnB lifestyle, with a hearty dose of gratitude for AirBnB, for recognising and validating my efforts with the coveted Super Host tag.



# La Vie en Rose – A Spontaneous Musical Collaboration

We're excited to share our latest music video, La Vie en Rose—a timeless French classic originally made famous by Edith Piaf. Known for its romantic charm and gentle melody, the song celebrates the beauty of seeing life through a lens of love and hope.

This rendition was sung beautifully by Divya Ann Abraham, with orchestration, mixing, and mastering by Jithu George. What makes this project truly special is its spontaneity: it wasn't a grand production, but a creative spark that turned into a vibrant collaboration between the HSS Media Lab and the Film Making Club (FMAC). The entire recording and video shoot happened in under an hour—a testament to the enthusiasm and teamwork of everyone involved.

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(Photo by: Alina Jolly)

We hope this short and soulful performance brings a smile to your face. Watch it, share it, and let us know what you think!



# Interdisciplinary Approaches to Understanding the Global South

by Shashwat Vikram Singh and Aranya Laxmi Shekhawat

From January 22 to 24, 2025, a Young Researchers' Conference and Workshop on Academic Writing and Publishing brought together emerging scholars and seasoned academics to explore critical issues in contemporary research. The event served as a platform for discussions on interdisciplinary approaches, methods, academic writing, and the evolving nature of academic knowledge production.

The conference's inaugural session took place on January 22 at 9:30 a.m. at DLT 9. Following the formal inauguration, a highly engaging panel discussion on Interdisciplinary Approaches to Understanding the Global South set the stage for the conference. It brought together four invited scholars from diverse academic backgrounds to share their views on the role of interdisciplinary research in studying the global South.



Professor Lakshmi Subramanian is a historian whose research focuses on maritime history, colonialism, and the development of modern South Asia. She has a long teaching and research career and, in that capacity, has had the opportunity to serve several universities in India and abroad. Her initial interest was exploring the ramifications of Indian capital formations in pre-colonial and early colonial India, specifically Gujarat and Bombay in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Subsequently, she has also looked at social networks, including those of piracy and predation in the Indian Ocean. Her work also includes studies on writing and archiving music history.

Dr. Rakesh Pandey, from the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi, works in the area of the cultural and intellectual history of modern India, with a particular focus on knowledge formations, philosophy of culture, moral orders, and critical theory. He examines how academic terms and categories shape how we understand the Global South. He is currently working on a monograph dealing with aspects of colonial archaism, together with a study on interpretations of pre-colonial textual traditions in North India and another on philosophical aesthetics and the anti-modern, focusing on Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, among others. He has been actively involved with the Centre's Teaching initiative, 'Researching the Contemporary' and the Indian Languages programme.



Dr. Shubha Ranganathan is an Associate Professor in the Department of Liberal Arts at the Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad (IIT Hyderabad). She works with multiple disciplines, including anthropology, gender studies, disability studies, and critical and qualitative psychology. Her work focuses on qualitative explorations of local healing practices among marginalized groups, as well as health and disability-related projects in India. She approaches her research from critical and social justice perspectives, emphasizing lived experiences and advocacy for social change. Currently, she is exploring questions about parenting and care in the context of autism as part of her engagement with the neurodiversity discourse in India.

Dr. Nitin Upadhyay is currently working as a Professor in IT systems and analytics at the Indian Institute of Management Jammu (IIM Jammu). He is a leading authority and speaker on blockchain, artificial intelligence, emerging technology, innovation, information systems, cloud computing, big data and analytics, future technology, and user experience. He is an expert on the Board of Panel of Experts for Startup Promotion Cell (SPC), Department of Information Technology (DIT), Government of Goa to assist the SPC in materializing the Goa Start-up Policy vision to make Goa one of the most preferred start-up destinations of India. His research interests are advancing the frontiers of Technology and Information Systems Research through Behavioural, Organizational, Design Science, and Economic Perspectives.

Across various cultures, the sea is revered as a nurturing mother figure, symbolising life, fertility, and sustenance. In Southern India, particularly among coastal communities in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh, the sea is affectionately called "Amma" (mother), embodying both the life-giving and protective aspects of motherhood. The sea provides food and livelihoods, yet its unpredictable nature commands deep respect. In Kerala and Karnataka, the sea is Kadamma, the sea mother, where children check if the sea mother loves them by writing their names on the seashore. If she loves you, she washes away your name quicker. Like a mother, the sea is generous and robust, a force that sustains life while demanding reverence and care. To us, perhaps she is a stepmother who, at best, is indifferent towards us and, at worst, loathes us. Perhaps we wrote our names on the shore a century ago, but Kadamma still hasn't washed it away.

This article captures the insights shared during that panel discussion, where four distinguished scholars delved into the challenges and opportunities of interdisciplinary research in the Global South.



*The Inaugural Session: (From left) Prof. Nitin Upadhyay, Prof. Lakshmi Subramanian, Prof. Rakesh Pandey, Prof. Shubha Ranganathan*

## Defining Interdisciplinarity in the Global South

Interdisciplinarity is often defined as integrating methodologies and insights from two or more disciplines to explore complex topics beyond the scope of a single academic lens. However, as the panellists pointed out, it is more than the sum of its parts; it requires creating new knowledge at the intersection of established disciplines. While interdisciplinary research fosters collaboration across disciplines, transdisciplinarity extends further by merging real-world perspectives with academic theories to develop insights unconfined by traditional disciplinary boundaries. In contrast, multidisciplinary involves multiple disciplines working in parallel on a shared problem while maintaining their distinct methodological approaches.

## Encouraging Young Researchers to Embrace Interdisciplinary Inquiry

Professor Shubha emphasized the necessity of ethical training for young researchers venturing into interdisciplinary fields. She cautioned against interdisciplinary work driven solely by preference rather than necessity, advocating for collaborations that ensure meaningful integration rather than isolated disciplinary efforts within a shared space.



## The Future of Knowledge Production in an Interdisciplinary Landscape

With disciplinary distinctions becoming increasingly fluid, particularly within the humanities and social sciences, the question of how knowledge will be produced in the future remains crucial. Professor Lakshmi underscored the role of administrative and institutional support in fostering interdisciplinary research. She lamented the decline of South-South cooperation, which was prominent in the 1960s and 1970s due to financial and administrative backing. She highlighted the importance of reviving such networks to advance collaborative research.

## Examining the Global South: Insights from the Panelists

### Rethinking the North-South Dichotomy

Professor Lakshmi, known for her work on colonial economic interactions, reflected on the nuances of the North-South divide. While her earlier work in *Indigenous Capital and Imperial Expansion* explored the role of Indian merchants in colonial expansion, she acknowledged that her perspective has evolved. Despite the enduring legacy of colonialism, she argued that the

rigid North-South framework risks oversimplification and overlooks the complexities within these historical and economic relationships.

### Language and the Politics of Knowledge Production

Professor Rakesh tackled the issue of how academic discourse on the Global South often occurs within terminologies and frameworks originating in the Global North. He illustrated how philosophical concepts, initially confined to niche academic debates, often re-emerge in contemporary discussions across disciplines, reinforcing the political dimensions of language and categorization. Using a compelling metaphor, he argued that Global South scholars must develop and use their intellectual frameworks rather than merely adapting existing Northern paradigms.

### Challenges of Legitimacy in Interdisciplinary Research

Professor Shubha addressed a critical challenge interdisciplinary scholars faced—the legitimacy crisis. Drawing from her research on liberal arts spaces in India, she advised scholars to first grasp the limits of their primary discipline before expanding into interdisciplinary territory. She emphasized that interdisciplinarity should be pursued only when traditional disciplinary methods prove insufficient for addressing a research question rather than as an arbitrary or fashionable choice.





## The Role of Technology and AI in Bridging Gaps

Professor Nitin highlighted the transformative potential of technology for researchers in the Global South. While the internet has democratized access to academic resources, he pointed out that most online content is produced in and for the Global North. This imbalance extends to artificial intelligence, which predominantly operates in English and other major Northern languages. To rectify this, he emphasized the need for localized AI initiatives tailored to the languages and contexts of the Global South.

India, for instance, has launched ambitious AI-driven linguistic projects such as Bhashini (under the National Language Translation Mission), BharatGen (a multimodal AI initiative led by IIT Bombay), and BharatGPT (a language model supporting Indian languages). These initiatives mark a significant step toward digital inclusivity by promoting indigenous linguistic data and ensuring AI technology serves local contexts rather than merely replicating Western models.

## The Way Forward for Interdisciplinary Research in the Global South

The panel discussion underscored interdisciplinarity's importance in generating holistic knowledge about the Global South. However, it also revealed several persistent challenges, including the dominance of Northern frameworks in scholarly discourse, the difficulty of gaining legitimacy in interdisciplinary fields, and the need for technological interventions that prioritize local contexts.

As academia continues to evolve, fostering an environment where interdisciplinary collaboration is institutionally supported and ethically practiced will be crucial. Whether through rethinking knowledge production, engaging in South-South collaborations, or leveraging AI to bridge linguistic divides, scholars must actively shape the intellectual landscapes of the Global South on their terms.





# The Gendered Kitchens: My Kitchen Stories from India and the US

by Divya Ann Abraham

## Acknowledgements:

I express my deep gratitude to all the fantastic women in my life for their constant encouragement; thanks for believing in my abilities. Thanks to Appacha and Ammachi (translates to grandfather and grandmother) for letting me tell their story. I thank Mr. Albin M. (my second cousin) for helping me get all the pictures from Kerala. I also thank my Aunt for the pictures from the USA. Finally, I thank Dr. Samanthi Gunavardhana, my mentor from Monash University, Australia, for inspiring me to write this essay.

I have used specific anecdotes, while based on real-life events, are shared with informed consent. The names have been altered to ensure confidentiality.

"Man is defined as a human being and woman as a female – whenever she behaves as a human being, she is said to imitate the male.

One is not born, but rather becomes a woman." Simone de Bouveair

This is one of my favorite quotes on how gender has been socially constructed as 'becoming' a male or a female or any other. My understanding of gender has evolved through movies and "socialization" in public and domestic spaces. My idea of gender shifted from the traditional binary division to a multidimensional concept which includes gender identity, expression, and sexual orientation. The binary division and the resultant compartmentalization eventually lead to the institutionalization of gender roles. In a family (that is already institutionalized), it is interesting to learn how, quite explicitly, gender plays in domestic spaces inside a house, such as a kitchen. In the next part of my photo-essay, I will be narrating two stories from India (Kitchen story-1) and the US (Kitchen story-2) to show how gender is performed in hierarchical but subtle ways.



## Kitchen Story - 1: My Grandparents' House

The first kitchen story comes from my maternal grandparents' house in Kerala. My 80-year old grandfather, a.k.a. my appacha, Rev Samuel, is a priest in a Syrian Church and my grandmother, a.k.a. my ammachi, Mrs. Samuel (76 years), is a homemaker.

They are a lower middle class family who raised four children and were able to walk up the social ladder due to the education and jobs of their four children.

*(Photo 1: By Susan S, 2012, My Grandparents in the verandah of their house)*

They have a 21 year old, two-storied house (photo 3) with four bedrooms, a kitchen, a living area, a prayer room, and three bathrooms



*(Photo 4: By Albin M, 2023, A view towards the kitchen from the dining area)*



*(Photo 3: By Aunt Suz, 2012, My maternal grandparents' house)*

The above is a picture of the first kitchen (from the dining area) where not much activity takes place; it's just a passage way of food from stove to table (pic 5)

The cooking takes place here (Photo.6), in the second kitchen, and if you stand there you'll smell the masalas that are added to the dish.

An interesting gender divide that is practiced in the house for several years is that my ammachi who cooks, is usually the last one to eat, after feeding all the others-my grandfather, uncle, and children-in the family.





*(Photo 5: By Albin M, 14/03/2023, Ammachi bringing food from the kitchen and appacha waiting for the food to arrive)*



*(Photo 6: By Albin M, 2023, Ammachi cooking in the second kitchen and the view from kitchen to dining area)*

The Dining area has a power dynamics in the way chairs are arranged, plates are placed and food is served. My Appacha sits on the central stand-alone chair (pics-4,9).



*(Photo 7: By Albin, 2023, Ammachi serving food to Appacha in the Dining hall)*



*(Photo 8: By Albin, 2023 A view of the dining hall from the living room)*



*Photo 9: By Albin M, 2023, Dining hall ready for lunch (see the arrangement of chairs)*



*(Photo 10: By Albin M, 2023, A view of the living room from the second kitchen)*

This is usually where my Appacha (male head) of the family sits, the rest of the chairs could be occupied by women and children. Ammachi serves food in a hierarchical order of chairs, and the best parts of the curry would go to older men. When I once sat on my appacha's chair when I was a child, my uncle told me, "It is usually Pappa who sits on that chair and not children, for sure. I don't sit there when Pappa is around." Even though my uncle said that as a mark of respect to his dad, I now realize that the practice evidently creates gender disparity.

## **Kitchen Story - 2: My Aunt's House**



*(Photo 11: My Aunt's family picture, 2022)*

After high school, my family moved to the USA, where I stayed at my aunt's house. My aunt, Vavachechi (47 years old), is a nurse practitioner by profession. She lives in Texas with her family—my uncle-in-law, Vavachachen (49 years old), a Pharmacist, and their children, Teeyah (18 years old) and Tristin (6 years old). The two-story house has four bedrooms, a vast living room and kitchen, four bathrooms, and other rooms.



From picture 13, we see that the kitchen is a continuation of the living-dining areas that offer an open purview for people sitting in various areas. This openness of this complex space, creates more communication, interaction and so is non-hierarchical.

*(Photo 12: By Vavachechi, 2012, From the entrance of the house with the dining table on the right and kitchen on the left leading to the living area)*



*(Photo 13: By Vavachechi, 14/03/2023, View from the living room to the Dining and kitchen space)*

Once my uncle-in-law said aloud (taking a dig at my aunt), while washing dishes manually: "I may not be a great cook like my sweet wifey, but I wash the dishes religiously and with care, don't you think so, Divya?" The open structure of the kitchen lends itself for a more inclusive functionality in this house. Gender is played in subtle ways in my aunt's house in a more inclusive and non-hierarchical manner.



## Towards Non-Hierarchy of Kitchen Spaces

From my kitchen stories I infer that both the kitchens are gendered in two different ways—the first kitchen is directly hierarchical, subjugative, closed, and compartmentalized whereas the second one is seemingly non hierarchical, more fluid, participatory, and open. The design of the kitchen lends itself to these two kinds of gender performances. It is interesting that the design of the kitchen directly influences the functions of gender performance. This gender binary brings a power dynamic to this vibrant space—the kitchen. It is necessary to critique and redefine these spaces, and their designs so that families, societies, and nations can be built on the basis of non-duality, non hierarchy and integration.

This photo essay is driven by my genuine urge to explore how gender is performed in domestic spaces through personal narratives. My approach to this essay is based on singular comments which do not necessarily reflect deeper gender convictions of the individuals mentioned. I acknowledge that there could be more scope to understanding the household's power dynamics by bringing in more perspectives of the other inhabitants of the house. The comparative approach of 'traditional' Indian kitchen and the 'inclusive' US kitchen points out the scope to studying deeper contextual differences such as socioeconomic status or architectural trends that may also play a role in gender and space discourses.



*Photos 14: By Vavachechi 2023, Picture of my aunt Vavachechi (mom's sister) and my uncle (Vavachechi's husband) cooking and doing dishes in their kitchen*

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# Iridescent bloom

by Deepika G.

Mixed media painting for me is an exploration of textures and layers. It's all about intuition. There are no rules; it's about letting each material react with the next, building up depth and creating unexpected visual interest. It's a truly liberating process, constantly evolving as I discover new ways for different mediums to interact, resulting in a piece that feels uniquely mine. In this painting a translucent jellyfish shimmers with iridescent blues and purples, its delicate tentacles trailing like an aurora in the deep, vibrant ocean.

[Click here](#)



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*(Photo by Meera Das)*

# On the Art of Getting Lost in Vienna and Re-searching through play

by Shona Lynn Desilva

I once had a serendipitous meeting with a researcher on a flight to Kanpur for a conference. Among our numerous conversations was a discussion about the difference between being a tourist and a traveller. I was never particularly averse to being a tourist and doing touristy things like rushing into a tight and meticulously planned itinerary with tour guides. However, the conversation made me realise that being a traveller, experiencing the culture of a place like a local would and being immersed in the everyday life of the place as much as possible, could be so much more fulfilling. This kind of intensive rather than extensive learning would require a considerable amount of time at the new place, something that I never thought I would have.



A few months later, I was listening to Billy Joel's Vienna on repeat. When I listened to the song before, the idea of slowing down, escaping the rat-race and not being afraid to live out dreams seemed so utopian. Then came the sneaky shadow of an opportunity, a month-long research visit to Vienna, and suddenly, the refrain Vienna waits for you took on an entirely new meaning. My Ph.D. supervisor and two other professors from the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at BITS Pilani, Goa were working on a SPARC project on Museum Studies which included funding a research trip for Indian research scholars. It was not just about exciting research possibilities but also about slowly but surely renewing a sense of passion for the realm of literary and cultural studies beyond the monotonous chaos and competitiveness inevitable to academia.

Being both a traveller and a researcher in Vienna allowed for a kind of learning that, according to me, closely resembles Derrida's concept of play. Play signifies the fluidity and openness within a structure, where elements are not fixed but rather constantly shifting. The meaning by consequence is not static but subject to endless interpretation. This idea stayed with



me throughout the month because of how my academic and cultural experiences in Vienna were never fixed or compartmentalised but rather blended into each other.

Conversations with Prof. Manuela Ciotti and Ankit, from the University of Vienna, enlivened this sense of intellectual play. During the university tour with Ankit, a visiting research scholar, discussions ranged from scholarships to our shared love for interdisciplinary research. Meeting Prof. Ciotti on the other hand, felt like being drawn to a lighthouse in the sea of knowledge. She recommended readings that were different from my usual research trajectory, which included texts that connected literature to visual cultures, museum studies, and memory work.

Prof. Manuela's suggestion to visit the Kunsthistorisches Museum and the Weltmuseum opened up avenues of cultural discoveries I had not previously thought possible. From the numerous museums I visited in Vienna, I was able to learn about the different modes of display, the politics of representation and most importantly their heritage preservation techniques. Personally, the Sisi Museum was the most intriguing to me as I could visualise Empress Elizabeth come to life by both the museum artefacts and the Netflix series that I had recently watched. It was thrilling to see the intertwining of popular culture and historical memory through the story of Sisi.

Apart from traditional museums, visiting the House of Music was like being teleported into another world entirely. This was the world of Viennese Classicism which included artefacts,

music and biographies of great composers like Mozart, Beethoven, Strauss and the Vienna Philharmonic. There were so many musically interactive spaces (I even virtually conducted the Vienna Philharmonic orchestra and succeeded!). The sheer volume of knowledge on the creation, intricacies, and science behind sound and music made it a splendid musical journey.







I attended a ballet performance at the Vienna State Opera for the first time and was moved by how the ballet dancers, without uttering a single word, managed to convey the story of *Die Kameliendame* by Alexandre Dumas Jr. with remarkable precision and emotional depth. Each movement showed their power of physical expression and drew the audience into the narrative with grace and intensity.

The other memorable Viennese musical delight was a concert by the Sophia Philharmonic Orchestra at the Vienna Music Society, where child prodigy Fabiola Kim took centre stage. The violinist was dressed in an elegant bottle green gown, and not only stunned with her musical talent but moreover her passion and showmanship. Being able to explore Vienna's rich musical heritage complemented my immersive journey through the House of Music.

Just as my academic experiences were woven through Viennese culture, likewise, were certain cultural experiences shaped by spiritual and intellectual learning. An Ash Wednesday mass that I attended at Auferstehung Christi was not just a religious exercise but an instance of spiritual reflection. Although the mass was in German and I could not understand a word spoken by the priest, being able to sing along to the hymns gave me a strange and inexplicable sense of belonging.

During a visit to St. Charles church, I was given a pamphlet with the history of the church and symbolic meaning of the contemporary art in the church. It was such a mesmerising experience to both read, understand and simultaneously perceive and disambiguate the contemporary art installation made up of LED lights hanging from the ceiling of the church. The architectural design, statues with inscriptions, blessed sacrament, ornamentation and panorama on the final floor represented both the historical layers and spiritual meaning behind the church.

Being a traveller meant losing my way more than once, quite literally. And by virtue of being a researcher I was also able to enjoy getting lost because I knew that I would end up finding my way somehow or the other eventually. I once got lost on a tram route and landed myself at the edge of the Ringstrasse, where I stumbled into Volksgarten by accident. Instead of leaving the garden for the next museum on my list, I sat on a bench by the flowers, sipping a Viennese Melange coffee and doing absolutely nothing.







My visit to Vienna was not a detour from my academic life but rather an extension of it. It taught me that research is not always about productivity but also about play. That knowledge is not always acquired from books, but also from conversations over coffee, wandering through museums, exploring a rich musical heritage, savouring a Schnitzel, or simply getting lost.

Vienna did not just wait for me. She slowed down time, and painted memories filled with music, history, spirituality and art that made intensive cultural learning possible. I do not know if Vienna still waits for me, but after getting to know her a little bit, I definitely long to see her again.





# The Podcast: A Conversation with Mayukha Dyta

Meet Mayukha Dyta, a Fulbright-Nehru Scholar from the United States with a unique academic background that bridges pre-medicine and sociology/anthropology. With prior experience in biomedical research that ranges from ion channel electrophysiology to cell biology, Mayukha has also published groundbreaking work on BK channels in exosomes. Her current Fulbright project in India explores how cultural contexts shape biomedical diagnosis and treatment, particularly in pluralistic healthcare environments. Blending ethnography with medical inquiry, she seeks to understand how biomedicine adapts across diverse patient populations. Beyond research, Mayukha is also a youth delegate for the UN's UNITE2030 program and a dynamic student leader passionate about women in science and inclusive academic communities.

Watch the podcast on YouTube

[Click here](#)



or Scan here

In this episode, Divya Ann Abraham sits down with Ms. Dyta for an engaging conversation. Mayukha shares her remarkable journey from the U.S. to India, offering a unique perspective as an aspiring medical student navigating the Indian healthcare system. She reflects on cultural differences in diagnosis, medical education, and the practice of care, blending personal experiences with academic insight.

And for those curious about applying for a Fulbright themselves, Mayukha provides a candid, step-by-step breakdown of the application process along with practical advice for prospective scholars. Don't miss this thoughtful and inspiring conversation!



# Beyond the Stars

by Sushmita Bhattacharjee



The painting of this girl is an irony. This well-educated girl forced to live in black and white cage named society from where she can only escape to a colourful life only in her dreams. The purpose of knowledge is to inspire us to fly high and chase ultimate freedom rather forcing us to compete with others. But in reality, like this girl, we become caged to fulfil socially approved goals and forget to find our inner light. We are constantly running to achieve so called 'success' by getting grades, trophies or even salaries that deep down we are not realising that we are running in a meaningless race and forgetting the real purpose of life.

# A Lookback: Issue One

On 23rd November, while BITS celebrated its Open House Day, we released the first issue of our HSS e-magazine, *The Saltwater Scrolls*. The magazine was unveiled by our beloved HoD, Prof. K. A. Geetha, along with Prof. Rayson K. Alex and the editorial board, in the gracious presence of our department.

It was a moment of immense joy, pride, and warmth as we watched something we had poured our hearts and minds into for months finally come alive. This marked the very first time our HSS department had launched a magazine of its own, and with the creative support of the HSS Media Lab. at BITS, we were able to make it not only literary, but also audio-visual.

*The Saltwater Scrolls* stands as a testament to the exciting new technologies enriching the humanities, as well as to the unwavering love and support we received from our collaborators, fellow scholars, and the HSS faculty who guided us every step of the way.

As we present this second issue of *The Saltwater Scrolls*, we take a moment to revisit and relive that beautiful day which set our journey in motion.

The Chief Editors





# Awards & Recognition

Sl. No.	Name	Accomplishment	Additional Details
1.	Mavis Rodrigues	Published a short story titled "The Heart of the Mangroves" in Cashew Kernels: Short Stories from Goa, an anthology of stories shortlisted from the 2023 Fundação Oriente Short Story Competition, released in 2024.	
2.	Nasla Najeeb	Najeeb, N., Jose, K., Sreejith, K. A., Pulla, S., Suresh, H. S., Ratnam, J., ... & Chaturvedi, R. K. (2025). Presence of large trees and tree diversity enhances carbon storage in the Western Ghats. Biological Conservation, 308, 111250.	Research Paper
3.	Karun Jose	1. Jose, K., Najeeb, N., Bandopadhyay, A., Singh, C. P., & Chaturvedi, R. K. (2025). <b>Unraveling Meteorological Drivers of Leaf Phenology in the Western Ghats, India.</b> <i>Trees, Forests and People</i> , 100861.	Research Paper

		<p>2. Jose, K., Najeeb, N., Suryawanshi, K., Hebbalalu, S. S., Page, N., &amp; Chaturvedi, R. K. (2025). <b>Woody species diversity, structure, and carbon stock in a tropical semi-evergreen forest in Western Ghats, India.</b> Environmental Research Communications, 7(4), 045027.</p>	
4.	Utsarjana Mutsuddi	<p>Published a volume of poetry titled <i>Stardust and Wildflowers: Susegad Observations of the world</i> with Bookleaf Publishing, that is now listed on both amazon and the publishers' own website and it is available in both e-versions and hard copies. ISBN 10 9369536299 ISBN 13 978-9369536290.</p> <p>Presented multiple papers at conferences focusing on Indigenous Studies. The most prestigious of these conferences is at the International Conference on Indigenous/Tribal Communities - Reframing Research Methodologies, at English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, Telangana, where I am presenting a paper titled, <i>Peripatetic Indigeneity: Nomads, Census and the State in South Asia</i> on the 9th of August, 2025.</p> <p>Another interesting contribution during this phase is that I am gradually positioning myself as an Research Advisor to political influencers (women)</p>	

		based out of West Bengal. I think this is an interestingly positioned voluntary intervention in modern digital spaces where influencers are gradually becoming important voices in society. Currently I am officially part of a writers room for a Kolkata-New York based influencer in the capacity of official team Researcher.	
5.	Vaishali Kashyap	<p>1. Presented a paper titled Governance Paradigm of Guwahati's Beels, as part of the panel 'Riparian Governmentalities in Urbanising South Asia' at the Association for Asian Studies (AAS-in-Asia) Conference in Kathmandu, Nepal, from 31 May to 04 June, 2025</p> <p>2. Participated in JPS Asia Writeshop in Critical Agrarian Studies and Scholar-Activism, co-organised by Journal of Peasant Studies and College of Humanities and Development Studies, China Agricultural University, from 30 June to 13 July, 2025, in Beijing &amp; Hebei province, China</p>	
6.	Shashwat Vikram Singh	1- Presented a paper titled "Touristification and the Right to Public Space: Gendered and Generational Exclusions in Goa" at Emerging Urban Inequalities 2025 Webinar organised by Urban Institute, University of Sheffield, 3rd July 2025-	





		<p>Got Writing Urban India Fellowship, 3rd iteration, The HUPA Chair for Urban Poor and the Law at NLSIU, in collaboration with Writing Urban India Collective and the Urban Studies Foundation (UK), is hosting the third iteration of the Writing Urban India Fellowship in 2025. The Writing Urban India Fellowship Round 3 (WUI 3.0) is a mentoring initiative to nurture early career scholars in writing and publishing on urbanisation in India..</p>	
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## Ph.D. Awards

Sl. No.	Name	Supervisor	Thesis Name
1.	Kulkarni Ashutosh Anilbhai	Prof. Rajiv Kumar Chaturvedi	Impact of Climate Change on the Glaciers of Indus and Spiti River Basin
2.	Nithya K Gopi	Prof. Rayson K Alex	An Ecophobia Analysis of the Narratives of the 'Save Silent Valley' Movement in Kerala
3.	Yeola Kalyani Rajendra	Prof. R.P. Pradhan	Negotiating Nation and Citizenship: An Ethnographic Study of Tibetan Youth-in-Exile of India
4.	Karan Sharma	Prof. Reena Cheruvalath Co-Supervisor: Prof. Prabhu Venkataraman	Heteronormative Regimes of Morality: A Phenomenological Ethnography of Queer Experiences

5.	Jestin Johny	Prof. R.P. Pradhan	Review and Analysis of India's Free Trade Agreements
6.	Fernandes Rochelle Ann	Prof. K.A. Geetha	Echoes of Unfreedom: Representing the Disabled Memories of the Poskim

## Awards

Sl. No.	Name	Award	Thesis Name
1.	 Fernandes Rochelle Ann	Outstanding Ph.D. Thesis Award	Echoes of Unfreedom: Representing the Disabled Memories of the Poskim
2.	 Kulkarni Ashutosh Anilbhai	Best Ph.D. Thesis Award	Impact of Climate Change on the Glaciers of Indus and Spiti River Basin

# Bionotes of Contributors

**Utsarjana Mutsuddi** is a travel-happy academic who loves to cook, swim, perform and just-be. She is into her fourth year of Ph.D. research in Cultural Studies at BITS, Goa.



I am **Shaswat Vikram Singh**, a fourth-year Ph.D. student diving into the wild world of how tourism shakes up neighbourhoods in Goa. With a background in Urban Studies, I am all about figuring out how people, places, and their surroundings mix and mingle—and sometimes clash—in unexpected ways!

A of literature, art and anime, **Deepika G** is a third year Ph.D. scholar working in the area of Ecocriticism and Japanese manga. She loves experimenting with different artforms and media, from watercolours and acrylic to pastels and crafting, she finds inspiration from random everyday events and also wildlife/nature photography.



Hi, I am **Sushmita**, currently pursuing PhD. Apart from it, I have a deep passion for art, films, and animals. Especially, stray dogs hold a special place in my heart. I believe in creating an optimistic, positive world and remain hopeful for a kinder, more compassionate future.





**Shona Lynn Desilva** loves literature, music, and all things romantic. Her research centres on the cultural politics in the Goan mando—a topic that has been close to her heart ever since her school days, when she wore the traditional bazu torhop and sang with a fan in her hands! Besides researching full-time and teaching Cultural Studies part-time, she also enjoys writing songs inspired by literary texts and everyday life.

Hello gang!

I'm **Divya Ann Abraham**, a second year Ph.D. scholar in Artificial Intelligence and Crisis Communication from BITS Pilani, Goa. My love for singing, reading (and staying creative) has been inspired by the places I've been to and the people I've met along the way. I'm a Shutterbug and a lover of cats. If you can dum the biriyani, can we be friends?



**Aranya Laxmi Shekhawat** is a Counseling Psychologist, currently in the first year of her PhD at BITS Pilani Goa campus. Her research is going to focus on the emotional health of men. Her interests in life include exploring places, adventure activities and knowing people from different walks of life and their stories.

Scholar at BITS- Goa with a passion for ecomusicology. When not diving into the rhythms of nature and research, you'll find her on the couch indulging in some good old fun, frolic, and music. Brainy and breezy, **Anupama Madhusudan** blends research with a carefree spirit.



**Sameer Shivam Redkar** is a Fine Arts graduate from Goa College of Fine Arts, with a Diploma in Advanced Computer Arts from C-DAC, Mumbai. He has worked as a graphic designer at IIT Bombay, a Senior Techno-Sales Executive at Monarch Innovative Technologies, and a Support & Product Manager at Valensc Solutions. Currently, he leads the technical side of the HSS Media Lab at BITS Pilani, Goa, where he combines his skills in design and technology.

**Athira Manoharan** is an over-enthusiastic nerd who yearns to try her hands in everything except culinary arts. Distilling art and literature from her would be an easy way to murder her which would sadly leave her one year old research on Kochi Muziris Biennale, orphaned.



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