



RANI BIRLA GIRLS' COLLEGE



e-volve

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MAGAZINE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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We hope that this issue of e-voLve not only reflects the evolving nature of literary and academic pursuits but also serves as a beacon of inspiration for our readers.

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Table of Contents

Poetry

- 1. Divine Feminine by Zainab Khatoon**
- 2. A Woman, A Lover, A Goddess by Jaweryah Shaheen**
- 3. Women and Indian Epics by Hushbana Khatoon**
- 4. Their Voices Ring by Sufia Naaz**
- 5. Prayer to Ahalya by Sarah Rahaman Shaikh**
- 6. Panchali's Pride by Uzma Asif**

Prose

- 1. Surpanakha: A Tale of Transformation by Trisha Deyashi**
- 2. Corona Times: Time to Mend Ties by Sushmita Das (Faculty)**
- 3. The Memory Seller by Ritwik Balo (Faculty)**

Poetry

Divine Feminine
by
Zainab Khatoon
(Sem 3)

In every stage of life, we women face a trial,
A test of our character, our heart and our soul.
They seek in us the virtues of purity and honor true,
Selflessness, courage, wisdom, loyalty, and sacrifice, anew.

But why must we seek validation, why crave for their praise?
Are we not the embodiment of power, with a divine spirit that sways?
We are the guardians of tradition, the keepers of family ties,
The nurturers of life, with love that never dies.
Our strength is not just in our bodies, but in our hearts and minds,
A reservoir of resilience that forever redefines.

We have numerous examples, our godly ladies;
First, Mother Sita, In Ramayana lore,
A paragon of purity and virtue, inspiration to generations of women
who suffer the same fate,
A test of her character even though her love and loyalty were already
well-known.

Why must she suffer thus, unarmed and innocent?
Her only fault, her unconditional love.
The earth became her final refuge,
Swallowed her whole, spared her the humiliation that was fated.

Continued on next page...

Make offerings to the sacred fire, see how Draupadi arose.
Her spirit, ablaze, burns bright and true.
Her soul, a canvas of strength, painted with strokes of Ma Kali's locks.
A masterpiece of resilience, for me and you.
Unpredictable, unwavering, and unapologetic, she shines through the test,
A shining star that guides us to our best.

From Ramayana's pages and Mahabharata's might,
Sita and Draupadi shine, like a beacon in the night,
Reminds us that strength lies in standing up for what's right.
That we are not a possession or a prize, something that can be wanted or fright
We're women whose spirit equals divine.
Not in silence or submission, but in courage
They inspire us to rise, like phoenixes, from ashes.

A Woman, A Lover, A Goddess

by

Jaweryah Shaheen

(Sem 3)

A woman, a lover, or a goddess
So destructive, did you ever learn to be modest?
Your aggression would leave the world to ashes
Will the best survive or die young?
What is it to someone who's seen enough?

A woman, a lover, or a goddess
Too much of an overestimation for a mortal
All love is dust when prestige prevails
Will the best survive or die young?
What is it to someone whose vengeance's prolonged?

A woman, a lover, or a goddess
The city is always weary of Helen
But the city never burns for someone all hates
Will the best survive or die young?
What is it to someone who has fire for soul?

A woman, a lover, or a goddess
There is no way that we wouldn't have faith
Oh, it's only fair that you pass this test
Will the best survive or die young?
What is it to someone who's one with the nature?

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A woman, a lover, or a goddess

So deceitful, all stark, an ogress

So abhorred by generations

Will the best survive or die young?

What is it to someone who'd always been cursed?

A woman, a lover, or a goddess

A bard knows that the tale never ends

Every woman I've known had unparalleled strength

Will the best survive or die young?

What is it to someone who never learned to give up?

What is it to someone who fought until the rest was dust?

Women and Indian Epics
by
Hushbana Khatoon
(Sem 3)

She was a goddess with an attitude unfathomable
Her aura reincarnated with her pains intolerable.
She kissed the solitude and tasted silence too
She was a spirit unfazed in her heart she knew
Histories are the testimony her empathy was judged
Glittery eyes and hurricane bones with a dreamy soul
In the past her present sought refuge
Piousness was hurled character was berated in conscience she lamented

Agonizing the beauty and uniqueness that she was created
The bearer of courage and the potion of sweetness
Was left alone to perish herself in darkness
Guarded her identity under the shade of respect
Then why was her existence made to introspect
In the descending hazy night she was a cooling twilight
Healing the wounds caused by others she stood behind
She was alienated in the world luxuriously dined
Faded in the maze buried alive.

Their voices ring

by

Sufia Naaz

(Sem 3)

In ancient tales, their voices ring,
Warriors, queens, and mothers bring
Courage, wisdom, strength, and grace,
Shaping history with their embrace.

Draupadi stood with fiery might,
Her spirit unbroken, shining bright.
Sita's heart, so pure and true,
Through trials and fire, her love grew.

Kunti's wisdom, steady and kind,
Guided her sons with heart and mind.
From every age, their stories live,
In their strength, the world to give.

Prayer to Ahalya
by
Sarah Rahaman Shaikh
(Sem 5)

Everything Fades!
Everything Decays!
But not the still glass of beauty,
The ethereal Earth of purity,
The Ahalya blended in every woman's day, and night.
The Ahalya which strengthens the powerful symphony of sensitivity, and smile.
Tolerance in her kajal, grace in her white petals,
The benign patience of her love,
And her endless sky of knowledge transcends her above.
Through the dark night, with the aromatic mist,
She holds her poised stature and faith,
Her luring curls, takes hold of the disguised Gautama,
Her moonlit saree with spilled invisible vermilion,
Became the testimony of her ignorant innocence.
With the wrath bestowed on her,
Her stoned stillness crossed infinity years,
Until Rama's foot broke her silence and healed,
O, Ahalya, how did you wait and prove your innocence with enchanted silence?
How your curse paint the inspiration for all of humanity?
Your inner-divinity worshipped by all!
Your sacred peace preserved in the world.

Panchali's Pride

by

Uzma Asif

(Sem 5)

With eyes that blaze like wildfire's might
Her spirit unchained, a force that takes its right
Unbroken, unbowed, she stands, a warrior in her might
And though the world may test her will, she stands, unbroken still.

They pierced her soul with shards of shame
But still she rises, with a heart that beats with flame,
Her spirit unbroken, like a phoenix from the flames,
She wears her scars, like badges, of a warrior's pride.

Call her Draupadi or Panchali
Her story woven, in the fabric of time
A testament to courage, that will forever shine
Guiding others forward, with her radiant light.

Prose

Surpanakha: A tale of transformation

By
Trisha Deyashi
(Sem 5)

In the depths of the Dandaka forest, the air was thick with the scent of sandalwood and jasmine. Surpanakha wandered alone, her once-fiery spirit now tempered by time. The daughter of sage Vishrava and demoness Kaikesi, she had been both revered and feared, her beauty and power a double-edged sword, hence was named Meenakshi.

Her thoughts drifted to the past—of love, loss, and betrayal. She remembered her infatuation with Rama, the prince of Ayodhya, and the cruel twist of fate that followed. Rejected, humiliated, and disfigured, she had returned to her brother Ravana, her pain igniting the great war that would bring Lanka to ruins.

Yet, years had softened her bitterness. She had learned that revenge was a storm that destroyed the vessel it sailed in. But she regretted something else too. Something bothered her, was stuck in her throat like a fishbone: her vengeance to kill her own brother.

Long before the forests of Dandaka echoed with Surpanakha's anguished cries, she was a young woman with dreams woven in starlight. Married to Vidyutjihva, a powerful asura prince from the Kalkeya clan, Meenakshi's life was a dance of passion and pride. Yet beneath the surface, shadows brewed—a tension that would shape destinies.

Vidyutjihva was ambitious, his heart set on expanding his influence. Ravana, the mighty king of Lanka, viewed this with suspicion. His love for Meenakshi was fierce, but his loyalty to power, unyielding. Vidyutjihva's rise threatened the balance Ravana had carefully cultivated among the clans.

One evening, the storm finally broke. Meenakshi and Vidyutjihva hosted a feast in Lanka, a celebration of their union. The air was thick with the scent of sandalwood and rivalry. As Ravana arrived, his eyes met Vidyutjihva's—a silent war waged in a glance. "My sister deserves the best," Ravana said, his voice smooth yet edged with steel. "Power that is earned, not taken." Vidyutjihva's smile was sharp. "Power is a beast, brother-in-law. It bows to no throne, no bloodline."

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Meenakshi sensed the rising tide. She loved them both: her husband, the fire of her heart, and her brother, the anchor of her spirit. But ambition is a flame that consumes. The feud escalated in whispers and secret skirmishes. Vidyutjihva sought alliances; Ravana sent spies. Surpanakha was torn, her pleas for peace ignored. Finally, one night, Vidyutjihva disappeared. Some said Ravana's assassins struck in silence. Others claimed Vidyutjihva fled, fearing a war he could not win.

Meenakshi was left with a void. Her grief turned to fury—a seed planted deep, waiting for the day it would bloom. When she saw Rama years later, his rejection was but a spark on dry wood. The everlasting wound of blood-thirst found its way out. Meenakshi could finally water the seed of vengeance through her tears, and little did her almighty brother understand.

Was it a right step though? That question haunted her ever since. She blames herself for the loss of her dynasty, her lived ones.

One day, deep in meditation, she heard footsteps approaching. It was a young girl, lost and frightened. Surpanakha's heart, once hardened by hatred, softened. She guided the child back to her village, where the villagers, unaware of her identity, offered gratitude. In that moment, Surpanakha realized her redemption lay not in retribution but in compassion. She stayed in the village, healing the sick, guiding the lost, and sharing the wisdom earned through pain. Surpanakha now sought solace in solitude, reflecting on the consequences of her actions and the complexities of fate.

Whispers spread of a mysterious woman who once walked with demons but now healed the wounds of men. Some said it was penance; others believed it was destiny. Surpanakha, once a name that evoked fear, became a legend of transformation—a reminder that even the fiercest spirits could find peace.

Corona Times: Time to Mend Ties

by

Sushmita Das (Faculty)

Mending ties - for a better tomorrow - ties that keep us together - ties that magically transform 'I' and 'you' into 'we' and 'we shall overcome...' the virus. But is it the virus only that the world shall overcome?

Stay home, stay safe - an unexpected, unscheduled opportunity given to Man to mend and strengthen the loose, fragile strings that bind them together. Return to home - that is the urgent call of the times, corona times. The journey has commenced, the journey to make strong all those strings that have already snapped or are on the fatal verge of snapping.

Reconnecting with long forgotten passions, savouring the likes of post-superannuated life, no accusing each other of intrusion into private space - this has become the order of the day in Corona times. The family sitting rooms, the dinner tables are now choc-a-block - no empty chairs, no vacant spaces, the kitchen reverberates with the enthusiastic exchange of recipies between the ladies of the house and which is not to be interrupted by the nagging expressions of the maid.

Ailing grandparents wake up to the smiles and soothing touch of their dearest ones - their warmth replacing the cold, mechanical acts of the so called duty bound 'caregivers', children find themselves flooded with loving attention of their parents. "Not now, I am too tired" - cliched remarks replies have receded to some dark corner, but for how long? Are these renewed ties here to stay? but for how long?

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Strange, faint whisperings fill the almost deserted streets, the parks, the garden, the sky - stay a little more, a little more - but why? - why not? The world has become a better place to live in - no honking of cars, no fumes, no competition, no rivalry, no jealousy, no empty homes, no fast food, no late night parties, no menace to disturb Mother Nature. We were tied down to the wrongful acts - "snip them off" says some unseen force, "pay a price", "that's the deal". The world is bruised and battered by the foolish demands of foolish Men - it now expects an equilibrium - mend your ties, discard those that are flimsy, threatening and unhealthy and thou shall be healed.

One still wonders as to how the dictionary be wrong - after all the family is all together again! So is this 'social distancing' or 'social oneness' - a mystery never to be solved. But surely 'Aall surely izz Well'.

The Memory Seller
by
Ritwik Balo (Faculty)

Tonika adjusted the neural calibrator strapped to her temple, her fingers tracing the oxidized surface with practiced precision. The device hummed to life, ready to capture another fragment of the dying world outside. In December 2044 she remained among the last memory sellers with access to "authentic experiences" – unfiltered moments of nature that commanded astronomical prices in Kolkata's climate-controlled residential towers. There, the city's privileged dwelled to escape the devastating heat waves and the particulate smog that draped over the city like a suffocating *kantha* – a quilted shroud that mocked its ancestral purpose of providing warmth and comfort.

“The first rains once brought the breath of the Bay,” her grandmother's voice echoed in her mind, a memory from when Tonika was still young enough to believe in salvation. She inhaled deeply now, tasting only metal and ash on her tongue instead of the salt-laden breeze her grandmother had described. The mangrove forests that once filtered that essence were now largely submerged beneath the rising Bay of Bengal – a fate her grandmother's generation had seen coming but chose to ignore, their decades of willful consumption and denial sealed in Tonika's bitter inheritance.

Today's client wanted something special: the sensation of *dakhina hawa* – the southern breeze that once carried the first whispers of approaching monsoon. "I want to feel what my parents felt," the young entrepreneur had insisted, his eyes bright with desperation. "The real thing, not those synthetic approximations."

Tonika smiled, thinking of her illegal rooftop garden in North Kolkata, nestled among the crumbling remnants of century-old architecture that once defined the city's character. The acrid smell of decay mingled with the surprisingly sweet fragrance of her hidden plants. Such cultivation could cost her license, but authenticity required risk. The neural feeds from synthetic environments lacked the subtle imperfections that made genuine memories so addictive to her wealthy clients.

Making her way up through the abandoned service stairs of her ancestral home, each step creaked with stories of generations past. The heavy air pressed against her skin, thick with moisture from the morning's programmed precipitation. Unlike the sterile rain that kept the indoor vertical farms running, this humidity carried traces of earth and rust and time.

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The rooftop garden was her secret temple, protected by malfunctioning pollution sensors and corrupted security protocols. Here, she cultivated the last traces of untamed nature in what was once called North Kolkata before the district reorganization. A crow called in the distance – a sound so rare now that it made her pause mid-step. The plants weren't uniform like the decorative patches in the biodomes – her little patch of *dhaan* grew in defiant clusters, some yellowing, others an almost violent green.

"These aren't just memories people want to buy," her grandmother had told her once, in the early days of her trade. "You're preserving our history, Tonni. The feel of real soil between your toes, the taste of unpurified air – these are the things that made us human."

As the first light of dawn broke through the perpetual smog, Tonika removed her shoes. The neural calibrator captured everything: the lingering moisture from the artificial rain system, the coarse texture of the soil, the fading memory of what morning air used to feel like before the atmospheric processors became mandatory. The concrete beneath her feet retained pockets of warmth from yesterday's heat, contrasting sharply with the cooler patches of earth where her plants grew.

These sensations, once common in what used to be called the city of joy, now fetched more than a month's salary from the right buyer. Her clients came from all walks of life – entrepreneurs from across the country, artists from the surviving cultural enclaves, historians documenting the city's transformation. Some collected memories like precious heirlooms, others used them to create immersive installations about Bengali life before the climate crisis. Before the Sundarbans' mangrove barrier collapsed, before half of South 24 Parganas disappeared under the Bay of Bengal, before salt water infiltrated the aquifers and transformed fertile paddy fields into barren flats.

"Will you record the crow's call as well?" her automated security system chirped, its voice carrying an odd note of curiosity. Tonika hadn't bothered to reset its personality matrix in years.

"Everything," she whispered back. "Every imperfect, beautiful detail."

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The sun rose higher, its intensity amplified by the greenhouse effect that consumed the city. Tonika checked the calibrator's feed – perfect capture, with all the subtle variations that made it undeniably real. She'd command a premium for this one, especially with the bird's call woven through the recording. The few remaining birds were rarely heard this close to the city center.

Packing up her equipment, Tonika contemplated how much longer she could continue this work. The garden required constant attention, and authentic experiences became harder to find each year. But as long as people hungered for these memories of a vanishing Bengal, she'd keep collecting them, preserving small moments of wonder in an age that had almost forgotten what wonder felt like.

Soon, she'd have to head back to her shop in the underground market of Gariahat, where collectors gathered to trade fragments of remembered nature like precious gems. But for now, she stood barefoot in her secret garden, her feet pressing into ancient soil that felt increasingly foreign to a city of synthetic surfaces. A bead of real sweat – not the climate-controlled moisture of the towers – trickled down her neck, and she made sure the calibrator captured that sensation too. Some memories were worth every risk.

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