

(Photo by Rutva)

THE SALTWATER SCROLLS

The Research Scholars' E-Magazine

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Editor's Note

“

This Edition of *The Saltwater Scrolls* has come together at a time, when so many things are happening, in so many places, and all of them are shaping our evolving reality. Living through a global energy crisis, and dealing with rising prices of essentials in our everyday lives, we are all taking it one day at a time (if you aren’t, I envy you). Cyberphilosophers might even call this Race Conditions. Yet, irrespective of the demands of this era, our hamlet of BITS Goa continues to dance its way during Navratri, colour code its solidarity through festive expressions, and contribute towards the emergent order, one project at a time.

When the articles and pieces for this edition started arriving a pattern emerged from the articles themselves. A simple binary pattern that has been the go-to template for all major cultural texts in the past century or so, Heroes and Anti-Heroes. In essence both heroes and anti-heroes are just fictional narratives that gatekeepers of perspectives (aka editors, managers, middle-men, directors, writers) frame different stories in, for it to make immediate sense to those consuming that content/data/information.

In the last edition, I chose to foreground the immediate temporal background against which the volume emerged. This time, I want to zoom out a little, and remind ourselves of the simple things. The games everyone can play, the small acts of community building that everyone indulges in, the prayers we carry in our hearts, the ways we see the world, and all the different ways we often choose not to see the world or are influenced to not see (?).

Despite all that is going on in the world, the rhythm of creation beats gently on. This volume is all about capturing that rhythm and adding another piece to the Mosaic of human experience in 2026.

Sincerely,
Utsarjana Mutsuddi
Editor

Heroes



(Photo by Aarti Narayan)

Plea for Peace*

Christal Velda Mitzie Ferrao

©christalclearcreation (my Instagram handle for poetry and articles)

Once a political and patriotic pride
Pursued patiently and perfectly,
A poet's permanent picturesque admiration
A place of pilgrimage and piety...

Now a persistent and perpetuating pain
Performed by polarization and plunder,
Promoted through a pessimistic pretense of propaganda
Prevented by sabotage of prudent progress of the poor...

A pleading penance for providence before the day of Pentecost
A positive pastoral papal proclamation and preaching,
For the praise and glory of the panoramic paradise
And promise of personal pleasure frequently passing, and so pleasing...

A partial paralysis from protection during a pandemic
A pronounced provincial proverbial paradox,
Provoked by protests purposely
The Plea for Peace always opens a Pandora's box...

A petition for penalty for prejudice to perish
A permitted persuasion for a poised society,
A phenomenal phase for philosophical and psychological thought
The Plea for Peace is the main point of every personality...

The poem is part of the series A to Z Poetry, a self-initiated challenge during the pandemic to experiment with alphabet and vocabulary through poetry.



Reconciliation (Versöhnung) by Artist Josefina De Vasconcelos. Photographed at the Berlin Wall by Utsarjana.

A Baby Carrier, a Recorder and a Journey to Remember

Aarti Narayan



(Photo by Aarti Narayan)

This is about the time I realised the meaning of enjoying the journey, not worrying about the destination. It's about a short fieldwork where parts of me felt both vulnerable and resilient.

The ruminations

It was a morning somewhere in the last week of November 2025. I was cleaning the house while my six-month-old daughter, Pranvi, was sleeping. I got an email titled, "Chapter Proposal Acceptance". I had sent the proposal a few weeks back, thinking that it had a very bleak chance of selection. When I read this mail I was happy and at the same time I thought, how I will do fieldwork to write this paper.

I thought,

My baby is completely dependent on me.

I have not even finished my maternity leave and have joined college. Which means Pranvi and I have not learned to be apart.

In the abstract proposal, I had written that I'll do my fieldwork in Buldhana, Maharashtra. It is a place with extreme climatic conditions, severe cold in winters and water crises in summers. If I wish to write this paper, I had to go for fieldwork in the month of December. I checked my phone, the temperature in Buldhana at night drops below 10 degrees in the month of December.

While writing the proposal, I was thinking like an ambitious research scholar and not as a mother. I almost forgot that I would have to take Pranvi along.

Will a six-month-old baby be able to tolerate such cold weather?

Is it too selfish of me to even consider doing the fieldwork?

Who will accompany the two of us?

If I go by train, how will we be able to sleep in a train berth?

Should I book a flight? But how will I manage the expenses?

From being excited about reading about the chapter acceptance, I soon started having second thoughts about even writing the paper. It felt practically impossible. My supervisor said that I should plan for the field trip soon. My hosts in Buldhana said, "You are most welcome". These words filled me with bleak motivation.

The next hurdle was: who could accompany Pranvi and me? I knew it would be no less than 10 days, and my husband could not take a break from his work for that long. With very bleak possibilities of getting a yes as an answer, I asked my mother-in-law. To my surprise and amusement, she said chalo! (I'll come with you). I was amused; my mother-in-law has not travelled much in her life, she remains fearful for most part of the day about the baby. She said yes for a field trip along with a baby and that too, to a place she hasn't even heard about.

Are you sure? I asked

It's a good opportunity that you shouldn't miss. She said

I felt so grateful and confused. I booked the tickets right away. We were going in the first week of December. A week before the trip, we were packing the bags when my mother-in-law said, "I am feeling scared".

Can your mother also come with us? Can she join us from Delhi? She asked.

I wasn't sure about that. I called my mother, and she said ok, book my tickets. I had a sigh of relief. Four of us – Pranvi, my mother, my mother-in-law, and I were going for this epic journey.

With two backpacks and a baby carrier, we started the train journey

It was a 26-hour-long train journey. On the train during the daytime, we managed well; we just sat with Pranvi in our arms, turn by turn. When I felt that she was turning fussy, I would just wrap her in the baby carrier and walk. She would be entertained observing the people around. In the afternoon and night, Pranvi and I slept in the upper berth while my mother-in-law had the lower berth to herself. Pranvi is generally a poor sleeper. Even a light noise wakes her up. But surprisingly, she slept peacefully beside me in that small berth.

Whenever I had to go to the washroom, I handed the baby from the upper berth down to my mom-in-law.

Now, when I think about passing on the child, I smile. It feels like we were playing some kind of serious catch with a baby in our arms. I still remember the look my mother-in-law would have on her face as I handed Pranvi over to her.

The train journey was much easier than we thought. We finally reached the place we were supposed to stay. My mother had arrived a day before us and was waiting for us. It was evening by the time we reached. Pranvi was meeting her Nani (Maternal grandmother) after three months. I was looking forward to seeing if Pranvi remembered her. To my surprise, she didn't just remember; it felt as if she was complaining about me to her Naani,

Mom has made me tired.

All of us had a bout of laughter, reminding each other of Pranvi's expressions.

After resting for almost one and a half days, adjusting to the cold weather and figuring out the logistics, I was ready to start the fieldwork. I planned to visit a few nearby villages and talk to older adults from farming communities about their experience of climate vulnerability and resilience.

The fieldwork

On the first day, all four of us left in an autorickshaw to a small hamlet in Parada village. The hamlet was called Nehru Nagar. This village is inhabited mostly by agricultural labourers, who also cultivated in small patches of land between 1 and 3 acres. We first went to Savita's, who was supposed to help me through the fieldwork. She and her husband (Suresh) were surprised and also excited that I had come for my work with a 6-month-old. Within five minutes of the meeting, Suresh made a *Jhoola* (Crib) out of a warm, soft blanket for Pranvi to sleep on. Savita brought tea for us and asked if the baby would have something. I was so humbled by their kindness. Pranvi loved the *jhoola* so much; she kept smiling and slept in no time. Leaving her with her grandmothers, I started my work.



(Photo by Aarti Narayan)

I saw an old lady sitting outside her house. She was wearing a colourful skirt and top, and her head was covered with a *dupatta*. She had a very large silver nose ring and was wearing a big *bindi*. She looked quite old and frail to me. I was naturally drawn to talk to her, and she agreed with little hesitation. I spent the next half an hour having a conversation with her about her life, livelihood, agriculture, climate and the challenges she goes through. Within 15 minutes of the conversation, though I was listening to her, my mind started wondering about Pranvi. If she was alright, was it a good idea to leave her and come for the interview? What if she is crying? I continued with the conversation despite these thoughts. It felt hard. After wrapping up with a satisfactory conversation, I ran back to Savita's home.

On the way back, I already heard Pranvi crying profusely, and I ran in on the urge to hold her. As soon as I held her, though she stopped crying, her eyes and expressions were asking, where did you go without me? After 5 minutes, she was still hitching with sobs. I spent some time comforting Pranvi. Though I felt extremely guilty, I carried on with work. However, I decided that all of us would go to the next place for the interview together. It felt weird; I could see people discussing amongst themselves amusingly about us.



(Photo by Aarti Narayan)

Next we went to Anusuya and Shreechand's house. They were also older adults belonging to the Banjara community (A nomadic tribe settled agriculture in parts of Maharashtra). My mother-in-law made Pranvi sleep on her lap while I did the interview. We were there for more than an hour and the conversation went very well. I could focus better as knowing Pranvi was just next door, sleeping peacefully. Anusuya and Shreechand were extremely kind and welcoming so it didn't feel odd. By the time I finished the interview it was 3pm. We wrapped for the day.

The next day we all went to the same village. This time we went way early, around 9 am. But I couldn't do any interviews on that day. The reason was not Pranvi, but because nobody agreed to the interview, citing language issues and a general discomfort, particularly among older adults, talking about their lives. The next day we went to Wagzal village, which was a half an hour from where I was staying. In this village also, I encountered the same issues; older adults were hesitant to speak in general. A few people who were willing couldn't speak Hindi at all.

I was told that I would face this problem if I intended to speak only to the older adults. By the fourth day of fieldwork, I was feeling demotivated and started thinking, was this journey even worth it? As a mom, I also felt guilty because Pranvi had caught a cold. We decided to rest for the next two days for Pranvi's sake.

Although I was resting, my mind constantly worried about the outcome and the days left for the fieldwork. After having conversations with my supervisor and some Ngo persons, I decided to approach differently from the 6th day onwards. I decided not to restrict myself to older adults and just try to listen and observe whatever comes my way. I left the interview script and agenda behind and went with an open mind to learn.

Next, we went to Parada village, and I told the auto driver to stop at any house where people were willing to talk to me. That day we first met Suresh, who gladly welcomed us to his home. I just said I wanted to talk about issues he was facing in farming, and he went on speaking about the issues for almost 40 minutes without me even asking another question.

Somewhere in between, he said,

"I don't care even if you make the PM hear this because these issues are genuine and we, the farmers, are struggling to make ends meet; forget about the profit"

I had one of the most candid conversations about the issues farmers are facing with him. He even shared that he has recently sold half of his land. Suresh was not an older adult as I planned originally. But after talking to him, I realised I got a real snapshot of the issues that farmers in Buldhana were facing, and it was not limited to water crisis.

As we left his house, an old man wearing black glasses waved at us and called us inside his house. He looked concerned for us, but he was speaking in Marathi; I could understand only partially. One thing I did understand was that he asked:

Why are the three of you ladies roaming around in this village with this child and that too in this cold weather?

In hindsight, as I recall the facial expressions of the people in the village, I feel most of the people were having questions about our abrupt presence in the village with a six-month-old baby. But I had to carry on, overlooking these questions.



(Photo by Aarti Narayan)

Our last day was the most adventurous of all. A senior from an NGO suggested that we must visit a village called Sindhkhed Lapali. He said that in this village community watershed work is very much appreciated locally. I was told it's a little far. But I still made up my mind to go. The next day we took an auto rickshaw at around 10 am to visit Sindhkhed Lapali. The road was so bumpy and broken that at times I was worried that my mother or mother-in-law who were sitting beside me in the auto would just fall off the road. It was a never-ending journey. When will we reach? I kept asking the auto driver like an impatient child. After more than an hour of this journey, which felt more like a scary rollercoaster ride, we reached Sindhkhed Lapaki. Pranvi, again had that expression on her face as if she was asking me,

"Where all, are you going to take me, I am just a baby" .

In fact, all of us were tired, hungry and thirsty. But I had to start the interview with the Sarpanch right away.



(Photo by Aarti Narayan)

I sat for the interview with Pranvi on my lap. For the next 2 hours, he shared every detail about the village, such as the quality of soil, demography of the village, livelihoods, aspirations of youth, challenges due to climate change, water scarcity this village used to face, and watershed work that the villagers have done together to solve the water crisis. It was a very insightful conversation. Honestly, when I was suggested to meet the sarcpanch I thought I'd be meeting a political figure who would just boast about his work. However, I could see his genuine eagerness to work on community resilience and environmental concerns. He was also kind enough to invite us to look at the tree plantation and watershed initiatives.



(Photo by Aarti Narayan)

A biodiversity park in Sindhkhed Lapali Village

But to see these structures, we travelled in a car and trekked for some distance with Pranvi still wrapped in the baby carrier. It was an adventure that I would not have gone for had I known about the steep treks it would involve. However, what we saw was so inspiring and the Sarpanch explained everything very minutely. We saw the farm pond, acres of tree plantation using different techniques, CCT (continuous contour trenches) for rainwater percolation and a rain gauge, which is an equipment to measure rainfall. After unbearable tiredness, hunger and overwhelming guilt of exhausting Pranvi, we stopped. I felt there was so much more to learn from Sindhkhed Lapali village and its people about community resilience. I noted down all that I still desire to learn in my diary, as my homework. And with lots of gratitude my fieldwork ended.

While coming back to Goa on the train, I didn't think about the outcome or what I would send for the book chapter. I was just glad that we could take this trip. Most of all, I felt much closer to my mother, mother-in-law, and Pranvi for being there with me on this epic journey.



(Photo by Aarti Narayan)

Riptide Rising – A coast defence game set in Panjim, Goa

Ferdin Sylvester

About the Game

Imagine you are the one who has to save your home, your village, your city.
Not a made-up world, but your own. The street you grew up on, the school at the corner, the field your grandparents farmed. Every hill, hollow and riverbank sits where it really is, because the map is built from real elevation and topography. The danger is the one your place really faces, and the defences are the ones your place has always known, from the mangroves on a creek to the old fields and bunds that farmers built long before anyone said “climate change”.

This is a game about learning by playing. You don’t read that a mangrove slows a storm surge; you plant one and watch the water stop short of the houses behind it. You don’t hear that a seawall has a cost; you build one, and years later you watch it crack. Every choice plays out on ground you recognise, so the lesson stays with you after the game is over.



22° halo by Rutva

And it is meant for everyone who lives there. A child can learn why the wetland at the edge of town matters. A farmer can see their own fields hold back a flood. A councillor can test a plan on the real map before spending a rupee on it. The science sits underneath, sourced and honest; on top, it is just a game you want to play again.

Riptide Rising begins in Panjim, as a pilot. The vision goes much further: an atlas of playable places, one town at a time, until anyone, anywhere, can open a map of their own neighbourhood and practise saving it.

Panjim 2050

This first map of Riptide Rising is set in Panjim. The board is built from OpenStreetMap and from real ground heights taken from the Copernicus satellite elevation model, CRAZ/GCZMA maps, so the beach at Miramar, the slopes of Altinho and the low fields of Taleigao and Merces sit where they do in real, along with landmarks such as Sharada Mandir School, Kala Academy and the Immaculate Conception church.

The game runs from 2026 to 2050, with one build each year. Three storms come. A cyclone hits Miramar in 2030, a monsoon flood comes down the Mandovi in 2040, and in 2050 both arrive together.

There are seven things you can build. Dunes, pandanus, mangroves and khazans are the natural and traditional ones. Khazans are Goa's old estuary fields, walled with mud bunds and worked through sluice gates for rice and fish. Seawalls, breakwaters and small dams are the engineered ones. They are strong, but they cost biodiversity and they crack with age. A mangrove protects in both kinds of storm, and kingfishers, egrets and otters come back to it. You earn stars for the homes you save and for the biodiversity you keep, so the plans that score best are the ones that lean on nature.

How it came about

We wanted people to try building disaster resilience and climate science for themselves, in a place they know, instead of reading about it.

What it does

The game puts science and art together and lets people learn by playing. The core of the virtual world comes from the real world and with science backed sources, listed under Facts and sources in the game. Anything we simplified is marked as a rule of the game. After each storm, a replay shows what would have happened if nothing had been built. By the end of a run a player has built a khazan, watched a dune take a cyclone. Learning through play is the what this game is all about.

HOW TO PLAY

Getting Started

1. Open climate-game-psi.vercel.app in Chrome, Edge, Firefox or Safari on a laptop or desktop. A mouse helps.

2. On the title screen, choose Tutorial. It takes a few minutes and covers everything you need for the main game.

3. Nothing is saved between visits, so every player starts from the beginning.

Tutorial

1. You look after a small coastal village for seven years, with one build a year. A cyclone comes after your fourth build and a river flood after your seventh.

2. Each year a card in the corner suggests one defence. It says what the defence is, what it protects against, and what it costs in the game. The matching card glows in the build menu and the best tiles for it pulse on the map.

3. Click a tile, then pick a card. That build ends the year. You can ignore the suggestion; the checklist keeps track of the defences you have not tried yet.

4. When a storm comes, each defence lights up as the water reaches it. Press Speed up to hurry it along.

5. The result card shows how many homes were saved and which defences did the work. The last card shows how many of the seven you tried. Then choose Play Panjim.

Play Panjim

1. A short brief shows where the first storm is likely to hit. The objective in the corner suggests a few builds that would help, and their tiles pulse on the map.

2. Keep an eye on the two numbers at the top: Homes at risk, which you want low, and Biodiversity, which you want high. Point at a card in the build menu and the homes that build would protect light up.

3. If a storm goes badly, Try this storm again takes you back to the start of that storm's years.



Meet the Mudskipper - A fish that walks on land. The living proof Darwin's theory of evolution

Anti-Heroes



(Photo by Rutva)

Bazar

Gurpartap Singh Kaur

Note: This is the first poem I had composed in the Sikh/Bhakti style. The language is a mixture of what we today classify as modern North-Indian languages with a strong flavour of Panjabi. It is born out of an observation of the market space, what/who is (un)observed/is (un)observable and what is their share or (non)location in the market. It reflects on the spectacle of capitalist economy, consumerism and how caste and gender play out. It also critiques the idea of production, acts of labour and how exploitation linked to these is justified in the name of karma in routine conversations. And more radically, the attempt is to write this in my mother tongue and not in academic English, using Panjabi poetic metaphors and rhythm. The musicality hence is an important component of this poem, making it difficult to translate it into English. Hence, I've transcribed it in the Devanagari script and added more Hindustani touches to it, to make it more accessible.

ਬਾਜ਼ਾਰ
-ਗੁਰਪਰਤਾਪ ਸਿੰਘਕੌਰ 'ਤੁਸਾਂਕੇ'
-گُرپرتاپ سنگھکور 'تُسانکے'

ਰਵਿ ਗਮਣ ਤੇ ਮਨ ਰਮਣ
ਕਾਰਣਿ ਤੁਰੇ ਤ੍ਰਿਕਾਲਾ ਭ੍ਰਮਣ।
ਧਰ ਚਰਣ ਪੁੱਜੇ ਬਾਜ਼ਾਰ
ਕੇਤੇ ਕਰਣ ਏਥੇ ਵਾਪਾਰ
ਕੇਤੇ ਸੁਨਿਆਰ ਕੇਤੇ ਕਿਰਿਆਨ
ਕੇਤੇ ਵੇਚਣ ਰਸ ਕਸ ਪਕਵਾਨ
ਰੰਗ-ਬਰੰਗ ਜਗਮਗ ਅਪਾਰ
ਖਿੱਚ-ਖਿੱਚ ਕਰਹਿਂ ਨਜ਼ਰ ਖੁਆਰ।
ਅਣਡਿੱਠੇ ਦਰਿਦਰ ਜੋ ਕਰਨ ਭਿਖਾਰ
ਨਾ ਸੁਣਿ ਗਰੀਬ ਭੁਜੰਗੀ ਪੜੀ ਫਟਕਾਰ
ਹੁੰਕਾਰਣ ਸੂਟ-ਬੂਟ ਪਹਿਰੇ ਦੁਕਾਨਦਾਰ
ਪਿੱਛੇ ਗੱਲੇ ਬਿਠਾਏ ਬਾਲ ਸੂਹੀ ਮੁਸਕਾਰ
ਚੱਬਣ ਸੁਰਖ ਮੁੱਖੀਂ ਪਾਨ-ਸੁਪਾਰ।
ਤੁਸਾਂਕੇ ਏਹੋ ਪ੍ਰਤੱਖ ਨ ਆਵੈ ਦੀਦਾਰ
ਕਾ ਕੀਜੀਐ ਜੋ ਗੁਪਤ ਨ ਦਿਸਣਹਾਰ?

ਨਾ ਦਿਸਣ ਹਥੇਲੀ ਸੁੱਜੀਆਂ ਚੰਮ ਸੜ੍ਹ ਫਿਣਸੀਆਂ
ਗੰਧ ਨ ਆਵਣ ਫੇਰੀਆਂ ਜਾ ਵਿਕਣ ਧੂਫ ਬੱਤੀਆਂ
ਅਣਸੁਣੇ ਰੁਲਣ ਰੁਦਾਨ ਕੰਜਰੀਆਂ ਕਹਿ ਨਿੰਦੀਆਂ
ਕਿੰਨਰ ਨੱਚ ਹੱਥ ਫੈਲਾਨ ਵਪਾਰ ਹੱਕ ਨ ਦਿੱਤੀਆਂ
ਲੱਗੈ ਨ ਭੂਖ ਸੰਤਾਪੁ ਨਾ ਪੈਣ ਢਿੱਡ ਮਰੋੜੀਆਂ
ਨਜ਼ਰੋਂ ਬਾਝ ਜ੍ਹਾਲੁ ਨੈਣ ਅੰਗ ਸੰਗ ਭੱਠੀ ਬਲੀਆਂ।

ਆਖਨ: "ਕਾਹੇ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਨ ਜਾਂਵਦੇ ਇਹ ਲਾਲ ਲੀਰੋ ਲਾਰ?
ਕਿਉਂ ਘੁੰਮਣ ਹਸਦੇ ਗਾਂਵਦੇ ਲਗਹਿਂ ਸੁਖੀ ਢੋਂਦੇ ਭਾਰ।"
ਆਖਨ, "ਖੁਸਰੇ ਕਿਉਂ ਕਰ ਜੰਮਦੇ ਪੂਰਬ ਜੂਨਾਂ ਕੇ ਕੂਕਾਰ!
"ਉਪਰੋਂ ਰਾਖਵੀਆਂ ਪਾਂਵਦੇ," ਆਖਣ, "ਜਾਤਿ ਕਰਮਾਂ ਕੀ ਮਾਰ।"

ਕਿਰਤੀ ਕੰਮ ਕਰ ਕਰ ਰੜ੍ਹੇ ਕਰਮ ਖ਼ਸਮਾਂ ਹਕੁ ਕਰਾਰ
ਜਿਸਮਾਨੀ ਧੰਧ ਫਿਟਕਾਰਦੇ ਮਾਣਸ ਖਾਣਿਆਂ ਗਲੇ ਹਾਰ
ਲਾਲੋ ਛੱਡ ਭਾਗੋ ਚੱਟਦੇ ਪਰ ਧਨ ਮਾਲ ਕੀ ਜੈ ਜੈਕਾਰ
ਠਾਠ ਬਾਟ ਨੂੰ ਰੀਸਦੇ ਉਪਜੀ ਅੰਨ੍ਹੇ ਗਾਹਕਾਂ ਕੀ ਕਤਾਰ
ਐਸਾ ਮੱਧ ਵਰਗੀਆਂ ਕੈਸਾ ਚੜਿਆ ਜੋਰੁ ਖੁਮਾਰ!
ਵਜ਼ੀਰ ਪੈਦਲ ਰਾਣੀਆਂ ਨ ਆਵੈ ਪ੍ਰਤੱਖ ਦੀਦਾਰ
ਸਭ ਪਿਆਦੇ ਇਸ ਖੇਡ ਕੇ ਵਿਛਿਆ ਸਤਰੰਜ ਬਜ਼ਾਰ
ਕਹਿਣ ਤੁਸਾਂਕੇ ਇੰਸਾਂ ਵਿਕ ਕੇ ਫਿਰਣ ਅੱਖਾਂ ਗੋਲੀਆਂ ਗਾਵਾਰ।



(Photo by Rutva)

बाज़ार

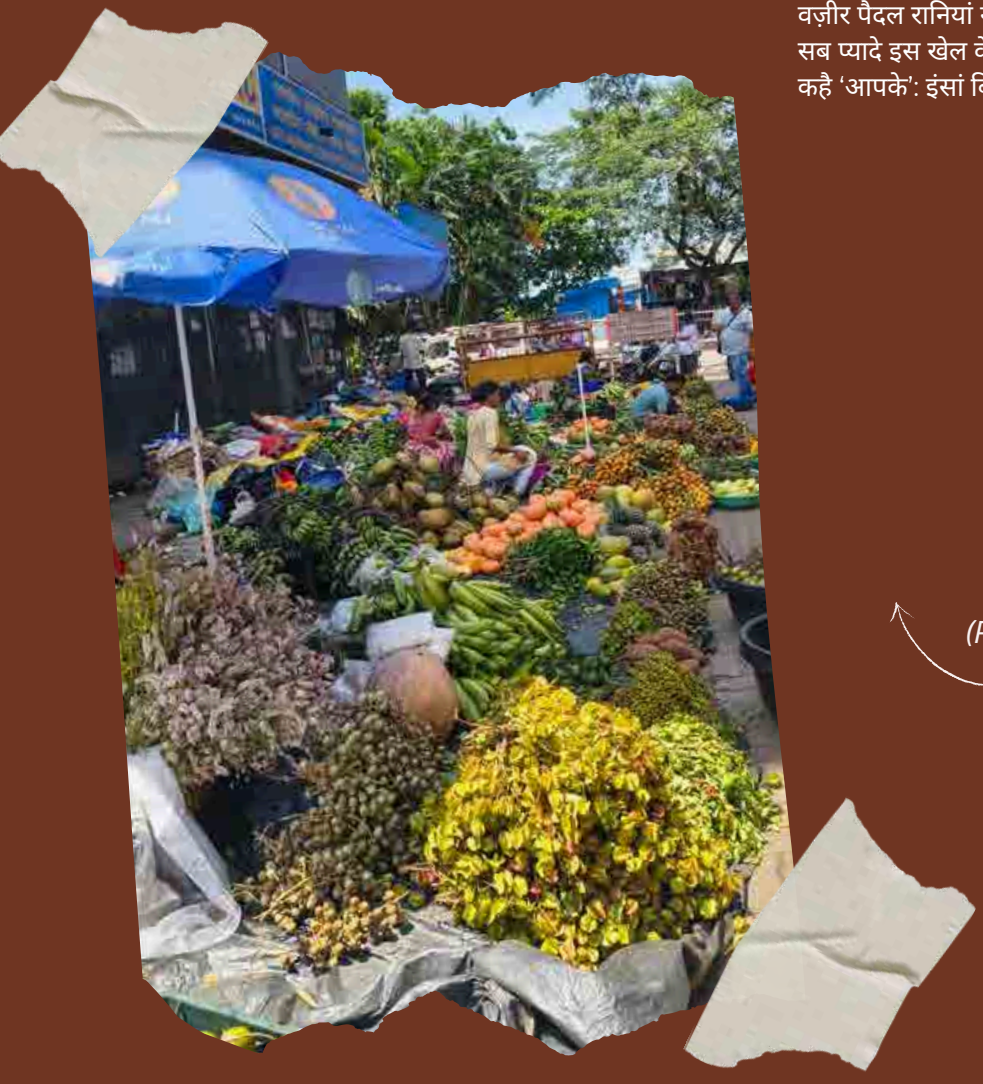
-गुरपरताप सिंहकौर 'आपके'

रवि गमन व मन रमण
कारण चले संध्या भ्रमण।
धर चरण पहुंचे बाज़ार
कई करें यहाँ व्यापार:
कई सुनियार कई किरियान
कई बेचें रस-कस पकवान
रंग-बिरंग जगमग अपार
खींच-खींच करें नज़र ख्वार।
अनदेखे दरिद्र जो मांगें भिखार
ना सुनि गरीब बच्चों को पड़ती फटकार
हुंकारें सूट-बूट पहने दुकानदार
गल्ले पीछे बिठाए बाल सूही मुस्कार
चबाते सुर्ख मुखीं पान सुपार।
'आपके', यह प्रत्यक्ष न आवै दीदार
का कीजिए जो गुप्त न दिखणहार।

ना दिखें सूजी हथेलियां सड़ी चमड़ी फुनसियां
गंध न आवन ढेरियां जहां बिकें धूप बत्तियां
अनसुने रुलें रुदान, कहि कंजरियां दुत्कारियां
किन्नर नाच फैलाएं हाथ, व्यापार हक न दित्तियां
लगे ना भूख संताप, ना पड़ें पेट मरोड़ियां
नज़रें रिक्त ज्वाल, नैन अंग संग भट्टी जलियां।

पूछते: " क्यों पढ़ने नहीं जाते ये लाल लीरो लिबास?
क्यों घूमते-हंसते गाते, लगते सुखी हैं ढोते भार?"
कहें: "हिजड़े हो क्यों पैदा होते, पिछले जन्मों के कु-कार!
"ओर तो आरक्षण है पाते," कहते हैं, "जाति कर्मों की मार।"

कर्मी श्रम कर-कर पके, कर्म मालिकों हक करार
जिस्मानी धंध फिटकारते, मानस भक्षियों गले हार
लालो छोड़ भागो चाटते, पर धन माल की जय-जयकार।
ठाठ-बाट की भेड़-चाल, उपजी अंधे ग्राहकों की कतार
ऐसा मध्य-वर्गियां कैसा चढ़ा सत्ता खुमार!
वज़ीर पैदल रानियां न आवै प्रत्यक्ष दीदार
सब प्यादे इस खेल के, बिछा शतरंज बाज़ार
कहै 'आपके': इंसां बिक के टहलती आंखें गुलाम गवार।



(Photo by Rutva)

Bazar

Gurpartap Singh Kaur 'Yours Truly'

Down the sun laid, jocund our minds swayed
Plans were hence made, for an evening promenade.
Into the bazar, we set our feet
So many here their trades carried
Many a jewellers, many a groceries
Many selling flavourful delicacies:
Rainbow hues, lit-up in bloom
Captured-captivated our sight to doom.
Obscuring the beggars begging for alms
Unlistening the impoverished kids receiving barks
From the puffing shopkeeper dressed up "smart"
Whose sons sat behind the counter with grins dark
Their mouths scarlet, chewing paan-supaar.
Yours Truly, even this spectacle comes not in vision
What to do of the concealed that remains hidden?

Remain hidden the swollen palms, rotten skin and blisters
Comes not the smell of slums where sell incense sticks and powders
Unheard wander ruined cries, of those slandered as whores, kanjars
The kinnars beg and dance, stripped off the right to business
Haven't felt the pangs in stomach or the ache of hunger
Sights ousted from flame, in kilns burn eyes, limbs and organs.

They ask: "Why go not to schools, these lads laden with rags?
Why do they loiter dancing-singing, perhaps they are happy bearing sacs?"
They say: "why would they receive a hijra birth? Could be the ill-fruits of previous births?
"What for is reservation given?," they say, "jaati is the punishment of accumulated karmas."

The labourers did labour and labour, for their masters to be with the karma rightfully entitled
The trades of body are disparaged, while blood-suckers are with garlands honoured
Leaving Lalo, they lick Bhago, it's a celebration of the rightful extortion of capital!
Mimicking luxurious lifestyles, has flared queues of aspiring clientele
What a trance of Power has enchanted the middle -class!?
Viziers, Footmen, Queens- none can the visible grasp
All are but pawns in this game: thus spread-out is the bazar-chess
Says 'Yours Truly', having sold the human, eyes roam enslaved ignorant.

1Lalo and Bhago are character references from a popular hagiographical story of Guru Nanak. Bhai Lalo was a lower caste carpenter at whose home Guru Nanak chose to stay while he was traveling. Malik Bhago, a wealthy zamindar, organised a feast inviting all kinds of holy men, Brahmins and sadhus including Guru Nanak. The Guru rejected the invitation which offended Bhago as the Guru had chosen a lower caste person's stale roti over his feast. Upon inquiry, Guru Nanak took Bhai Lalo's stale roti in one hand and Malik Bhago's puri in another and squeezed them. Milk oozed out of the former while blood oozed out of the latter. The Guru explained that Lalo's stale roti was the fruit of his hard earned labour while Bhago's puri was a symbolic production of exploited labour from lower caste workers, hence the Guru found the stale roti acceptable over the Malik's feast.

Seppuku

Mehul Kumar Singh

I remember locking the door behind me. The dark room, filled with a stench that I recognized, but couldn't recognize at the same time. How odd it is! It's really frustrating when that happens. The thumping in my head had been going on for...- wait - I don't know how long. I have no idea of time. Or space.

DHAM-DHOOM-DHAM!

I feel so tired. Lying on the ground was the right call. Some water might have spilled where I laid. I felt my neck getting wet. The collar of my shirt was also soaked! All the grime that will stick to it! Fuck! I'll have to wash it again. I just washed it yesterday. I'll think about that later. First, I'll rest a little.

The question is urgent, but do I need to answer it urgently? I know that I don't know where I am, but does that really matter? As far as I can assess, my first priority seems to be some good old sleep. But, why can't I recognize where I am? I don't remember having amnesia! For that matter, if I had amnesia would I remember having amnesia? My headache is getting worse from all the thinking. I'll think about that later. When did I become a sloth! Whatever, I'll cut myself some slack.

I close my eyes. It's not like it matters anyway, with the room being pitch black. I try bringing my hand to my chest, but it feels heavier than usual. I am clutching something. I feel it around with my fingers. Cold, sturdy, long, sharp...- wait- WHAT! Sharp? I think I am holding a knife. I felt a tinge of pain in my thumb where I cut myself trying to examine it. Strangely enough, I couldn't make a sound. A hiss escaped my lips.

WHERE AM I?

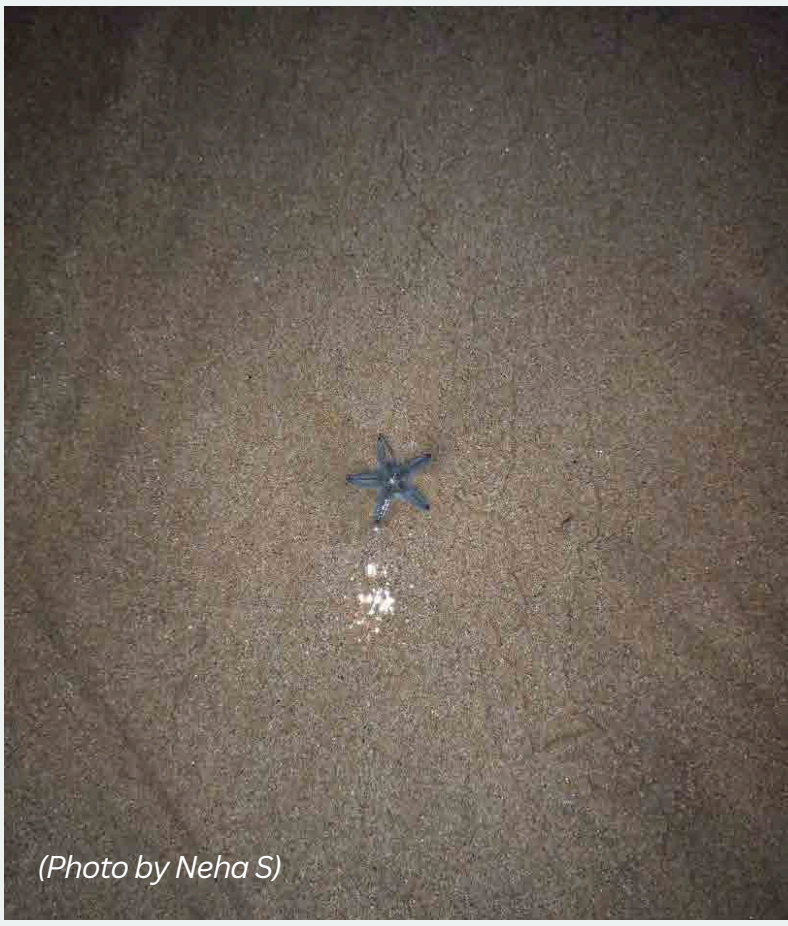
I let go of the knife, and somehow brought my hand up to my neck. Lukewarm fluid. Consciousness creeps in, vision becomes clear, and there's pain all over my body, emanating from my neck. There's blood, constantly flowing out of my throat that is slit open like an envelope. Thick crimson bubbles bursting, smearing my mouth. I must scream. I can't.

Oh My God! I am dying.

I remember.

I remember everything.

It was Neila's birthday. I was supposed to buy a cake on my way home from work, but I forgot. Right at the entrance to my house, I remembered. I couldn't enter empty handed. I ran to the market without washing myself.



(Photo by Neha S)

I remember now.

The stench in this room, where I laid, was mine. Earlier that day, I had worked inside a manhole, and realizing I needed to be home early today for my daughter's birthday, I just washed myself with water, and changed my clothes, thinking I'll just take a bath with soap and ash at home. That didn't happen.

I remember.

The girl was there, on the road. Must have been the same age as my daughter. She had her ears plugged. Maybe listening to the new TREX song which was on every hoarding in the market, every channel on TV, and before every video on YouTube. It was even on the reefer truck that rocketed straight towards the girl. I remember running to her, and diving onto her, holding her tight, to get her away from the truck's trajectory. I remember realizing the sin I had just committed. Everyone's eyes were on me. I let go of the high-born, for her to get up on her own, while the crowd started to surround me. Her face, she had recognized the tattoo on my left cheek. The tattoo of a plus sign. An incomplete swastik. The tattoo which was a reminder of my limits. If it were a man, I would have been killed then and there, for touching him. But unfortunately, she was not a man. And thus, the price for the sin was even higher. The rule book says so.
The look on her face...yes, I knew that look. 'I am thankful to you for saving me, but sorry, that I can't do anything' face. I panicked and ran. The crowd was behind me. It was a game. I was their hunt. And I knew my own fate. A prey knows. It always knows.

And just like a bunny running from a cheetah, the knowledge of my fate was the only motivation I had for running, even when my muscles burnt so hot that I could feel them melting on my bones. In the hopes of losing them, I had ventured into an unknown neighborhood. Finding a woodwork shop, I ran for it, and I remember pulling down the shutter behind me. The shutter looked sturdy. And it definitely was, for it stood between me and my fate. I remember crying, thinking of my daughter, who must still be waiting for me at home. Unfortunately, the smiling face of my twelve year old wasn't enough to hold me back from doing what I did. I found a machete hanging elegantly on the wall, the carving of a swastik on its handle I could feel. I remember slitting my throat, without hesitation. Blood gushing out instantly. With the bridge between my body and head demolished, it all got dark, then and there.
I had run all the scenarios in my head, and I knew this was the best. For me, and my daughter. At least I will die. Die thinking of my daughter. Who will be orphaned. But won't have to see her father being flayed alive, and burnt on the nearest square, while the news channels broadcasted the whole thing, like they always did.

The Japanese wouldn't have invented the practice for this purpose. There were some technical divergences in the practice. But my seppuku was the best there was for me today.

The Accidental Trip Ft. Goa @080826

Utsarjana Mutsuddi

On the days you move unexpectedly, unexpected things will happen. Mine included being charged at by aurouch sized domesticated cousins of wild bisons. Falling on a really sharp rock straight onto an embarrassing bone. Dhoondha petroglyph, mila waterfall. Sri Narayandev, and Sri Mahishasurmardini. Getting lost in Margao twice. Entering someone's home space to back up, because I read the terrain wrong. In a matter of 6 hours.
Who wants to read the picture story?
.
..
...
....
.....
Okay. So, some of the stories come with pictures. And other pictures come with stories that led up to them. Cool? Cool.
So, I woke up and I had a day where I was happy to not work deadlines at all. And I selected a heading for Budbudiyachi Talaab. A pond where bubbles appear from aural experiments. Aural experiments failed and I was deeply underwhelmed by the place. But how I got there was a fun story. The route was Margaon Western Bypass Highway, to Quepem, and then the route via Usgalimal. I had no plans to go to Usgalimal anyway. But here's where the Being-charged-by-Aurouch-sized-domesticated-cousins-of-wild-bisons story happens. At a certain turn, near Usgalimal, I look straight ahead of me, on my scooter, and there are two bison type extremely large cows or bulls or whatever you can call them (given their pace of advance towards my direction, I wasn't exactly feeling safe to wait and determine species), that were charging towards me. The only time I can say the word "charging" in the medieval war animal sense.

I did what I felt was the smart human thing to do, I took an about turn and parked off the road towards the direction they were charging. Essentially as far out of their way as possible. I switched the engine off, looked ahead of me, and a black cat had appeared out of nowhere. The bisons had contested off each other into a service road on the opposite side. No, I kid you not. Each of them was at least 2/3rds the weight of my scooter + me. The impact would not have been pretty. A couple of them were taller than me while I was driving past. Like if a scooter were driving along-side a Scorpio. Now replace Scorpio with domesticated cousins of wild bisons. (To be entirely honest, I did not stop to examine if they were domesticated or wild, they were a pack, they had horns larger than the Krampus I saw at the Gernsbach Fastnicht in Germany). Much larger. On real bison-like very large cows. Anyway, I'm glad I did not stop to take a picture of this.
So, Budbudiyachi Talaab was the farthest point on my plan. Next time I think it could be the starting point. I hear that's an interesting route. But on my way back I saw something called the Kazur Petroglyphs. Obviously, I had to explore. So, I took the left, and started going uphill, soon enough, I saw this.



The route to the waterfall is through someone's house (They kindly allow a rusted Archaeological Survey of India sign post, for the Kazur Petroglyphs. ed me to pass through)

I am a stupid person, I did not find it, but I believe I passed it right by. (That's on me).
But having believed on my drive in, that it was not where I now retrospectively believe it was, I drove into the hill. I kept driving upwards, till I landed on an incline that I couldn't manage. So, I had to just rev up into the nearest flat, and that was inside someone's home. I was gently escorted out, and told of a route I could follow on foot. I believed I was going to find the Petroglyphs, but the route was something like this.



The route to the waterfall is through someone's house (They kindly allowed me to pass through)



Kind friends who showed the way



Wildflower

"We all depend on the kindness of strangers." Blanche DuBois, A Streetcar Named Desire
(ISC Drama, Anyone?)

The route was quick, hot, humid, and comfortably inclined. Given my last forest hike was Black Forest/ Schwarzwald, Germany in the winter, this was denser, more alive, louder, and palpable. I was constantly afraid of the big two, Leeches, and Slytherins. But thankfully those are not the injuries I came home with. And the entire route for what?

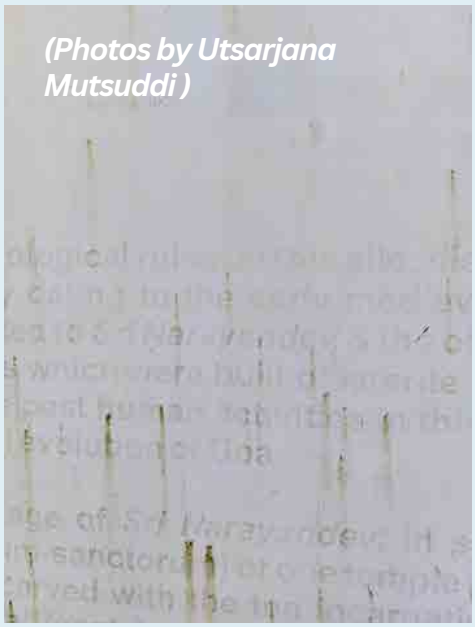


Foliage

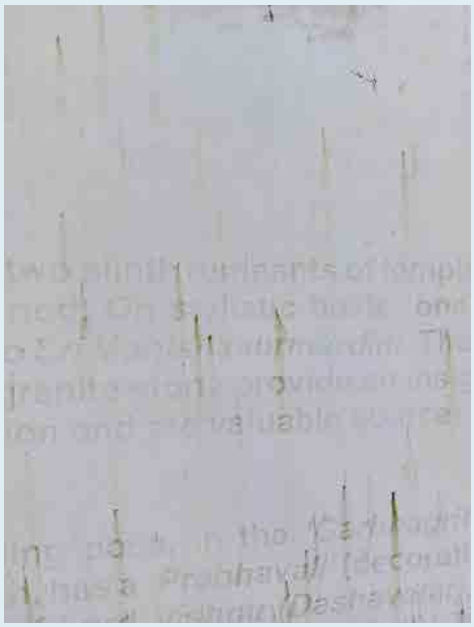


A Human Managed Waterfall

The entire route, for a waterfall that helps with steppe farming. I went as far as I felt safe alone. Since, I did not want to take the risk, I returned. I started driving back towards Margao, but en-route to Margao, I found this.



Identification of part of the ruins as a dedication to Sri Narayandev



Identification of a part of the ruins as dedicated to Sri. Mahishasurmardini



Signboard Literature (Fading)

For this I'll turn to my friend, ChatGPT.
Dear GPT, Extract Text.
GPT:
MAHBAL / BINI TEMPLE (title partially obscured; likely "Mahabal Bini Temple" or similar)
Archaeological ruins, at this site, display two plinth remnants of temples, roughly dating to the early medieval period. On stylistic basis, one is dedicated to Sri Narayandev and the other to Sri Mahishasuramardini. These temples, which were built of laterite and granite stone, provide an insight into the past human activities in this region and are valuable sources of cultural evolution of Goa.
The image of Sri Narayandev, in standing pose, in the garbhagriha (sanctum-sanctorum) of one temple plinth has a Prabhavali (decorative arch), carved with the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu (Dashavatara). A Garuda (eagle) sculpture is found in the Sabhamandap (hall), while the plinth of the temple is decorated with diamond and floral patterns.

Confidence Report

Section	Confidence
"Archaeological ruins..." paragraph	95%
Sri Narayandev paragraph	90-95%
Temple name in heading	20–40%(too faded)

Things I could make out

- Karnataka (small map/label at upper left)
- Sri Narayandev
- Sri Mahishasuramardini
- laterite and granite stone
- early medieval period
- Garbhagriha
- Prabhavali
- Dashavatara
- Garuda
- Sabhamandap
- diamond and floral patterns

Bye ChatGPT.



The first steps...



Garbhagriha of Structure dedicated to Sri Mahishasuramardini



Sri Narayandev from Sri Mahishasurmardini's Garbhagriha



What Endures



Remains of a Deity



Inside Sri Mahishasurmardini's Garbhagriha

Interestingly, and (Fair disclosure: I did not take pictures of this due to device memory constraints), The site was tagged as Laxmi Narayan Ruins. The newer signposts along the route were indicating that.
So, for the sake of satisfying my itch for confirmation bias, I told GPT.
Look for sources from that era and confirm who Sri Narayandev and Sri Mahishasurmardini were?
GPT:
The archaeological evidence and the iconography on the signboard point to two well-known Hindu deities rather than obscure local figures. Here's what we can say with confidence.

1. Sri Narayandev (नारायणदेव)

Sri Narayandev is Lord Narayana (Vishnu). The suffix "-dev" simply means "the revered deity" and is common in medieval western India.
The strongest evidence is actually on your signboard:
"...the image of Sri Narayandev... has a Prabhavali carved with the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu (Dashavatara)..."
The Dashavatara (Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Parashurama, Rama, Krishna, Buddha/Balarama, Kalki) is one of the clearest identifying features of Vishnu worship. It would be extremely unusual for any deity other than Vishnu/Narayana to be surrounded by the Dashavatara.
(The Times of India)

Narayana in the Early Medieval Deccan
During the Kadamba period (c. 10th–13th centuries), Goa contained temples dedicated to:

- *Vishnu (Narayana)*
- *Shiva*
- *Durga*
- *Saptakoteshwar*
- *local Gramadevatas*

Vaishnavism was well established alongside Shaivism and Shaktism. The Narayandev temple represented this Vaishnava tradition. (Government of Goa | Official Portal)

2. Sri Mahishasuramardini

This identification is even clearer.
***Mahishasuramardini** literally means:*
"The Slayer (Mardini) of the Buffalo Demon (Mahishasura)."
*She is one of the principal forms of **Durga**, described extensively in the **Devi Mahatmya** (part of the Markandeya Purana, c. 5th–6th century CE).*
According to the text:

- *Mahishasura defeats the gods.*
- *The gods combine their divine energies.*
- *Durga is created.*
- *She fights Mahishasura for several days.*
- *She kills him with her trident while her lion attacks the buffalo.*

This exact iconography appears in numerous medieval temples.
*The Archaeological Survey of India's Goa museum even preserves a **Kadamba/Yadava-period Mahishasuramardini sculpture** showing:*

- *four arms,*
- *trident,*
- *sword,*
- *shield,*
- *grasping the demon,*
- *lion attacking the buffalo,*

which matches the traditional medieval depiction. (Museums of India)

Why these two together?
This is actually very interesting archaeologically.
A temple complex containing:

- *Narayana (Vishnu)*
- *Mahishasuramardini (Durga)*

*suggests **coexistence of Vaishnava and Shakta worship** within one sacred precinct.*
This was common in medieval western India.
Rather than separate religious traditions, many temple complexes housed multiple shrines dedicated to different deities belonging to the broader Hindu pantheon.
*The excavation at this site even revealed evidence of **three temples**, although the third deity has not yet been identified. (The Times of India)*

What period were they worshipped here?
*The signboard says **early medieval**.*
*Archaeological studies and architectural comparisons place these ruins broadly in the **Kadamba period**, approximately **11th–13th century CE**.*
The use of:

- *dressed laterite,*
- *granite,*
- *carved plinths,*
- *Prabhavali,*
- *Dashavatara imagery,*

all align with medieval Goan temple architecture. (Government of Goa | Official Portal)

Was "Narayandev" a local Goan deity?
*Probably **not**.*

*"Narayandev" is most likely the regional name used for **Lord Vishnu as Narayana**, rather than a distinct local god. Medieval inscriptions and temple traditions across Goa, Karnataka, and Maharashtra often use forms like:*

- *Narayanadev*
- *Narayandeva*
- *Narayan Deva*

to refer to Vishnu.

Overall conclusion

The archaeological interpretation is well supported:

- ***Sri Narayandev** = **Lord Vishnu (Narayana)**, identified by the Dashavatara carved on the prabhavali.*
- ***Sri Mahishasuramardini** = **Goddess Durga** in her warrior aspect, the slayer of Mahishasura.*

*The temple complex represents a medieval Goan religious center where **Vaishnava and Shakta traditions were practiced side by side**, likely during the Kadamba period (11th–13th century), with evidence for at least one additional, as yet unidentified, shrine. (The Times of India)*

Hmm. Interesting. I'm sure this is a favourite site of theological discussion among Hindu Religious Scholars. A site of Shaivite-Vaishnavite unification, where only the Vaishnavite is allowed to survive, in idols and signpost memories. If the TOI article that GPT fished out for me is for real, we have been waiting on renovations on this structure since 2015. I get that archaeological integrity deep inside the heartland of Goa, is not a priority for the tourism forward industry. I can let that slide. But what I find interesting is in the names of the deities. Both deities were assigned the same honorific, aka "Sri". No, gendering noted. No, "Sri" for male, and "Smt" for female. Both deities are accorded the same honorific. Read into that, what you will, dear reader. I would like to note that it represents equality in deification. Why this stands out for me, is that it is representative of an era where the internal cultural dynamics of gendering or gendered social difference, worked within a very different kind of logic.

For me, the traveller, who likes to pursue knowledge, and has been attempting to understand nomadism in the South Asian context, this is interesting because it reminds us not to read history without context. When we find multiple or even contentious narratives about a culture from a frozen timestamp in the past, where we have no verifiable oral narratives left, and all that we have is ruins, that are accorded different and sometimes opposing cultural meanings, by the generations that come afterwards, it's best that we dig up as much as we can about that era from history books.

In this case, my primary teaser is, am I looking at a description that was written at the same time or by the same cultures that built the temples whose ruins I saw, or am I reading a cultural translation from a period that came after that but before now. Because I believe that it is in this answer the narrative really lies. Is it a Laxmi Narayan Temple, or a Sri Mahishasurmardini and Sri Narayandev Temple? They are two very different cultural contexts.

Brain teasers aside, this was one of the more unexpected adventures of this year for me, and the question of how culture is memorialised really stayed with me. It's a different matter altogether, that the story of Wild Bisons charging at me, makes it to my permanent dinner conversation starter list.

Everything in between



(Photo by Rutva)

The Witch and the Man in the Grove

Ferdin Sylvester

Wandering along the machiavellian mires of the saltmud, in the silence of the le tide, I least expected her, a glow, almost a halo around her head.

“The Fuck!!!” were the exact words what exploded in my head.

She stood there with a smile. Who was she smiling at? Who was she!? In my grove.
I ventured out a “Hello?”
“Hello…” she said, her smile getting bigger.

What was that around her eye? A shimmer of some kind.

“Do I know you?” I asked, surprised to find myself smiling too, albeit a small smile, couldn’t figure out why.
“No. I hope you do not.” she said, throwing her head back and laughing in my face

Hit with such a force of open mirth, I felt a wave of.. a wave of what? Warmth? I felt a tiny tendril of excitement creeping up as the first wave receded. Why!!??
“What are you doing here?” I asked, forcing close the smile which threatened to out if I didn’t keep it locked up behind pursed lips.
“Do you think I’m lost?” she asked me back instead; her voice sounding more like feral purr than anything human I had heard before.
That’s when I first actually noticed her. And honestly, it was truly a godlike effort to tear my gaze away from those deep, dewdrop eyes.
A cover of green over the softness of blue. Skin the color of sunflower honey and dark moonlight. I could feel her copulin; an aroma of herbs, lust, and flowers; pouring out of her. Flood would be the right word.
“What! No. I didn’t say that. I mean, how did you get here?” I spluttered out, feeling a bit mesmerized.
“Mesmer!!?” I thought, my ears ringing with alarm bells.
“I would like to believe…” she replied lifting a finger to her lips, “it was destiny.” And just like that, cast was the spell.
I, just a man in the grove, had met a witch.



(Photo by Rutva)

Sarà perché ti amo : A Journey Through Italy

Shivani Keny

Che confusione, sarà perché ti amo
È un'emozione che cresce piano piano
Stringimi forte e stammi più vicino
Se ci sto bene, sarà perché ti amo
Translation:"What confusion, perhaps it's because I love you. It's an emotion that slowly grows and grows. Hold me tight and stay closer to me. If I feel so good, it must be because I love you."


(Photo by Shivani Keny)

Between the streets of Florence, the conversations at a conference, and the moments of discovering Italy, there was this song. The lively rhythm of Sarà perché ti amo (1981) seemed to bring more joy to an already beautiful place. It is one of those songs that stays with you, even when you do not understand every word.

In January 2025, I applied to present at the International Congress of Applied Psychology (ICAP) 2026 with an ulterior motive: to travel to Europe! Growing up in Goa, I have always been aware of the many ways in which Goan culture has European influences. Thus, I wanted to make the most of my visit to Italy. I found myself looking at the country with a certain familiarity, interested in its cultural connections, architectural details, and history.

My journey started with landing in Milan from Mumbai. What struck me most about Milan was how fashionable everyone seemed to be. It felt as though the city had its own unspoken dress code: looking effortlessly stylish without trying too hard. From tailored coats and well-fitted trousers to carefully chosen accessories, looking stylish simply seemed to be part of one's day. Milan had certainly set the bar high, and I found myself looking at the people more than the city itself.


(Photos by Shivani Keny)



Due to the conference, I spent the majority of my time in Florence. Florence is the kind of city that encourages you to look up. Its streets are full of life, and I enjoyed walking around without always having a particular destination in mind.

The architecture is difficult to ignore, from the magnificent Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore to the historic buildings lining its narrow streets.

The Duomo was breathtaking. Photographs do little justice to the scale and intricate details of the structure. The legacy of the Renaissance is everywhere.

Florence was home to some of the greatest artistic and intellectual minds in history, including Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and Botticelli. All thanks to the Medici family!

And then there was the food. Italian food made me appreciate the regional character of its cuisine. Florence introduced me to the pleasures of Tuscan cooking, from fresh pasta and Pecorino Toscano to freshly baked focaccia. And, of course, there was gelato. Walking through the city and stopping for an affogato felt like one of those travel experiences that need no elaborate description. Not to forget, the yummiest coffees.



(Photo by Shivani Keny)

The people added another dimension to the experience. There was something lovely about the everyday rituals of Italian life: stopping for coffee, laughing over meals, and talking endlessly. I enjoyed observing these small moments and imagining what it might be like to grow up in a place like this.

Pisa was another stop on my Italian adventure, and it felt quite different from the larger cities we had visited. Its name immediately brings to mind one iconic landmark: the Leaning Tower of Pisa. The Piazza dei Miracoli, where the famous tower stands, was undoubtedly the highlight. Tourists posed in every imaginable way and watching everyone participate in this familiar ritual was entertaining in itself.

What I enjoyed about Pisa was its simplicity. It did not feel as overwhelming as a major metropolitan city. A half-day spent walking around, admiring an extraordinary piece of architecture and enjoying the atmosphere was enough to make the visit memorable.



(Photo by Shivani Keny)



(Photo by Shivani Keny)

The next city, or rather, empire, to explore was Rome. The Colosseum was undoubtedly a highlight. Standing before this nearly 2,000-year-old amphitheatre, it was fascinating to imagine the gladiatorial contests and public spectacles that once took place here. Nearby, the Roman Forum offered a glimpse into the political and social life of ancient Rome. The grandeur of St. Peter's Basilica, the intricate sculptures of the Trevi Fountain, and the dome of the Pantheon each revealed a different chapter of history. The Vatican Museums and the Sistine Chapel housed some of the world's most celebrated works of art, including Michelangelo's extraordinary ceiling frescoes.

What struck me was how these monuments coexisted with modern life. Ancient ruins stood beside busy roads, and historic squares were filled with cafés and people going about their day. Rome has too much history to take in during one visit. Multiple visits would be needed to do justice to it.



(Photo by Shivani Keny)



(Photo by Shivani Keny)



(Photo by Shivani Keny)



(Photo by Shivani Keny)

Cinque Terre was like stepping into a postcard. Comprising five colourful fishing villages along the Ligurian coast, it is known for its pastel-coloured houses perched on cliffs overlooking turquoise waters. After the grandeur of Rome, Cinque Terre offered a quieter, more relaxed experience.

What struck me most was the way the villages seemed to cling to the hillsides, with their narrow lanes, winding stairways, little harbours, and breathtaking coastal views. Every turn offered another picture-perfect scene. There was a certain simplicity to the landscape: fishing boats bobbing in the water, little cafés tucked into corners, and people enjoying the unhurried rhythm of a coastal town.Coming from Goa, I felt a certain familiarity in being surrounded by the sea. There was something comforting about the coastal landscape.

Of course, the Italian summer heat was another story. As beautiful as Italy was, the heat certainly did not make me miss India any less!

Now, when I think about Italy, I suspect that a little of that emotion has stayed with me.

Sarà perché ti amo (Perhaps it is because I fell a little in love with Italy).

The Ecocritical Mosaic

Neha S.

Clay Artwork - Marine conservation, Global Resilience

Inspired by the previous UN Ocean Conferences (particularly the 2025 UN Ocean Conference in Nice, France), this handcrafted air-dry clay minimalist model centres on a tiny earth wrapped in the mandate 'Marine Conservation, Global Resilience', visually capturing the summits' mission to link ocean wellbeing, biodiversity, and climate action. At its base, a vibrant coral reef teeming with tube sponges, starfish, a clownfish, sea anemones, clams, algae and a blue whale represent the vital coastal ecosystems that must be restored to safeguard biological richness of the sea and vulnerable communities. Emerging alongside the reef are an offshore wind turbine and a floating solar array, symbolizing the transition toward a sustainable blue economy that decarbonizes global energy systems without degrading marine habitats. A thriving ocean system regulates the climate, cycles nutrients, and buffers the coast so that terrestrial life (symbolized by the leaf) can survive and flourish. This mini sculpture ultimately reinforces a critical truth---protecting life below water is indispensable for securing planetary resilience above it.



(Photo by Sameer Redkar)

The Ecopoetic Voices

While this magazine primarily serves as a platform for doctoral scholars, we chose to feature these undergraduate works to highlight the interdependent nature of teaching and research. This semester, serving as Teaching Assistants for the Ecocriticism course and engaging with the engineering students during the workshop and subsequently evaluating their poetic submissions provided us with profound academic and creative insights. Witnessing the students' transition from rigid, technical paradigms to fluid, ecological reflections challenged our own analytical frameworks. Managing these undergraduates alongside our instructors through the process of articulating environmental consciousness reminded us that our pedagogical responsibilities inherently enrich our doctoral journey. Their innovative approaches to merging science with humanities offered fresh perspectives that deeply influence our own research methodologies and creative expressions, making their work a vital addition to our scholarly community

The five poems presented in this collection were selected from the Ecopoetry workshop conducted by the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences on September 26, 2026, as an integral part of the HSSF349 Ecocriticism course. Facilitated by Prof. Kathryn S. Hummel, who serves as Instructor-in-charge of the course, alongside Dr. Rayson K. Alex, the six-hour workshop was designed to connect literary study with real-world environmental action. The session began with an introductory look at ecopoetry, followed by a warm-up exercise challenging students to apply structured rhyme and sensory vocabulary to reimagine the overlooked, everyday campus spaces. The main part of the workshop was a thirty-minute walk involving field observation, during which the students were told to opt for a detailed, descriptive kind of language. Students recorded a number of very specific environmental thoughts, including five exact visual details, four acoustic observations which were layered, three tactile sensations, two different olfactory sources, some specific kinds of movements in nature, and the contrast between anthropogenic and wild elements present in what they observe.

Moreover, the students developed questions that were specific to each environment with the aim of promoting scientific investigation.



Ecopoetry workshop presentation Introducing students to Ecopoetry



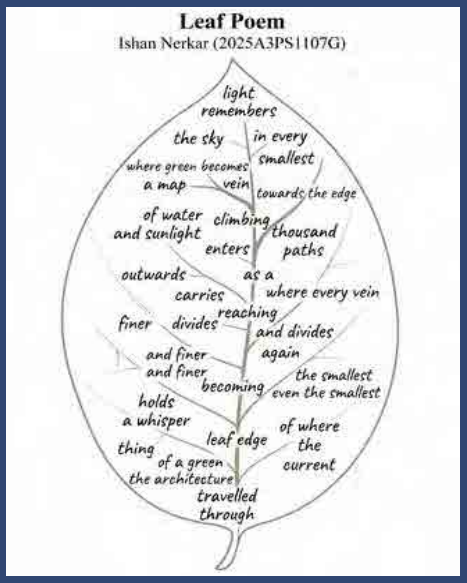
Students taking Field Notes



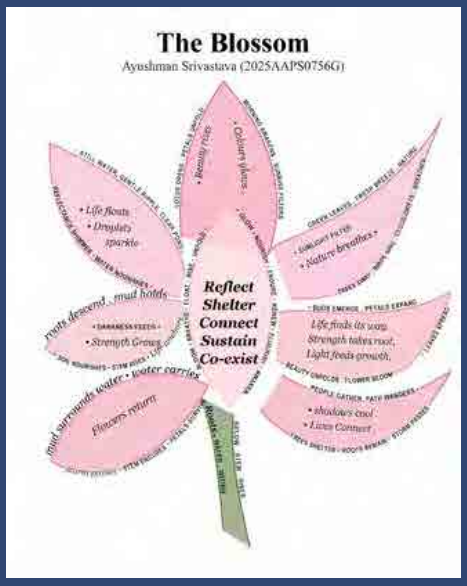
From first drafts to the final display - young poets leaving their mark on the walls

The systematic fieldnotes thus obtained were used as the raw materials for subsequent writing activities, such as rule-bound poems and visual and concrete poetry structured around observation, time, location, and feelings. Following a collaborative peer presentation session, the following five poems were selected from the workshop to be featured in our magazine.

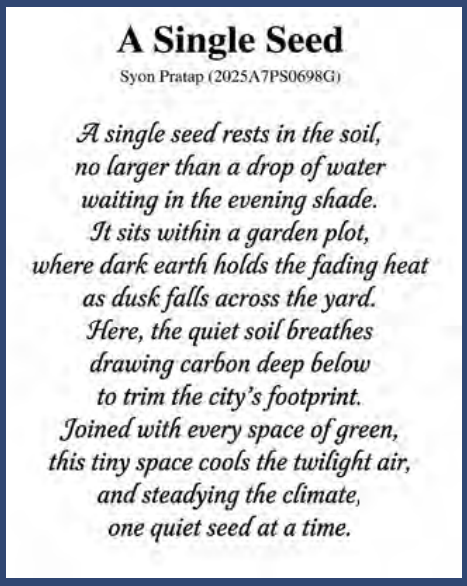
The striking piece of visual poetry by Mr. Abhilash Singh, ingeniously bridges engineering concepts with Ecopoetry. Structured in the format of an electrical circuit diagram, the writer has titled the work as 'AC RL Circuit: A Story of Resistance and Restoration'. By utilizing this technical framework as his canvas, he maps electrical components directly onto ecological realities. The poem 'A Single Seed' authored by Syon Pratap shifts the focus from technical analogies to the profound ecological impact of micro-landscapes. The visual poem by Md. Arman Abdullah titled 'Tensor of the sensor', embraces the workshop's exploration of concrete and tabular poetry formats. The poem executes the field exercise's mandate to contrast the wild with the anthropogenic, placing the natural movements and sounds of the environment in direct, structural juxtaposition with modern intrusions. The poem by Ayushman Srivastava is an example of concrete poetry, fully embracing the workshop's instruction on pictorial formatting. The writer physically arranged the words into the intricate shape of a blooming flower, where the visual form itself becomes an active part of the reading experience. Ishan Nerkar's 'Leaf Poem' is also a concrete poem, intricately arranged to form the delicate, branching structure of a leaf.



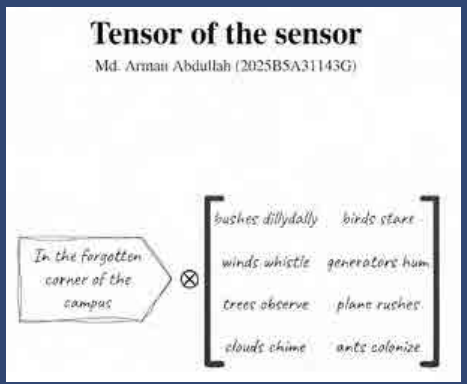
Leaf Poem - Ishan Nerkar



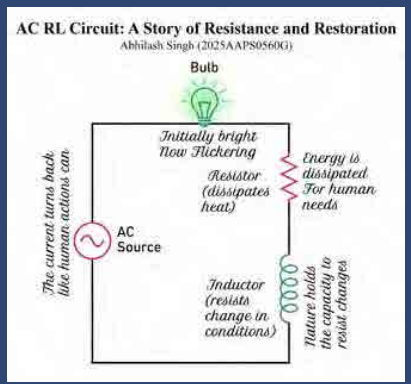
Poem: The blossom - Ayushman Srivastava



Poem: A Single Seed - Syon Pratap



Poem: Tensor of the Sensor - Md Arman Abdullah



Poem: AC RL Circuit - Abhilash Singh



(Photo by Neha S)

Closing Gallery Walk and Reflection from EcoPoetry Workshop

A City of Festival Spaces

Mavis Rodrigues

About the Poems

These poems are reflections on my experience of the Serendipity Arts Festival (SAF) over the past few years. Since its first edition in 2016 in Panaji, Goa, SAF has returned annually to the city (with the exception of two years during the Covid-19 pandemic when the festival went online like so many other events) with programmes, exhibitions, performances, and workshops spread across the fields of music, dance, theatre, visual arts, culinary arts, and more.

I make it a point to visit the festival every year. Sometimes, I go alone; sometimes, with my mum; Sometimes, I go with a friend; other times, I take students along with me for a field trip, introducing them to art appreciation, creativity and imagination, and critical thinking over the course of a single day. Each visit offers a way to experience art and Panaji, and these two poems reflect and meditate on those experiences.

Take the poem “Exhibition Space (After Fazenda)”. The poem draws from my visits during SAF, and from when I was child, to Fazenda, a heritage building in the heart of Panaji that was formerly the site of the Directorate of Accounts, Government of Goa, before it shifted across the river to Porvorim to a new building – Kautilya Lekha Bhavan. Fazenda, or rather, Direção dos Serviços da Fazenda e Contabilidade, as my father tells me it was called, has now become a regular venue for the Serendipity Arts Festival. But for me, when I step into the building to see a particular exhibition or a specific painting, I also find myself stepping back into the past, remembering what I used to see as a child the spotlight noticeboard of the recreation club, a maze-like workspace, people at their desks, files everywhere, my father at work.



(Photo by Nicole Sequiera Vaz)

The second poem “Eating at the Art Park” is a poem about food and friendship. It is a poem for my friend Nicole. Nicole and I visit Serendipity every year, and while this particular poem carries with it all the memories of all our past visits, and all the love and affection I have for her, it is also specifically about SAF 2025. We had exhausted ourselves walking through the exhibits in the Old GMC Complex, we were both tired and hungry, our feet were hurting, and all we wanted was to rest and unwind and spend some more time together. So, we crossed the road and made our way to the Art Park, found ourselves a table, and kicked off our shoes. We ate and we laughed and we remembered.

Exhibition Space (After Fazenda)

people were here before the caravaggio,
before the drawn landscapes and synthetic audios,
before art spilled out from open windows
and tumbled down polished stairs
to catch the spinning wheels
of motorists, passing by unaware

people were here before phones foretold the future,
before screens shimmered in the hands of commuters,
before the governing heart started to shift
and relocate muscle, mind, bone, blood, person
to buildings free from the weight of heritage

people were here before all the artist statements,
before the left-behind signs and performed laments,
before the histories etched in the tiles of these rooms
became the experience of the exhibit
booked and bought and sold as something new, something old

people were here before the galleries,
when sections divided space and floor, and
i was there too, years before art occupied these yellow walls,
pushing open doors, tumbling down wooden stairs
to stop the spinning wheels
of change, passing by with no care.

Watch Mavis's recitation of Exhibition Space

Click here

or Scan here

Watch Mavis's recitation of Eating at the Art Park

Click here

or Scan here

Eating at the Art Park

The soy sauce spills between gaps in the wood, forming pools of fossil gems in the sand, while we package the day into contained conversations.

Our empty boxes catch the swinging breeze, lifting away from us to where the jazz band begins a series of musical demonstrations.

With fingers sticky with the lingering scent of marshmallows and lemons, we move through our phones' records of art, stars, and constellations.

We walk up marble stairs and down winding iron, stumbling over the chipped edges of stepping stones and tripping into recollections.

We've been here before, you remark, handing me slices of candied love
We'll always return, I say, and the flavours in my mouth are affirmations

By Deepika G. and Divya Ann Abraham

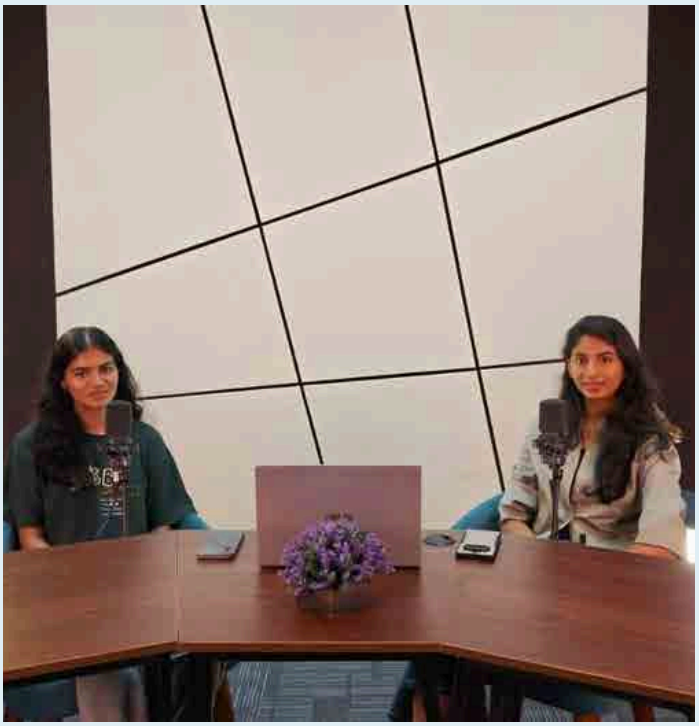
A Collaborative Conversation by two Interns



During a recent month-long (April to May 2026) internship collaboration between the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences (BITS Pilani, Goa Campus) and the Department of English (CMS College, Kottayam), we served as co-mentors to the interns, Nivedya and Hannah. Guided by Prof. Rayson K. Alex, our objective was to integrate the interns into our active Institute and Department ecosystems through structured interactive sessions, group meetings, a workshop and field visits. Over the course of their stay, several brainstorming sessions led to the development of a conversational podcast project. In the video, Nivedya and Hannah share their reflections on the research training, academic environment, and hands-on exposure they received during their time with us at BITS Goa.









Watch the Podcast: Studying, Travelling & Living in BITS Goa

Click here

or Scan here

"Love Song" by Adele

Cover by Divya Ann Abraham



Recorded live during our sessions, here is Divya Ann Abraham's cover of "Love Song" by Adele, produced as part of the Music Production Workshop (October 2026), organized by the HSS Media Lab. "It's always so much fun and equally a privilege to work with the Media Lab. team. More love to the team for always encouraging me to try different tracks and projects !

Watch Divya's cover version of the song. Click here

or Scan here

Achievements

Sl. No.	Name	Accomplishment	Remarks
1	Chhavi Rathi	Presented Research Paper Titled "Education Industry - Tribal Employability : A Pragmatic Innovative Solution towards Conversion to Jobs in Tribes"	"GRSM 2026" Goa Research Scholar's Meet 2026 held on 20 - 21 Aug '26 @ Directorate of Art & Culture, Sanskruti Bhavan, Patto, Panaji, Goa
2	Chhavi Rathi	Presented Paper Titled " Drones : A Pragmatic Industry Value in Multi Diversified Niche Usages for Leveraging Robust & Efficient Economical Swift Industry value Additive Viable Solutions.	"Auto Town" BITS Pilani Hyderabad dt 16 - 17 Feb '26
3	Chhavi Rathi	Participated in One Day Workshop sponsored by ANRF under Scientific Social Responsibility (SSR) titled " Identifying Flood Plain Zones in Regulated Rivers : Challenges & Way Forward"	ANRF under Scientific Social Responsibility (SSR) held on 29 Sep '26. Organized by Dr Kumar Gurav, Associate Professor, Dept. of Earth & Environmental Sciences & Centre for Science & Society (CS2) @ IISER Bhopal, M.P
4	Divya Ann Abraham	Presented a paper on "Social Affordances in Child Robot Interactions" at the ISA RCO4 Education and AI Midterm Conference at the University of Belgrade.	Link to post: https://lnkd.in/p/g-tsK_zh 

Bionotes of the Contributors



Christal Ferrao is an Assistant Professor teaching courses in Mass Communication and Journalism at Don Bosco College, Panjim, Goa. Her research focuses on communication, sustainable business practices, tourism, marketing, public policy and artificial intelligence. Before transitioning to higher education, she worked as a Journalist for Prudent Media, Viva Goa Magazine and IFFI. She is a poet with an independent anthology titled, "It is like Magic" published in 2016. She also co-edited the book titled, "Business for Good in Action" published in 2026.



Aarti is a second-year PhD scholar who believes that rural India is a heartland of stories, knowledge, and learning. This is the belief which has shaped her research on understanding how climate change affects the everyday lives and experiences of rural farmers. She finds herself in one of the most exciting phases of her life, juggling academic deadlines while running behind her one-year-old daughter, who has recently discovered the joys of walking. Beyond academia, she enjoys reading biographies, exploring regional cuisines, and documenting her travels through the rural India.

Ferdin Sylvester is a researcher on mangroves and how they protect us. In his free time you can find him in and around the mangroves.





Mavis Rodrigues is an Assistant Professor of English at Government College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Khandola, Goa, and a research scholar at BITS Goa. Her research on the literary cartographies and emotional geographies of Goa informs the creative directions of her poetry and short fiction. Her short fiction has previously been shortlisted for and published through the Fundação Oriente Short Story Competition.



Shivani Keny is currently a fourth year Ph.D. scholar at BITS Pilani, Goa campus. She has a Masters degree in Counselling Psychology and has successfully qualified for NET-JRF in Psychology. She is passionate about teaching psychology and has gained valuable experience as an Assistant professor of psychology. Her PhD research is focused on understanding parentification and dysfunctional dynamics between parent-child relationships. She is driven by a strong desire to deepen her understanding of the human mind and its profound connection to the world.

Neha S. is a doctoral scholar with a profound love for GIS, remote sensing, and sustainable development. Her research is anchored in disaster and infrastructure resilience in coastal regions. As a geographer, she loves exploring wetlands and beaches, finding endless fascination in their dynamic geomorphology. Outside of research, she enjoys miniature clay modeling and cooking.





Rutva Patel is a first-year PhD scholar whose research focuses on climate change. Her work explores how land-use dynamics, agricultural practices, and greenhouse gas emissions shape climate change mitigation pathways in the Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) sector. Through her research, she hopes to contribute to a deeper understanding of the connections between people, land, and the environment, and support the transition towards a more sustainable future.

Mehul Kumar Singh is a research scholar in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences. He has a keen interest in storytelling and photography. His literary interest lies in unconventional narratives, believing in 'boring is interesting'. He aspires to be a commissioned storyteller in future, dabbling into the ideas and lived experiences of masculinity, loneliness, alienation, and existentialism. He finds his inspiration in Manav Kaul, William Gibson and Haruki Murakami.





Gurpartap Singh Kaur flows through socio-cultural legacies, locations, perceptions, performances, interactions of love and inexplicable effects to (un)become into 'Yours Truly', the author of the poetry trying to reject the binary of "I" against the "Other". They are currently pursuing their PhD in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at BITS Goa. They read, observe and interact to unload the cart of haumai "I-I" and queer through their research work and poetry. They draw on the Sikh-Bhakti-Sufi style to transcreate academic analysis into poetry in their parent language, Panjabi.

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 find inspiration from random everyday events and also wildlife/nature photography.





Hello gang!
I'm Divya, a third year Ph.D. scholar in Artificial Intelligence in Education at 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, bet we can be friends!

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