



DHANSCRIBES

From Peaks to Pages

THINK
BIG

AND GIVE IT A PEN

MAGAZINE

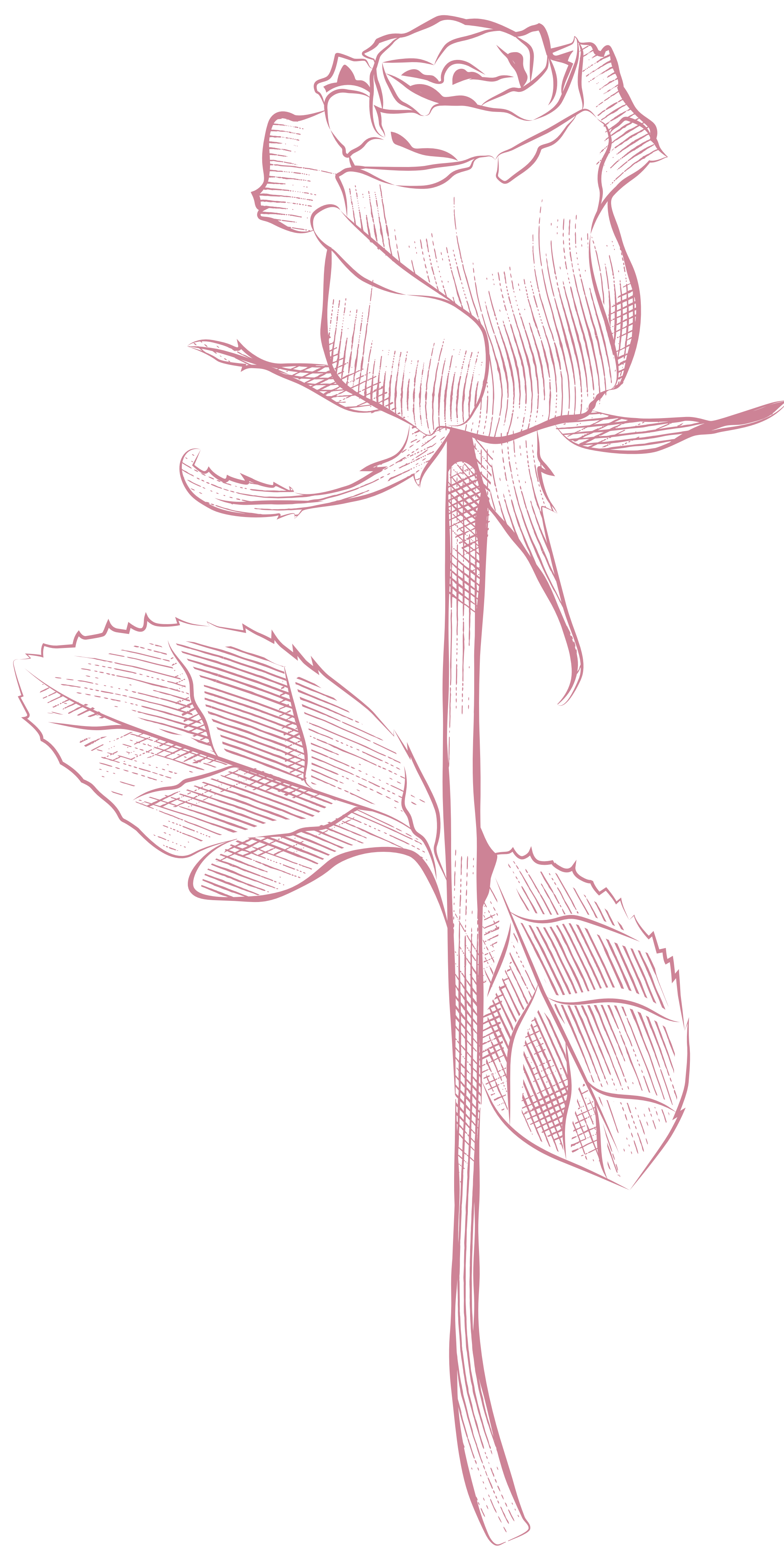


LITERATURE

THE PULSE OF
STUDENTS'
THOUGHTS-WISDOM-PASSION

IQRA NAYAB
DANIAL KHAN
EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

TO ALL THE FLEETING MOMENTS THAT BECAME
EVERLASTING IN OUR MEMORIES.



PREFACE

Welcome to “**DhanScribes**”.
An official literary magazine of the Department of English, Volume 01!

The title is a thoughtful amalgam of identity and expression, embodying both our roots and our craft. The term “**Dhan**” is derived from the Dhan region in Chakwal, a land steeped in history, culture, and tradition, brimming with stories waiting to be told. It represents the vibrant heritage of our locality, a source of inspiration for many. On the other hand, “**Scribes**” pays homage to the timeless art of writing, evoking images of devoted writers who transform thoughts into words and words into timeless narratives.

By merging these two elements, DhanScribes signifies the interplay of local identity and universal literariness. It is a platform where the cultural essence of Chakwal’s Dhan region meets the reflective and creative spirit of the scribe. This magazine aspires to celebrate diverse voices, showcase exceptional talent, and explore the myriad ways in which literature bridges the past, present, and future. Through DhanScribes, we invite you to embark on a journey of creativity and intellectuality, uniquely shaped by the vibrant essence of Chakwal and the enduring legacy of literature.

Through DhanScribes, the department aims to create a space where culture meets innovation, fostering a community of writers and readers who share a passion for storytelling and are zealous for narrating the poetry. Together, let us honour our heritage while embracing the limitless skyline of literary expression.

Warm Regards,

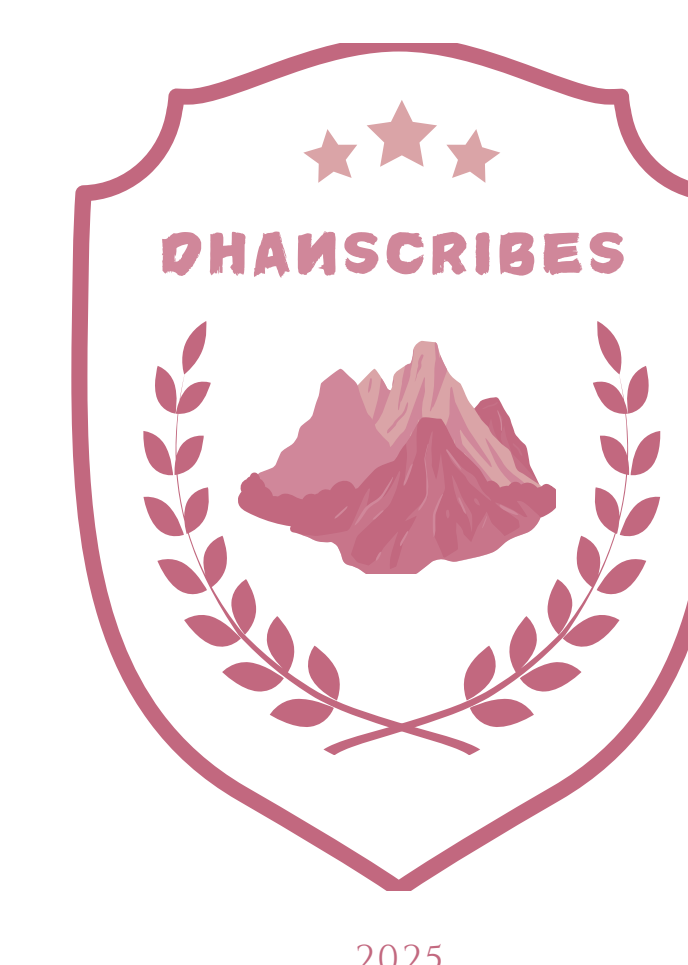
Team DhanScribes,
Department of English,
University of Chakwal.

Department of English

The Department of English at the University of Chakwal stands as a beacon of intellectual enrichment and unified development. As a dynamic and vibrant focal point for language, literature, and critical thinking, this department is committed to nurturing not just students’ academic abilities but also their personal and professional growth. Through a meticulously designed curriculum, we provide students with the tools to refine their analytical skills, enhance their linguistic competence, and broaden their literary horizons. Our committed faculty members go above and beyond to ensure that each student receives personalized guidance, empowering them to excel in all aspects of academia, aesthetics and life.

Beyond the classroom, the department actively engages and provide numerous opportunities to the students in a range of co-curricular activities. From engaging seminars and literary conferences to workshops on creative writing, public speaking, and critical analysis, we offer a variety of opportunities for students to discover and hone their talents. Department also organises poetry slams, writing competitions, and cultural events, providing a platform for students to showcase their creativity and build essential skills for both academic and professional success. In it’s essence, the Department of English at the University of Chakwal is more than a place to earn a degree; it is a platform for students to realize their potential, develop critical thinking skills, and prepare for the demands of the modern world.

Team - Behind the Pages



- Patron-In-Chief:

Prof. Syed Ali Raza
Head of Department of English

- Editors-In-Chief & Designers:

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Danial Khan

- Editorial Board:

Tahira Jabeen
Fatima-tu-Zahra
Farah Afzal

- Special Assistance:

Ma’am Munazza Khatoon
Lecturer, Department of English, UOC

MEET THE VISIONARIES



Prof. Dr. Muhammad Bilal Khan

Vice-Chancellor,
University of Chakwal

Dr. Muhammad Bilal Khan, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Chakwal, envisions transforming the institution into a hub of academic excellence and innovation. With a focus on expanding infrastructure, recruiting qualified staff, and fostering intellectual growth, Dr. Bilal Khan is dedicated to positioning the university as a leading center for education and societal advancement. He emphasizes resilience and strategic planning in overcoming challenges, and his leadership reflects a commitment to integrated development, encouraging students to cultivate emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical intelligence to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.



Dr. Ishtiaq Ahmad

Registrar

Dr. Ishtiaq Ahmad, the Registrar of the University of Chakwal, plays a pivotal role in the institution's administrative and academic progress. Committed to fostering a culture of excellence, Dr. Ishtiaq Ahmad ensures the smooth functioning of university operations while supporting initiatives that enhance the students' experience. His dedication to promote creativity and intellectual growth is evident in his appreciation for platforms like literary magazines, which showcase the talent and innovation of the university's students. Under his guidance, the university continues to uphold its mission of nurturing future leaders and advancing education as a mainstay of societal development.



Prof. Syed Ali Raza

Head of Department of English

It is an honor to introduce Professor Syed Ali Raza, who has recently taken the charge as the Head of the Department of English at the University of Chakwal. In his short tenure, Prof. Ali Raza has already begun to make a mark with his vision and dedication to academic excellence. One of his notable initiatives is the inauguration of this very magazine, DhanScribes, which stands as a testament to his commitment to providing a platform for creative expression and literary exploration. His leadership heralds a new era of growth and innovation for the department, and we look forward to the transformative journey ahead under his guidance.

"The Purpose of art is washing the dust of daily life off our souls."

-Pablo Picasso

It is a moment of enormous pleasure for me to welcome you to our departmental magazine, "DhanScribes", Volume 01. If life without art is not unimaginable, it is at least, unbearable. As the head of the Department of English, I am thrilled to share with you the outstanding achievements of our incredibly brilliant students.

This rich tapestry threads together a vibrant array of soulful symphonies, optimistic voices, and diverse perspectives. In a world torn apart by grave inequality, brutal injustice and suffocating oppression, this issue dares to dream an alternative world. Our students have poured their hearts and souls into the creative work which is reflected on every page of this magazine.

This magazine is a feather in our cap and I believe that it would be a prelude to many scholarly and creative works in the days ahead. This creative project also showcases the intellectual nuances of the students of this provincial region and it testifies that the department of English at university of Chakwal is the cultural hub of the university.

This document is a testimony to our faculty's commitment to imparting the world class education to our students.

I hope you will not remain unmoved by the powerful appeal of this intellectual endeavor of our students.

• Message from Prof. Syed Ali Raza

MEET THE SOUL OF THE MAGAZINE - THE CREW



*Behind the vibrant pages of DhanScribes lies a dedicated team of dreamers and doers who have worked tirelessly to bring this literary masterpiece to life. At the heart of this endeavor is our core team, from the Department of English—**Iqra Nayab, Daniyal Khan, Tahira Jabeen, Fatima-tu-Zahra, and Farah Afzal**—whose unwavering dedication and passion have driven this project forward. From crafting compelling content to meticulously editing, designing, and proofreading, they have left no stone unturned in their pursuit of excellence. Their efforts were enriched by the invaluable guidance of **Prof. Syed Ali Raza and Ma'am Munazza Khatoon**, whose mentorship and encouragement provided the foundation for this magazine's success. Fueled by creativity and an unyielding belief in the power of words, this team has turned challenges into opportunities and dreams into reality. Together, they aspire to inspire, motivate, and leave an indelible mark on the world of literature, proving that with ambition and teamwork, anything is possible.*

DEDICATION TO THE RESILIENT SPIRIT OF PALESTINE

*This inaugural issue of **DhanScribes** is profoundly dedicated to the unyielding spirit of the Palestinian people, whose resilience in the face of unimaginable adversities illuminates the boundless strength of the human soul. Their suffering is not just a political tragedy but a deeply human story—a story of homes lost, dreams deferred, and lives uprooted, yet stitched together with the threads of unwavering hope and courage.*

As writers, poets, and storytellers, we are reminded that literature is more than an art; it is a sanctuary for truths untold, a weapon against oppression, and a beacon for justice. The struggle of Palestine reflects the eternal battle between light and darkness, between the forces that seek to oppress and the human desire to breathe free. Their resilience teaches us that even when the world turns its back, the human spirit has the power to stand tall, to dream, and to fight for a tomorrow where peace prevails.

Through this magazine, we honor their sacrifices, their unbreakable resolve, and their undying faith in the possibility of liberation. Let this dedication serve as a reminder to our readers that, as long as there is a voice to speak the truth, no cause is ever lost, and no story ever forgotten. May we draw inspiration from their strength and let our words carry forward the torch of justice, freedom, and humanity.

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Poem: The Soul of Expression

A poem is the purest form of literary art, where language transcends its ordinary bounds to evoke emotions, paint vivid imagery, and explore the depths of human experience. Through rhythm, metaphor, and carefully chosen words, poetry distills complex thoughts into moments of profound clarity. From ancient epics to modern free verse, poems have been a timeless medium for exploring love, nature, identity, and the mysteries of existence. A single poem can inspire revolutions, heal wounds, or simply remind us of the beauty in the ordinary. Poetry is not just read, it is felt, experienced, and lived.

ESSAYS

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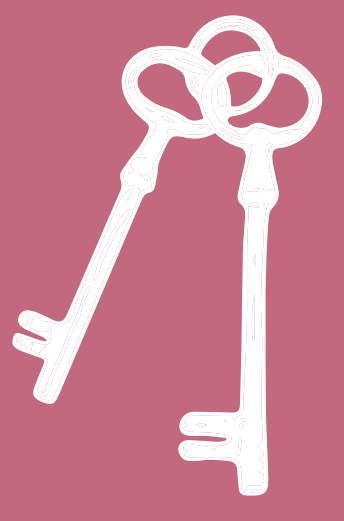
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Essay: The Art of Thoughtful Exploration

An essay is a versatile literary genre that blends intellectual exploration with personal expression. It is a structured yet flexible medium through which writers analyze ideas, reflect on experiences, or argue perspectives. Whether formal or personal, essays invite readers into a dialogue, encouraging them to ponder, question, and engage with the writer's insights. In its essence, the essay is the art of thoughtful inquiry—a bridge between the writer's mind and the reader's understanding.



YOUR DESTINY AWAITS

Honorable; Ma'm Munazza Khatoun
Lecturer, UOC

IN THE HONOR OF PALESTINE, IN THE REMEMBRANCE OF GAZA

أنا مع غزة

Nida Syed

*Your destiny holds greater worth than you know.
Your life is more sacred than what you show.*

*Your future shines brighter than stars that glow,
And your time is far too precious don't let it go.*

*You are the strongest block to build a land.
A nation that's solid and will always stand.*

*With wisdom and courage, you'll take command,
Ensuring your state is forever grand.*

*Your ancestors have given you this land to protect;
They will be proud if you honor it with respect.*

*Iqbal instilled in you the confidence of self-respect,
A virtue that was exemplified in Quaid's every act.*

*Above all is the life of Muhammad (P.B.U.H), so bright,
A guiding example, a beacon of light.*

*A path to success in this world and beyond,
With history's lessons to reflect upon.*

*You are a universe, vast and profound,
With strength to face challenges that astound.*

*So, what holds you back, what keeps you behind?
Why not move forward with a resolute mind?*

*In search of your worth, let your journey start,
Step ahead with courage and a steadfast heart.*

*It's time to rise and seize the day
Do you know who you are, have you found your way?*

Behold- Your Destiny Awaits

*Oh innocent soul killed in the womb,
Innocent children assassinated before the dawn.
Oh broken limbs and lifeless bodies,
the stripped slippers, blood-stained bread,
the burnt flesh, the kaffiyeh soaked in blood
Oh Palestinian mother, mourning for her child,
Oh Palestinian groom, burying his bride,
Oh Palestinian sister, shading her brother,
Oh Palestinian poor widowed wife,
Oh pure baby born in Palestine,
Oh sorrowful man grown old in Gaza,
Oh Palestinian people who pray at night and die before sunshine,
In the Honor of martyrs, in remembrance of faith that never fades,
The scent of resilience amidst the stolen olive trees,
Oh the lingering and haunting life,
Tiny eyes staring at the sky,
Wondering where the twinkling stars have gone,
Their sky in only lightened with bloody missiles,
Oh land owners who endured many exiles*

*In the honor of "Keys Of Hope"
In the remembrance of Jerusalem*

*In the Honor of truth, in the remembrance of disappeared dreams,
To advocate against the Nakbah, to speak up against genocide
Cursed are the oppressors, blind to their past
Killers who are deafened by bombs they throw*

*In the honor of hearts, who rots, resists, hopes, and yearns for Mahdi (A.S)
In the remembrance of tears shed in longing for Ayubi
To condemn the genocide, we make promise to Palestine,
For you will never be forgotten as long as we live,
How do I say that you are bravest,
My words are lost.*

To,

*"The Sons of the Water and the Mud",
Your "Roots are in the Earth, and Branches in Sky".*

*Oh people of Gaza who die and teach us life,
Those who paid the price of dying,
So the world may know what killers cost,
In the remembrance of poets born in Palestine,
To honor the tired hearts and teary eyes,
To paint the world green, red and white,
Oh people of Heaven, this world is yours,*

*Yours is the land, yours is the light, yours is the victory, upon the Honor of
Divine*

Long Live Resistance, Long Live Palestine!



SILENT CONCLUSION

Danial Khan

*The rest is silence, soul is wandering adore,
Undiscovered country, darkest creature assure*

*Now turn to clay, turn your rotten might;
Kings and fools earn equal tarnish right.*

*Maddest mighty, meanest grandeur,
Devil's dever, kingdom come stranger.*

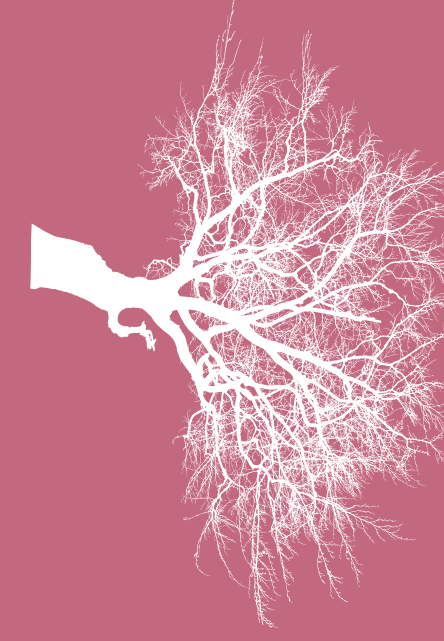
*To be, or not to be—the quest of up and fall;
Good is neither, bad is nor—this is what I think is all.*

*This woo, wear, and tear felt in wretched heart;
This too, too solid flesh would melt in timber cart.*

*Oh mortal, mortal thing I am,
Dig in, fly up—how I can?*

*Damned dreamer, doer faint,
Humane sinner and sadist saint.*

*Last walk, last bed—last is home,
Justly busted slum and dome.*



TO NATURE

Kashaf Zahra

*I love the process of Nature;
‘Tis the best God’s creature.’*

*Let’s enjoy an ocean breeze;
In the garden, bloom sapling trees.*

*A unique venue where you can survive,
Go where you feel most alive.*

*I’m tired of the pseudo world,
And want to breathe in a fair world.*

*Nature is our best teacher,
That edifies us to love the creature.*

*Stars are the adornment of the sky,
And muse to the poet’s eye.*



MUSLIMS WE ARE

Noor-ul-Ain

*Muslims we are; Muslims they be,
Then why do they suffer, and we are free?
Same faith we share, same God we adore,
Why must they face pain, and we ask no more?
What drives their fight, what fuels their flame?
Is it seeking justice or Islam’s name?
Their hearts beat strong, with conviction true,
While many of us neglect Quran anew.*

*It is Palestine, their home,
Now a battleground where peace has flown,
A river of tears, where sorrow has grown,
A cage of despair, where freedom has overthrown.
They are neither poor nor uneducated;
They are just left uninhabited.
When I think of them, I weep in my bed,
Their clothes torn, turned crimson red.*

*Forever in my head, those beautiful faces,
Who were murdered and lost in dark spaces.
The screams of the children echo in my ears,
How their laughter faded and turned into tears.
Darkness, darkness, everywhere,
Blood, blood, saturates the air,
Death, death, lingers in despair,
Still, the oppressors receive aid from everywhere.*

*Injustice reigns, as silence prevails,
While humanity’s heart in sorrow wails.
Let us rise, let our voices be heard,
For in unity lies the power of our word.*

THE GRANDEUR OF LOVE

Muqaddas Jabeen

*When you were in my hands,
A tiny soul, so pure and grand,
I held your heart, your first cry,
A love so strong, it reached the sky.*

*In my embrace, you found your nest,
A haven where love was at its best.
Your tiny hands, they wrapped around
My finger, a love profound.*

*Your first smile, a radiant beam,
Lit up my world, a heart’s esteem.
Your coos and giggles, music sweet,
A symphony that my heart repeats.*

*When you were in my hands,
I felt a love that transcends,
A bond so strong, it knows no end,
A treasure I’ll forever tend.*

*When you were in my hands,
I made a promise to stand.
Through every fall, every stride,
By your side, I’ll be your guide.*

*So here I’ll hold you, in my heart,
A love so vast, it never departs.
When you were in my hands,
Forever and always, my dear, my own.*





A STAGE FOR BALLERINAS

Fatima -tu-Zahra

WANT TO DIE

Izza Fatima Mirza

FADING ECHOES

Eman Rukhsar



Have you heard the story of that child,
Who dreamt of a world decently styled?

A world beaming with such a light,
As thousand fireflies guarding the night;

Where spring ruled with such a delight,
As there is no Fall in sight.

A world of beauty and soaring heights,
A world of bravery and fighting knights,

Where the boys are chasing that wandering kite,
And the girls are dressed in crimson bright.

Where dads are telling the tales of old days,
And moms are smiling while lowering their gaze.

A world full of love and caring guides,
Where there is no need to lie or to hide.

But soon, a loud thud woke up the child,
And his glossy illusions left him beguiled.

Now, once again, he was lost in the wild,
For not every nightingale has a firefly by its side.

Here the dream ends, and the spring dies,
And the child can hear the silent cries.

Now the villains are here, ruling the arenas,
And the world is just a stage for ballerinas.

They dance on the melodies of muffled cries;
Their flexibility can alter truth into lies.

Their steps are like arrows, ripping the bodies apart,
And the pieces are taken by them as awards.

And have you noticed their pointe shoes,
Which helped them dance on their toes?

Once the ballerinas receive their pay,
The shoes are actually thrown away.

Now, you have heard the story of that child,
Whose decently styled world is nothing but wild.

I really want to die,
And make people cry.
I want eternal death,
And a peaceful,
Uninterrupted sleep.

I just wanna see,
Is it the ending?
Where I can be free.
I just want to confirm,
Can I sleep under_
Tons of the mud,
And a huge grave stone?

What's the concept;
Of hell and the heaven?
Where I will go,
And what's the criteria?

Will I go to the hell?
I've heard that there,
People will die everyday,
Yet they ain't dead enough_
To be buried in the soil.

They will be surrounded;
By all of their devils.
And They will live a life,
In which they'll never;
Be forgiven for their sins.

But I think I've fore suffered all.
I've lived on a planet with all_
The devils and unforgiveable sins,
Who haunts me throughout;
My deadly, poorly lived life.

Or will I go to the heaven?
Where I'll be happy and_
All my wishes come true?
A really good place to go,
I don't exactly know;
That I'll stay or pray.

Maybe I want to die
And give it a try.
I think I'll choose this;
An eternal death and a_
Peaceful uninterrupted sleep.
Far from all the creatures,
Devils and unforgiveable sins.

There is a quiet that clings to the night,
A silence known only to those who stand at the
crossroads;
Of choices unmade, paths forgotten,
Where roads once gleamed with promise
Now fade into the dust of what-ifs.

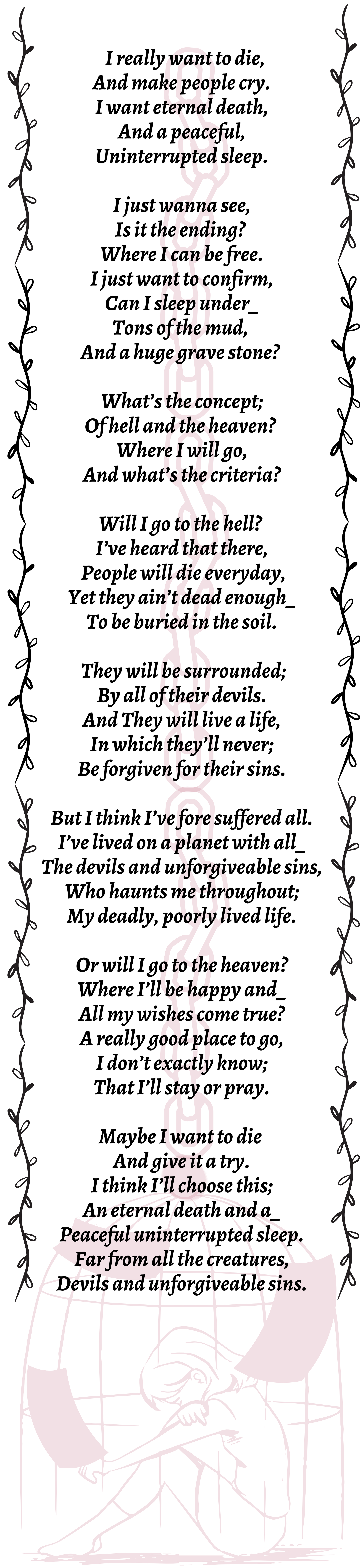
In every choice lies a ghost,
An echo that reverberates through the corridors of
memory,
Stretching long, bending the light,
Casting shadows on moments that could have
been,
But never were.

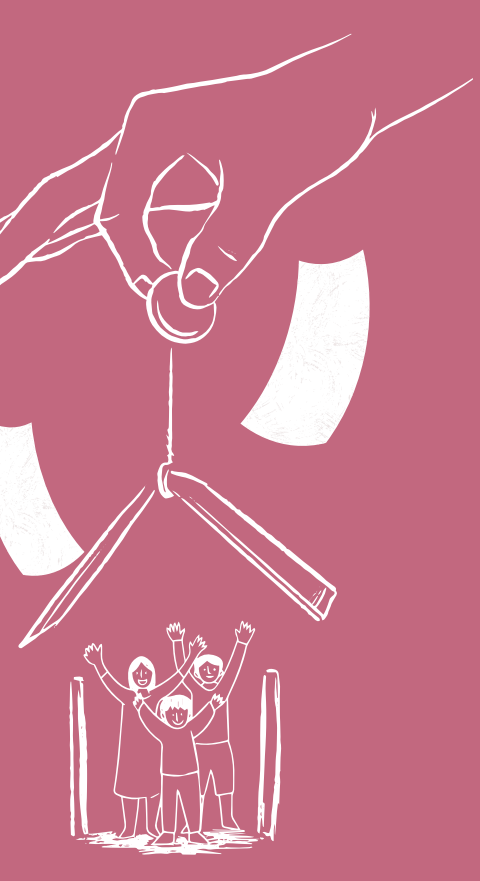
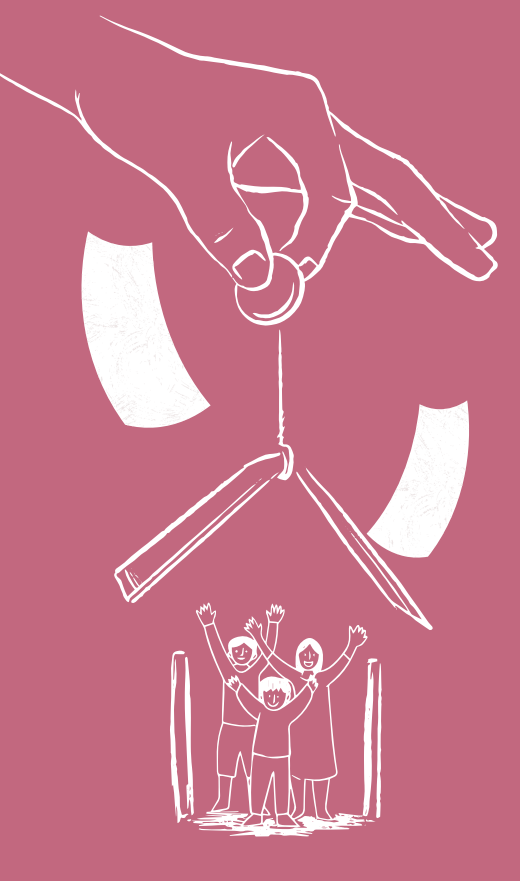
A quiet ache lingers there,
Not sorrow, not regret,
But something older,
Something deeper,
Woven into the fabric of every turn
We didn't take.

And still, the weight presses on,
Not seeking redemption,
But understanding,
The search for meaning in the spaces
Between what we wanted
And what we left behind.

These echoes are not just ghosts of past decisions,
But whispers of the selves we didn't become,
The lives we didn't live.
They are not haunting us; they are us,
Carrying the burden of what was,
And what never will be.

In the quiet spaces between breaths,
Where the noise of the world falls away,
We find ourselves face to face with the weight of the
road not taken,
Wondering, always,
How different we might have been
If we had only walked a little farther,
If we had only dared.





Family traditions, with their deep roots in culture and history, are instrumental in shaping an individual's identity. These customs and values, passed down through generations, not only guide personal development but also help define one's relationship with society. The family, often considered the first institution in a person's life, is the place where early lessons about life, identity, and belonging are learned. In many cultures, family traditions are so deeply ingrained that they influence not only our actions and behaviors but also the very essence of what we become. However, while these traditions can provide a sense of security, belonging, and purpose, they also have the potential to impose limitations and create conflicts, especially when they come into tension with the evolving demands of modern life.

As the renowned philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche once stated, **"He who has a why to live can bear almost any how."** Family traditions often offer this "why"—a sense of purpose, meaning, and continuity that anchors individuals to their heritage. For many, these traditions form the foundation of their values, beliefs, and actions. Whether it is the rituals surrounding religious observances, cultural festivals, or the moral codes that guide social conduct, the family acts as a primary vehicle for transmitting these practices. From a young age, children are socialized into these traditions, gradually absorbing the norms, expectations, and practices that shape their lives.

Traditions within the family also offer a sense of stability in a constantly changing world. In societies marked by rapid social and cultural transformations, family traditions act as a safeguard against the erosion of cultural identity. The poet W.B. Yeats captured this sentiment in his lines: **"Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold"**. In such times of uncertainty, family traditions can serve as the "center", offering individuals a solid foundation to stand upon, and a sense of belonging to something larger than themselves. These traditions provide continuity, passing down wisdom and knowledge from one generation to the next, which helps individuals navigate life's complexities with a sense of connection to their past.

However, the weight of family traditions can be a double-edged sword. While they provide guidance, they can also become restrictive, particularly when they clash with the aspirations or desires of the individual. The tension between tradition and personal identity becomes especially apparent in cultures where conformity is valued over individuality, and where family reputation and honor are paramount. Family traditions may demand that individuals conform to established roles and expectations, often limiting their ability to pursue personal dreams or make choices that deviate from the prescribed norms. This sense of obligation can lead to internal conflict and a sense of powerlessness, as individuals struggle to reconcile their personal desires with the family's values.

One of the key challenges that arise from family traditions is the pressure to meet societal expectations, especially with regard to gender roles and career paths. For example, the expectation that young women should prioritize family duties over professional aspirations can stifle their personal ambitions, while young men may feel compelled to pursue careers deemed acceptable or prestigious by their families. These pressures can be particularly stifling in societies where the concept of honor and family reputation is tied to adherence to tradition. As the writer Simone de Beauvoir famously wrote, **"One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman"**. This quote speaks to the way in which identity, especially gender identity, is shaped by societal forces, including family expectations. When these roles are rigidly enforced by tradition, individuals may find themselves confined to narrow, preordained paths, unable to explore the full range of their potential.

Moreover, family traditions can sometimes foster an environment where personal autonomy is undervalued, especially in the context of joint family systems. In such systems, where multiple generations live together under one roof, individual desires and needs are often overshadowed by collective decisions and communal responsibilities. This can lead to the suppression of individual expression, as family members are expected to prioritize the well-being of the collective over personal growth. The renowned sociologist Sigmund Freud once wrote, **"The ego is not master in its own house"**. In joint families, this dynamic is particularly evident, as the individual's desires are often subordinated to the authority and decisions of the family, leading to feelings of alienation and frustration.

The joint family system, though beneficial in fostering collective responsibility and support, can also present significant challenges to personal development. In such settings, individuals often find themselves bound by the expectations of a large group of relatives, each with their own opinions, values, and desires. This can create a constant tension between personal freedom and familial duty. For instance, a young adult may feel pressure to follow the career path chosen by their parents or may be coerced into marriage decisions that align with family expectations rather than their own preferences.

The individual may struggle to assert their own identity in such a highly structured environment, where every decision is made with the input of many voices. As author *James Baldwin* reflects, “**People are trapped in history, and history is trapped in them**”. In the case of the joint family system, individuals often find themselves trapped not just in history, but in the ongoing traditions and expectations that shape their lives.

Additionally, the constant interaction with a diverse group of relatives in a joint family can lead to an overbearing presence in one’s life, reducing the ability to form independent opinions and decisions. The sense of privacy is diminished, and individuals may feel they are under constant scrutiny. This can result in a loss of personal space, where the individual’s identity becomes subsumed by the family’s collective identity. This is particularly problematic for younger individuals, who may struggle to develop their own sense of self when they are constantly influenced by the opinions and behaviours of others.

The hierarchical structure of joint families also plays a significant role in shaping identity. Elders in the family are often seen as the final authority on matters of decision-making, and their opinions carry significant weight. While this can foster respect and provide a source of wisdom, it can also create an imbalance of power that stifles creativity, independence, and individual expression. Young adults, for example, may find it difficult to make independent decisions when they are expected to prioritise the desires of the elders over their own aspirations. This hierarchy can lead to generational divides, with younger family members feeling disconnected from the traditions they are asked to uphold, and older members feeling their authority is being undermined by the younger generation’s desire for autonomy.

The tension between personal identity and family tradition becomes even more pronounced when family traditions conflict with broader social changes. The societal shift towards individualism and autonomy, fueled by globalization and the rise of modern technology, often clashes with the collectivist values embedded in traditional family structures. This conflict can leave individuals feeling torn between two opposing worlds: one that values personal freedom and self-expression, and another that upholds communal values and familial duties. As the philosopher *Albert Camus* observed, “**Freedom is nothing but a chance to be better**”. However, in a traditional family structure, the individual’s freedom may be limited by the rigid expectations placed upon them.

While family traditions undoubtedly contribute to the formation of a strong sense of identity, they can also be a source of constraint and conflict. The challenge lies in finding a balance between honoring tradition and fostering personal growth. It is essential for individuals to retain the ability to make choices that reflect their authentic selves, even within the context of family expectations. This requires a level of self-awareness and courage, as well as the willingness to engage in dialogue with family members to negotiate the boundaries between tradition and individuality.

In conclusion, family traditions play a crucial role in shaping identity, offering a sense of belonging, moral guidance, and continuity. However, they also present challenges, especially when they have conflict with personal aspirations or limit individual autonomy. The joint family system, while providing support and a sense of community, can sometimes stifle personal growth and expression due to its hierarchical nature and emphasis on collective responsibility. The task, then, is to navigate the complexities of family tradition with the understanding that identity is not fixed, but evolves over time. As the writer *T.S. Eliot* once said, “**We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time**”. In this sense, the journey of self-discovery often involves reconciling the influences of family traditions with the need for personal freedom and growth, forging an identity that honors both the past and the future.

**Think
BIG**

*“Ever questioned the meaning of life in a universe that seems indifferent?
Dive into existentialism and uncover the profound search for purpose and identity in a chaotic world.”*



In the past, silence and solitude were essential aspects of everyday life. Today, pervasive influence of digital technology have made moments of solitude and solace increasingly rare. For centuries, sages and philosophers have embraced solitude to seek clarity and wisdom. In today's hyper connected world, this ancient practice feels increasingly elusive.

Solitude serves as a catalyst for self-realization and self-introspection. Meditation plays a vital role in cultivating solitude as it fosters interaction among mind, body and behavior helping in understanding oneself.

There is a common misconception that loneliness and solitude are two sides of the same coin, when, in reality, they have fundamentally different meanings. Loneliness is a serious mental health condition characterized by emotional burden, often leading to feelings of isolation and disconnection from the rest of the world. Loneliness as a Subjective State of Mind, begins by stating: **“According to a recent study, many people prefer to give themselves a mild electric shock than to sit in a room alone with their own thoughts. The pain of loneliness is such that, throughout history, solitary confinement has been used as a form of torture and punishment”**. (Burton, 2017).

Millions of people are afflicted by this state of mind. Loneliness is not a chosen phenomenon; rather it's an outcome of several shortcomings in a person's life. Loneliness, of course, has nothing to do with solitude. Loneliness is distinct in its nature. Solitude, in its very essence is different from loneliness. Solitude is chosen and conscious. Solitude is a state of mind, where an individual experiences disengagement. Solitude is not an outcome of societal desperation but a voluntarily activated decision of a person.

In the modern era, individuals are inseparable from digital technology and social media. Social media platforms and digital devices have contributed a lot in transforming the world. Additionally, digital technology poses a serious threat to the practice of meditation on solitude. Immanuel Kant, a German philosopher views enlightenment as man's emergence from self-imposed immaturity. However, in today's digital landscape, a question arises, can one truly attain enlightenment amidst countless distractions? Our blindness to digital stimulation; scrolling through social media, watching tv shows, and countless activities on phone perpetuates a profound disconnection from solitude. If we look at the psychological impacts of digital technology, the state of always being activated on such platforms can lead to anxiety, depression, stress and mental fatigue.

The masses live a life of quite desperation. People are no more interested in analyzing and finding way to their inner conflicts. Moreover, constant connectivity encourages a fear of missing out (FOMO), further diminishing the value of solitude and increasing dependency on digital interactions. Solitude is necessary for the well-being of an individual but it has become complex with change in digital media environment. In this digital age, individuals are so connected to the world, that they do not even have a minute to reflect on themselves. As a result, they are not able to exercise their minds and think creatively. Their mental health is deteriorating day by day.

In the countries like Pakistan, it is hard to find such people who are interested in solitude. Those who are among these exceptional few, often find themselves in a pool of misunderstanding, unsure whether they are perceived as lonely or intentionally seeking solitude. Solitude and its pursuit are core tenets of Islamic history; the very origins of faith are intricately tied to the Holy Prophet's (PBUH) search for truth in the silent deserts of Arabia. But, unfortunately what our prophet taught us is not being followed. If we talk about Ramadan, it's a month of spiritual awakening, and this can only be achieved by practicing solitude. We can reflect upon our sins, and attain inner peace and solace. In reality, month of spiritual awakening has become a month of special television transmissions and gargantuan iftar parties. It means, we are drifting away from our religious solitude.

Meditation is usually practiced for its various health benefits, specifically the elimination of certain mental states, such as loneliness. Meditative practices focus on self-navigation and awareness of intense feelings and emotions. Nowadays, where meditation is a beneficial tool for exploring one's self, and helpful in cultivating solitude, digital technology is a major hindrance in achieving that ideal state of solitude. People are too busy to reflect on their inner selves. To seek true solitude, practicing meditation is essential, as it allows one to embrace its pure form.

“ Everyone who wills can hear the inner voice. It is within everyone.”
- Mahatma Gandhi-

Being alone, in a positive sense, grants freedom in opinion and action. Proximity to nature once played crucial role in seeking solitude and mindfulness. William Wordsworth, John Keats, and Robert Frost are among the greatest poets of nature. As John Keats mentions in Ode on a Grecian Urn.

**“Beauty is truth, truth beauty _
Ye know on earth and all ye need to know”**

The poets of nature are aware of the transformative power of nature and it's healing process. In today's world, where everything is digitally connected, it's very rare for people to maintain their bond with nature. In order to pursue solitude, it's essential to practically applied several techniques. A lot of people fear solitude yet the great psychiatrist Winnicott said that **“The capacity for solitude is one of the greatest markers of psychological health”**. Developing a capacity for solitude indicates that one is comfortable with their own company. By embracing solitude, we can not only fully develop our capacity for optimal deep work but also enhance our ability to collaborate with others. Finding solitude in amidst of our busy lives, should be the first and foremost priority.

The significance of personal space is that this space, whether physical or figurative, serves as a sanctuary where we can nurture and connect with ourselves. Once we develop intimacy with our personal space, it's not difficult for us to build connection with our deepest desires, values, boundaries and preferences. Taking quiet time for oneself is essential for gaining clarity and understanding our own desires and aspirations. These steps also require putting aside all physical and digital distractions, allowing nothing to interrupt this peaceful practice. All types of physical and mental exercises like yoga, meditation and fasting help foster deep spiritual and personal growth. Meditative practices do not easily become habitual; they require passion and hard work.

Most people are well aware of the terms 'introvert' and 'extrovert'. Individuals who possess the capability of creativity are known as introverts. They are interested in exploring their internal world of ideas. Solitude cultivates creative mindfulness. When people practice solitude, their visions about things become more vivid. An example of creativity as a result of solitude is writing. With writing, our perspectives become broader. One has to find time and place, if he wants to write creatively. When we express our thoughts and emotions on paper, we actually release our mental burdens and inward conflicts.

One of the major advantages of solitude is that it helps us reform our way of thinking. By seeking solitude, we are able to refine our introspective tendencies. Another benefit of solitude is that it allows us to introspect spiritually and morally. Spirituality, in its essence, is about self-realization, leading to God-realization. Solitude is crucial for spiritual growth, as it enables us to recognize the path we're on. It is important to note that not everyone has the luxury or capability to practice solitude, it requires focus and consistency. **"Consistency fuels the journey to success"**.

Imagine if the internet were unavailable to us—what would we do? There are numerous activities we could engage in without the presence of digital technology. When a person succeeds in attaining solitude, they become more aware of the practical use of digital technology. The world of media is neither entirely bad nor entirely good; it has its own pros and cons. Meditation can also help us reflect on how and when to use digital technology and social media appropriately.

If a digital addict cannot avoid looking at their phone for 10–20 minutes, they may feel disturbed, or worse, experience a condition known as FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). Practicing solitude helps us overcome this condition and enables us to confront our inner fears and conflicts. It also allows us to recognize our own flaws (hamartia) and protects us from facing unnecessary tragedies.

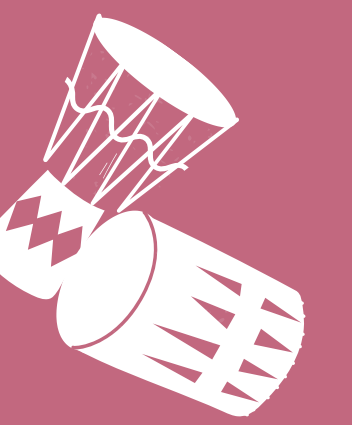
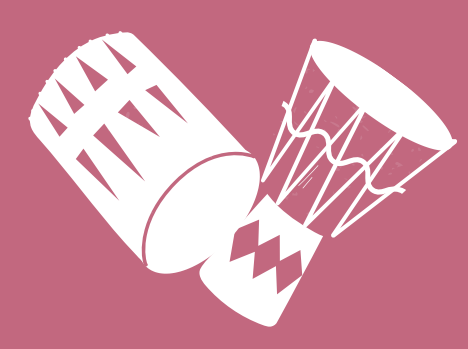
This essay critically analyzes the nature of solitude as a useful tool for introspection, examining internal ideas and conflicts. It explores nuanced perspectives on digital technology and its hindrance to meditation in practicing solitude. We discover various challenges while seeking solitude. In conclusion, it is essential to practice solitude in the world of social media and digital technology. Moreover, those who aim to practice solitude must clearly distinguish between solitude and loneliness, as discussed in this essay, since loneliness poses a significant threat to one's well-being. Additionally, solitude fosters creative abilities, making it essential for individuals to incorporate into their lives.

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"Unmask the illusion of false consciousness: Are our perceptions and beliefs truly our own, or are they mere reflections of societal manipulations? Discover the hidden layers shaping our reality."

Think
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"No, it is impossible; it is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence—that which makes its truth, its meaning—its subtle and penetrating essence. It is impossible. We live, as we dream—alone."



“A person without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots.”

- Marcus Garvey

Cultural heritage, the collective memory of a society, significantly influences our worldview. It's the lens through which we perceive, interpret, and interact with the world around us. By understanding our cultural heritage, we can better appreciate our past, present, and future. Cultural heritage can be divided into two categories: tangible and intangible.

Tangible heritage includes physical artifacts, monuments, landscapes and buildings, such as the Great Wall of China and the Pyramids of Egypt. Intangible heritage encompasses non-physical aspects like folklore, music, language, traditional dances, and knowledge passed down through generations.

Cultural heritage shapes our worldview in various ways. It provides a sense of identity and belonging, connects us to our ancestors and helps us understand the values, beliefs and customs of our past. It also shapes social norms, behaviors and expectations, influencing how we interact with others. Additionally, cultural heritage inspires creativity, innovation and artistic expression, shaping our cultural landscape. Let's explore how cultural heritage shapes worldviews in different cultures; first we have, Japan's Harmony with Nature, Shintoism emphasizes harmony with nature, reflected in architecture, gardening, and traditional practices like hanami (cherry blossom viewing).

This cultural heritage fosters a worldview that values environmental preservation, mindfulness, and respect for nature. Second, India's Unity in Diversity, India's rich cultural heritage is characterized by its diversity of languages, ethnic groups and religious practices. This heritage promotes a worldview of tolerance, inclusivity and respect for different cultures and beliefs. Third, Italy's Artistic Legacy, Italy is known for its contributions to art, literature and philosophy, The Italian Renaissance, a cultural movement from the 14th to the 17th century, produced some of the world's greatest works of art and literature. The Renaissance produced masterpieces by Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Dante Alighieri.

This heritage shapes a worldview that values aesthetics, creativity and intellectual pursuit. Fourth, Africa's Oral Traditions; Oral traditions transmit history, values and wisdom through storytelling, music and dance are used to pass down history, values and wisdom from one generation to the next. This heritage fosters a worldview that values community, cooperation and respect for elders. Fifth, Native American's Connection to the Land; Native American cultures emphasize a strong connection to the land and its natural resources. This heritage promotes a worldview of environmental stewardship, sustainability and respect for all living things

Sixth, China's Confucian Values; Confucianism emphasizes family, respect for authority and social harmony. This heritage shapes a worldview that values family loyalty, social order and respect for elders. Seventh, Brazil's Celebration of Joy and Diversity, Carnival reflects Brazil's diverse cultural heritage. The lively music, dance and colorful costumes of Brazilian festivals reflect a culture that embraces life's vibrancy and encourages social unity. This heritage fosters a worldview that values diversity, inclusivity and the joy of life.

Preserving cultural heritage is essential for maintaining our identity, values and connection to the past. Challenges like globalization and modernization threaten cultural heritage, but efforts are being made to protect it. UNESCO's World Heritage Sites program is one such initiative that aims to identify, protect and preserve cultural and natural sites of outstanding universal value. In a nutshell by understanding and appreciating our cultural heritage, we can build a more inclusive, tolerant, and sustainable future.

“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.”

- Marcel Proust

In a nutshell by understanding and appreciating our cultural heritage, we can build a more inclusive, tolerant, and sustainable future. Culture act as a lens that colors how we see the world affecting every aspect of our lives as it provides structure and meaning to our interpretation. Culture is also dynamic as it evolves in response to changing environments and interactions with different cultures. It teaches and reshapes our ideas and perceptions, and our worldview is not confined by it. The more we explore diverse cultures the more we expand our worldview and adopt more progressive ideals.

**Think
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“Discover the Wet Blanket Paradox: Why do our most brilliant ideas and plans often feel extinguished by doubt and negativity? Uncover the psychological twists that make enthusiasm evaporate.”

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Flash Fiction: Stories in a Blink

Flash fiction is a literary genre that delivers powerful storytelling in the smallest of spaces. Typically under 1,000 words, these concise tales capture the essence of a moment, a character, or a conflict with remarkable precision and impact. Flash fiction thrives on brevity, challenging writers to craft narratives that are both rich and restrained. From startling twists to poignant revelations, these short pieces often leave readers pondering long after the final line. In the world of flash fiction, every word matters, making it a masterpiece in the art of storytelling distilled to its purest form.

SHORT STORIES

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Short Stories: Worlds in Miniature

Short stories are compact narratives that offer a glimpse into the lives, emotions, and conflicts of their characters. Balancing brevity with depth, they capture the essence of a moment or a turning point, often leaving a lasting impression. From the haunting tales of Edgar Allan Poe to the evocative realism of Anton Chekhov, short stories have been a cornerstone of literary exploration, blending precision with profound storytelling.

The environment was suffocating due to hot weather, but at this specific time, everything was loud. The overstuffed bus of children was leaving the school parking-lot for its normal route of sudden stops, unforgiving bumps, broken roads, congested seats, and of course, transporting students to their destinations. Secluded from every other child on the bus, I was sitting quietly in seat number thirteen, listening to the screaming laughter and shrill excitement of everyone, as always, at that time. I was sitting there in silence because I knew that it was just a way to eliminate the jadedness of their tiring day. I was trying to take everything in: the smell of the old brown bus seats, the half-opened windows that daily tried to keep us cool; the pleasantly plump and incredibly rude bus driver, chewing tobacco; and the jovial, rambunctious sounds of kids cackling and yelping.

Suddenly, as we were moving forward, the blasting sound struck my ears, as the back tire of the bus burst. Every passenger was sure that the bus was of no use now. At this time, when the sun was blazing hot, all of the students were angry and tired.

But fortunately, the bus stopped a bit farther away from my dwelling. I preferred to walk the remaining way to home. The heavy bag was hanging around my pitiable shoulders, but who cares? Sweat made its way from forehead to chin in the blink of an eye, trying to escape through the miseries of a long path. I chose a lane that was always quiet and silent all the time as there was no houses around. I was walking along the roadside kicking off a tiny stone with my shoes like a wanderer. Head down, frowned eyebrows, tired body, and silently awkward walk was all I was doing with my inner self. There were trees all along the lane. The susurrant of leaves and the tweeting of a few thirsty sparrows was all I could hear in the quiet surroundings. I was moving in my zone when a barrel bag caught my attention, lying hidden at the back of an old tree. I looked around to see if the owner of the bag was nearby. I put my school bag on the ground and out of my curious nature, I peeked into the bag. The zip of the bag was opened from the side corner. I wanted to look inside but the fear of being caught was stopping me from doing so. I had no bad intentions but my curiosity was poking me badly.

I moved a step or two forward, then stopped for a while to think of the matter. I had a strange feeling about this. But at last, I sat down near that Barrel bag. I untied its mingled strip and opened the zip with my thumb and index finger. While doing this, I felt no scruples regarding this. Because curiosity can make you do things that may have bootless and futile consequences. I forgot about my school bag and the way back home, unaware of the situation that someone might have been watching my every single move since my arrival here. As I unzipped the bag, it had some uncommon and odd objects inside. There was a candle with melted wax, a surgical mask with scissors and a cloth bandage with a smudge of blood on it, a theatre playbill, a nail polish remover, and a mascara along with a little stuffed teddy bear.

I couldn't understand whether it was of a child, a lady, a gentleman, or a doctor. When I looked deeper into it, I pulled back sharply, dread coursing through me. It was a gun inside that was placed at the deepest end of the bag. My hands started shuddering. I got up and took a few steps back wiping off my sweat and eyeing around. A few seconds departed away and I glanced back at the Barrel bag. This time, my attention was caught by a piece of paper sticking at the lower end of the bag. That message was whispering the terrifying words of some scoundrel. Again, in a robotic motion, I went near that mysterious bag and started flipping through the words:

"As you have opened up this worthless and pathetic sack, mark my words; you are heading to mourn. However, before that, you have to submit the answer to my concern. Why is it that when one man constructs a barrier, the next man instantly desires to know what's on the other side? Whether it is associated with worldly subjects or one's sentiments?"

The words left me astonished and scared. Days moved in a blink, and the incident still lingers in my mind like an unwelcomed guest.

To all the fleeting moments that became everlasting in our memories.

The house always felt frigid, despite the hot sun rays streaming through the high-lined windows. Sara, the seventy-year-old maid, had spent thousands of days keeping it breathing—cleaning floors, spreading the fragrance of her flavored hands, and preserving the paintings of Jeff, the man who held sway over it. Her hands were rough, her back bent due to years of work, but she was an epitome of resilience, faithfulness and loyalty.

Jeff was a famous painter, known for his genius mind but haunted by his temper. He always carried a dagger with him that made everyone uneasy. His daughter, Julia, was an arrogant and sadistic girl who lacked the inheritance of talent. Sara used to absorb her insults with quiet patience. Jeff would beat her over small mistakes, and Julia's recreation was to set traps to embarrass her. But Sara remained silent and patient in the house of absolute chaos. The dark room was Jeff's sanctuary where he used to store his paintings under the dim light of bulbs, while the rest of the room was shadowy. No one was allowed to enter the room—not even Sara, who prepared every painting for preservation.

One day, Jeff's hands turned a piece of paper into a masterpiece of art "Everlasting" he titled. "Everlasting" captivated every person at the exhibition. It gave a speaking look to a collector who offered one million dollars for it—a great fortune Jeff never dreamed of. But his greed turned his fortune, and he refused the offer, insisting he would hold an auction to get more than the offered fortune. He took back his painting with extraordinary joy in his greedy eyes. "Sara!" he barked, handing over the painting to her for preservation, *"This 'Everlasting' is worth more than your life."*

Sara sighed with patience, despite Jeff's heart-wrenching comment. She preserved the painting more carefully than before and gave it to Jeff. Jeff took it to the dark room, placed it on a separate high-legged table under a colored bulb, and closed the door of the room. Julia heard her father's words about the painting and planned another trap for Sara, to humiliate her even after knowing her father's love for painting. That night, when the house presented the look of a dark room, Julia crept into the eerie room to spoil the painting and plotted against Sara to take the blame for her crime.

As Julia was ruining the painting, she was deeply delved into her creepy plan. The door opened, "You!" Jeff roared with a trembling voice. He lost all sense of reason, took the dagger, and stabbed her from behind as swiftly as no one could scream. Julia collapsed and fell on the floor; her blood splattering across the "Everlasting". As Jeff saw her daughter, the dagger slipped from his hand, and he fell to his knees, seeing the closing scene of his painting in Julia's eyes. Sara heard the noise, came into the dark room, and saw Julia's lifeless body with the blood stained hands of Jeff by her side.

"What have you done?" she shouted in extreme agony. "She was destroying the 'Everlasting'. I thought it was you," Jeff said.

Sara's eyes were brimming with tears as she looked at the man she had served for life. *"You killed your child for a painting"*, she said with a wretched heart. *"Your greed for great fortune has destroyed everything that mattered."* The neighbors arrived, hearing Sara's voice. They called the police, and the police arrested Jeff. As they took him away, he kept muttering, *"I thought it was her...."* over and over again.

At the trial, Sara revealed the truth that shocked everyone. *"I am his stepmother,"* she said. *"I married his father when he was nine. His mother left them, and I raised him after his father's death. I thought that I could make his life worth living without his parents, but the rest is nothing."* Jeff was sentenced to life in prison. His painting was forgotten and covered with dust, which made his daughter's grave. The house was given to Sara, the only person who had served, taken care of and lived her whole life. But the empty halls of the house scared her, reminding her of the pain and loss of Jeff and Julia.

One day, she entered the dark room. The dim lights of the bulbs were fading away, and "Everlasting" was screaming with the stains of Julia's blood. She covered the painting after preserving it for the last time. *"There is an everlasting lesson to be learned from the words written by blood on Jeff's great fortune,"* she said. The house remained silent, carrying the tomb of greed and cruelty, and the resilience, loyalty, and patience of a Maid Mother. Now, Sara remained the keeper of the house and story of great misfortune



The oppression begins to delve into the roots when it is organized by bounded voices. There was a girl named Leila. For her, collecting art, writing, music and speaking were the keys to contentment for her precious soul. The voices, each with their own distinct personalities and tones, admired her greatly. She had blue eyes, a simplistic nature, curly brown hair, and a distinctive sense of style. She had a strong desire to share her voice with the world. As a little girl, she joined school and drew her illusions, which were appreciated by the speakers. As she grew older, her passion for performance continued to shape her attitude towards her dreams. One day, she stumbled upon a recording studio in the basement, which sparked a new idea in her mind. With renewed hope and determination, she began to pursue her dreams. She started speaking. Leila's version was appreciated due to her tone. Her desire to share positive messages took another step forward. Her work was admired for its energetic and passionate tone. She shared her recordings with other people, sharing her feelings, thoughts, and emotions about art, music, and positivity. One day, Leila received an unexpected call from the head, inviting her to walk the red carpet at an industry event. After a long wait, Leila finally received a stipend, which brought her immense joy. Overjoyed by receiving her stipend, Leila's eyes sparkled with happiness. However, the harsh realities of the world soon took their toll on her gentle nature. The next morning brought another challenging day, filled with new obstacles. Leila found herself facing a multitude of challenges and dilemmas. One fateful day, Leila fell victim to exploitation by a domestic worker in the industry. A traumatic event occurred, leaving a lasting impact on Leila's life. She migrated to another city and changed her name; the unbearable burdens and the loss of potential seemed to emerge a disastrous and uninspiring boundary around the timid girl. The experience left Leila, once a passionate activist, feeling helpless and impaired. Leila's sense of self was lost in the chaos of her new surroundings. Leila's ambition to rise above her challenges and become a strong, independent woman seemed to fade away. Leila struggled to navigate her new life and find her place in society. In this unbearable era, Leila lost her vision. A suicide attempt was made by the girl, and she lost all modes of rising. There were no artistic sentiments surrounding the opportunistic world. The exploration of positive words fell apart. But the work created by her was so powerful that it did not lose its charm. It was alive in her recordings. People found her lost chastity through the recorded sounds. The last sentence found in her voice was: **"Whispers speak volumes behind the walls."**

Rania Gulnar, a bright, ambitious, and passionate 20-year-old from Sialkot, walked home from Allama Iqbal Library, her feet pulsating from the blistering pavements. The sun beat down on her broad back, its golden rays dancing across her dark hair. As she was contemplating her next literary project, her mind went blank, and suddenly, a vision of words emerged. She strolled through Sialkot's vibrant streets, where she could smell the aroma of spicy street food, hear the sound of children playing freely in a park, and hucksters sobbing over their products. Rania envisioned millions of thoughts, giving life to her words, and using her pen to create a phenomenon that would be known in time to come as one of the greatest works of this century. Her tattered bag, weighed down by books, souvenirs of her relatives, and papers, hung at her waist. Leaves rustled, birds chirped, and nature conveyed to her the rhythms that nurtured her creative mind. But in an instant, everything changed. A car zoomed onto the sidewalk, skidding and screeching its tires with an anguished animal-like scream. Rania's eyes snapped toward the sound; she realized that the thing was coming straight for her; her body was instantly overwhelmed with an entirely different feeling. At that moment, she felt like she was trapped underwater, gasping but unable to do anything. The impact struck her chest, a shockwave sending her flying through the air. Her backpack burst open, and books and papers spilled everywhere like confetti in a mad whirlwind. Shattering glass and crunching metal resonated through the air with all sound almost everywhere in cacophony. A giant bird's wings were lifting her from the wreckage and out of focus. Rania saw a stranger's face above hers, his eyes filled with worry, as he gently helped her up onto the pavement. **"Hold on, beta,"** he urged his voice a gentle breeze in the midst of the turmoil. Rania's world fades to black. Rania was lying in her hospital bed. There were various machines around her beeping, and disinfectant smells filled the air. The bright, harsh lights of the hospital shine down on her. She had her parents rushed to her side, their faces etched with worry. Her mother held her hand firmly as if trying to comfort her. Her father was concerned, with tired eyes because he hadn't slept. Rania's leg throbbed with pain, encased in a cumbersome cast. The cast felt like a prison, trapping her. She had tubes attached to her arm giving her medicines. It was very noisy in the hospital room- beeping machines, muffled voices, and clanging equipment. Lying in bed, Rania felt her ambitions slipping away. Her aspirations seemed to fade, just like the fluorescent lights in the hospital. Hopelessness crept in at night, stealing the remainder of her confidence.

"Why me?" she whispered, tears streaming down her face. But something inside of her stirred. As she spent long hours in hospital rooms, meditation, and journaling brought her little comfort. She started writing with her shaking hands. Her words overflowed onto the paper as the messy tangles of emotion. Tears streamed down her face as she poured all her fears and frustrations. As weeks folded into each other like a slow-moving river, Rania's journaling transformed into poetry.

**"Fractured bones, yet unbroken soul,
A journey through pain, to a newfound goal.
In shattered dreams, I found my voice,
A melody of hope, a heartfelt choice."**

Her leg was healing well, and Rania began doing some yoga. She liked the simplicity of movements and the way breathing was synchronized with the body. This was enough to turn things around for her. She started practicing more holistic techniques after this appreciation for her body's strength. As Rania slowly began to return to academia, her attitude had also changed. She was no longer out there looking for grades; instead, she wanted to seek knowledge and understand the human experience.

This accident had changed Rania's path but unveiled her secret strengths. She now learned to value every moment she spent and appreciate the beauty of imperfection in life.

Rania Gulnar, a renowned author, faces a life-changing accident that reveals the beauty of imperfection, teaching her that life's true essence lies not in perfection but in its unpredictable twists.

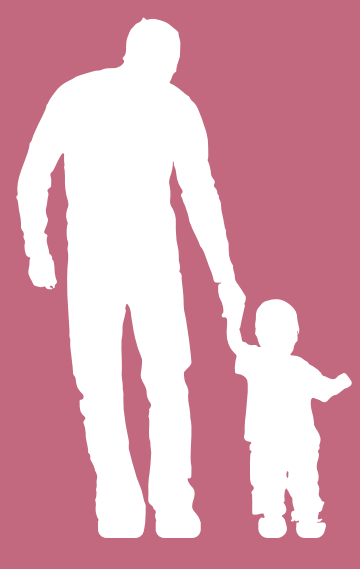
Rania sits at her desk, with the pen between her fingers, with an impression of a smile on her lips because she knows that her words have touched hearts and inspired souls.

"Life can be unpredictable," she writes, "but it is in the brokenness that we discover our true strength."

THE WHISPERING WORDS

Fasiha Rehman

A mysterious book altered Kane's fate, giving him a chance to delve into his inner archives. Kane, a solitary person, loved to live in the world of books. His life was a mere existence, barren of emotions and connections. Books were his refuge, his secure haven. One day, while browsing through the dusty bookstore, Kane's curious nature led him to a mysterious find. Its cover was tattered and its tagline, **"Echoes of Memories"** was etched in a language he couldn't understand. The bookstore owner warned him, **"That book has a life-changing encounter"**. Kane's thoughts whispered, this can't be just a book. Upon opening its pages, he felt an unseen presence lurking. The words danced before his eyes along with memories, he had long forgotten. He reminisced about his childhood, his parents, and his waves of laughter. Tears rained down like autumn showers as he relived moments he believed were irretrievable. Overwhelmed with emotions while reading, Kane discovered a note tucked between the pages: next chapter awaits... Author your own destiny. His mind resonated with the thought, I am better than I know myself. As Kane delved deeper into the text, the boundaries between reality and fiction blurred. Suddenly, the book snapped shut, and Kane's presence was extinguished like a candle snuffed out. The bookstore owner whispered, **"The book's mysteries have devoured another curious mind"**. The book stood poised, ready to claim its next victim.



WRITE A LETTER TO YOUR FATHERS

Muhammad Furqan



Dr. Tristin Bell has read somewhere else that “**life is not mere happiness, not only sorrows. It is neither in luxury nor in misery. We cannot discover it in a peculiar thing as a whole. However, it can be found in between smiles and tears.**” He reckoned that this sentence was an extremely realistic definition of life. Few years back, when he was called by The New York Times to receive his royalty and gift as a Writer of the Month, he was literally thrilled and over the moon. Delight was bursting from each and every pore of his skin. He dropped her wife at hospital as she was a surgeon; and his nascent son at a Montessori institute as he was just six and a half years old. After that, he went to The New York Times. He was heartily welcomed there and received his prize and gift with grand honor. His science-fiction essays and articles were widely read by the masses. Bunch of publishers were making contacts with him to publish his writing articles in the form of books. When he left the head office, his chest was panting up and down with a magnificent sensation of success and gratitude. He discerned the power of words, that day. They are invisible strings connecting you with the people you don't know. They have the ability to travel; even if you die. Decades and centuries go on, but the symbols scripted in books remain always alive and animate. The very same day, he got to deliver a lecture at a science university.

He was driving back to his house in the afternoon with an ideal felicitous when he heard about the terrible news of a horrible earthquake in the city. He heard the news in the car radio and all the jolly gaiety was plummeted down promptly. His heart beating fast and nervously in the hard cage of ribs. Descended from seventh heaven to Hades. Distress, agony, ache, suffering, despair, and pessimism rushed shortly before him. He didn't bother to check its location and magnitude and effected areas. Instead, he put his integral force like a stallion from the very segment of hips and pressed the accelerator. Stars trickle down from his eyes as his car's tyres dragged into the town's lane. Smashed buildings, pulled down houses and apartments, everything was shattered down to the ground. “**Natural disasters are the only factor that contributes to atheism.**”

Pondering on random thoughts, he got easy from car and galloped towards his home. His wretched and blasted eyes glanced it. He was struggling to rescue his family and other people in the proceeding few minutes. There was hustle and bustle..... Agitation horns and siren..... cries, yells and oceans of tears. Earthquake has already collided, streams and floods of random people, heavy rain of screams: there were millions and billions and zillions and gazillions and bajillions of disasters.

His wife and son were no more. God himself engraved their grave and buried them. Ah

Today, sorting out heaps and heaps of letters received from his fans; this destructive incident struck his mind and he melted and smelted into grief. He was resting on a soft-cozy chair with arms on study table. The light and slight fabric of letters' papers was illuminated in lamp's light and was kissing his hairy arms residing on table. It was itself a fascination to seek love in enveloped form. From the faces you aren't familiar with. Tomorrow he was invited for an interview in a TV channel. When he went thither next day, interviewer inquired a query in a run-to-the-mill style. ‘Being a successful physicist, a science activist and a technology enthusiast ... is there anything do you want to achieve in your respective field? What are your future plans and dreams?’

‘Eh... well, my dream was to become a scientist ... that I am today. But, still there are some desires and wishes that I want to fulfil in upcoming days. They are actually my aim and objective now.

‘Though, I do not have a major in computers but I want to invent a computer full of ingenuity. It would be such a computer that connect the wide and spacious horizons of time with each other. It will have the ability to send message to the past; if some computer experts coordinates with me.’ His idea was brain shaking. Such kind of machine was never invented by anyone before. It was an absolute new, novel, unique and solitary inkling. Soon he was trending on social media. It became far-famed as much as it could be; as an eminent consequence, he was offered for collaboration with Microsoft Corporation.

While driving in the direction of Washington DC, an awful thought intervened to stop him. ‘I was called by The New York Time few years ago and when I returned, everything had been ruined. Now, I'm heading to Washington... what would happen when I return? Oh! My goodness..... I forgot, now I don't have anything precious and expensive in my life to lose. What is making me frightened then? Go ahead.’ He greeted toodles to his thoughts and reached his destination. Microsoft Company was more glorious than his conceptions.

Professional staff, tremendous building and innovative minds. Microsoft was under his loafers with all its killer fab and sublimity.

‘How this idea came into your mind? Like it's exceedingly original and visionary. And you said that it's your objective. I want to ask why? What do you want to do with such an ingenious computer?’ A senior scientist asked from him during a conversation. Dr. Tristin Bell was accompanied by dozens of other computer experts and scientists also.

‘It's a bit long story. My wife and son were died in an earthquake.’ He replied with a sigh. He exhaled as if pushing out their death's lament. ‘Though, it was a natural disaster but it altered my life completely. I turned to an entirely different man. **I learnt that everything is replaceable in this world except humans. Luxury is revocable Money is reversible This planet has substitute of everything but once you lose your loved ones, you'll be deprived for ever.** Dawn of the day of judgement will breakout but the people who are gone; will never come. They would certainly never come.

Nowadays, the whole globe is occupied by the revolution of knowledge. Ignorance is fading day by day. Youth wants to study in world's recognized institutions but still practical implementation is in decline. When we, educated people, eat chocolates and snacks, we throw their wrappers on ground.’

Shiny and tall-bricked walls of Microsoft were never echoed with such a genius talk before. Senior scientists, AI specialists and IT experts were fully enthralled by him.

‘Despite this advancement, humanity is standing on the verge of chaos. We are eligible to produce a brand-new human being but we can't decrease the death ratio. Thousands of humans die everyday due to pollution. We did nothing for Greenhouse effect and Global Warming. These are serious lethal issues. Through the invention of this creative computer, we'll be able to send a letter in past in order to inform and warn our ancestors. We'll tell them several strategies and tips to save earth.’

He sealed his lips shut and applause rang all around.

They ignited working instantly. Construct of new computer was in full swing. Dr. Tristin Bell was exceptionally excited and worried too. An unknown fear was rooted deep in his head; what if it would not work. But his team was pretty hopeful. And right after four months, computer was ready but a monstrous turmoil was waiting for him. When senior scientists came and visited him and his computer, they got impressed and surprised. An IT expert and Dr. Tristin were yonder to explain its working procedure. One of those seniors raised a point. ‘Mr. Tristin Bell ... I am tremendously inspired by your work and efforts. But don't you know the ugly outcomes of playing hide and seek with timeline. **One who plays with fate is its enemy and fate never forgets its foes.** This question was striking in my head over and over again at the time of ‘this’ computer's production.’ She pointed towards computer in an inferior manner. ‘But I didn't indicate that time in order to not turbulent your thoughts and work pattern. And I deemed it unethical too. But What is the need of changing things that have been already composed and spelled in destiny? Playing with nature is playing with God. Don't do this.’

‘Ms. Emily, saving humanity is not playing with nature. We are doing this to save our planet.’

‘I think Dr. Bell is right. We are living in the twenty-first century; such a progressive era.’ One of the seniors from visiting panel intruded his talk solemnly. Dr. Tristin got rays of hope as words were coming out from his mouth. ‘We can't afford sitting idly and lolling and hibernating and

worrying all the time about future. After all, we have to take a step. Mr Bell continue your preparations. Tomorrow morning exactly at 8 am, we shall send a letter to our forefathers. I expect that it will bring a wonderful change. I expect

It was a fair cloudy day of January. Soft and velvety flakes of snow were falling from skies.

News channels were reporting this: "Good Morning America! This is Barbie – your favourite morning show host and today I have brought a highly radical news for you. Let's get engaged with me. As I informed you couple of days ago that our legendary scientist Dr Tristin Bell has invented a marvellous computer in with the collaboration of Microsoft Corporation Company.

Today, they will send a letter to the past. It's a remarkable day for whole mankind. A wonderful event is going to happen within few minutes in your own beloved country USA

Stay tuned with us. We'll meet them live.'

Mr. Bill Gates refused to type a letter in spite of Tristin's persistence. He asked Tristin to write by himself as it was his personal idea. His mouth watered. All at once, all the hundreds of butterflies flew from Malaysia Garden of Butterflies, migrated to USA and scooted hastily into his stomach. The entire planet was seeing his efforts yielding fruit.

His fingers ran on keyboard and began typing.

Hello!

Our Forefathers!

We are your sons from next generation
And we are writing you this letter to tell you
That we are wittier than you
And that



THE SOCIAL MURDER

Tariq Abbas



I had to leave my hometown Jehlum for continuing my studies in NUMS Islamabad. For my residence in Islamabad, my parents contacted one of our relatives named Aunt Sofia. Aunt Sofia lived alone in Islamabad after the death of both her son and husband. I never met Aunt Sofia personally before but, I remember I heard about her son Ahmed, that he was brutally murdered at the age of 19 by some drug lords and later her husband also died in the grief of his young son's death.

It was the day when I went to live in Aunt Sofia's house in Islamabad. She welcomed me warmly as if I was her own son Ahmed. It felt like I'm in my own house with my mother because she was way too sweet to me. We sat together, had tea and she started sharing her life experiences with me. Suddenly I asked her about her son Ahmed and in response to that she cursed Ahmed for being disobedient, ignorant and a disgrace to their family. I wanted to ask why was she saying that but she said "I'm not comfortable in talking about Ahmed, so please don't ask me anything about him".

She asked me to take my bag in her son's room and to get settled in Ahmed's room because it was comparatively more airy and spacious as well. It was indeed a huge room with old themed furniture and the walls of the room had paintings and posters of renowned Footballers. While exploring the room, I saw a strange wooden box in a corner of the room and asked Aunt Sofia about that box but, she didn't know anything about that, she picked the box up and opened it. There was a diary in it and only few pages of that diary had something written on it. She didn't have her spectacles with her at that time so, she requested me to read the diary loud for her. I started reading out the diary loud enough.

"If you're reading this, it means I'm dead! But this isn't important anymore, so let's talk about why I'm writing this diary before my death. Let me take you 8 years back, it was the day when I scored my first goal at the age of 11 years. The first ever goal and indeed the start of a new passion in my life. I ran as fast as I could to tell father about my achievement but, as soon as I told him about the goal, he furiously said, so what? Do you really think you'll make me feel proud with such act? Go and study if you want me to be a happy father. All of my joy and excitement got vanished and tears started to roll down my cheeks. That moment was really just the beginning of a suppressed, imposed and depressed life.

I continued studying because my parents wanted me to do so, but football had all my interest and commitment. I dreamt of becoming a professional footballer and to fulfil that I went to play football everyday after school and lied to my parents that I study with my classmates after school time. I developed glorious skills with the passage of time and became one of the best players of football of our city at the age of just 16. But, one of my relatives told my father that, Ahmed plays football and lies that he studies after school.

Abba cursed me to be a disgrace to them and banned my football forever. My relatives made fun of me and taunted me by asking the similar question every time, aww what happened to you footballer? Initially all of this just made me cry but with the passage of time it turned into depression. Even the school was just the same. Being an average student, I always ended up being punished by my teachers and they used to beat the hell out of me. I had no friends plus our class was also divided into several groups.

I wasn't a member of any of those groups. I literally had nobody to share anything about my inner thoughts, to share what I felt, to share what I wanted, to share what I was going through... literally Nobody.

I heard somewhere before that even after loosing everything you'll have your parents standing beside you, but in my case all I had was just emptiness and misery. My parents never treated me as they should have, rather they didn't even have any time to just listen to me for once. At the age of 19, one of my classmates, Zaheer, came to me and asked me why I always remain so depressed? I replied, I'm an introvert, that's why. He smiled and by showing his concern gave me a small packet of some kind of drug. I threw it away but he picked it up and said, look you need help and believe me this will surely help you! I knew it was wrong but unfortunately nothing was alright in my life either.

The depression of being a disgrace to my parents and a useless part of this society made me take those drugs. Initially, after using those drugs my body felt numbed and I felt a bit relaxed but, ultimately it lead to an addiction. I cursed myself at that time, but it was too late. I started to spend time with the worst guys of the university and in that company I came to know about a drug Mafia that worked in our university. Apparently, they were just students but they were inserting drugs in the blood of the young generation without getting noticed and I, myself was a victim of that Mafia.

I decided to unfold the truth. I went to a professor and told him everything about that Mafia, he calmed me down, brought me to a room and locked me inside, as he was himself a part of that Drug Mafia. They had all the weapons, guns and firearms and they decided to kill me like they did before with everyone who stood against them. But I somehow managed to climb up the window of that room and was able to escape, but I knew, it was impossible to save myself from those people now. Before dying, I'm writing everything that I've been through, obviously, words cannot express the amount of pain I have had in my life but I believe that this diary will surely make some difference.

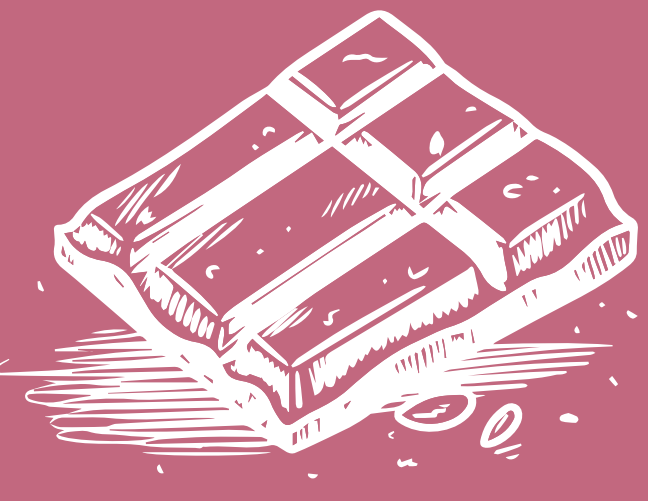
I know they will find me wherever I hide and will ultimately kill me. But, even after my death the question remains : Who Actually is my Murderer?

This Drug Mafia ?

OR

Whole of the Society ?

Aunt Sofia started crying out loud after hearing all of what her son had written and felt ashamed that they always suppressed him and imposed their own will upon Ahmed but, unfortunately it was too late now...



ON THE EARTH OF CHOCOLATE DELIGHTS

Noor-ul-Ain Fatima



My name is Noor ul ain Fatima. Before climbing the mountains of this story, I want to applaud that person who is spending the precious hours in reading these lines. My Dear reader! Let's forget the codes of your dilemmas, feel free and glee. I welcome you on my board heading towards the iconic treasure of fictional world. A world where a man can dream, fly, and relish.

I am a chocolate lover, a diver in the world of soft swirl streams. Each temporary vein of my organs demands high frequency of chocolate blood . In the series of my life hours, I always allow myself to roar around the pendulums of dark world. A world of chocolate and a world of creamy puffs. I have recognized a hidden urge within me, about this. Although being a human of these hypnotic waves, my existence can't bear the burden of going into a world where fantasy dances, desires smile and crying laughs end their credits. One day, when I was sleeping in the evening, taking rest out of my daily routine. Suddenly, the loud strings of whipped creamy pieces captured my soul and called the running hours to stop and wait. It was the hanging feet of time holding elasticity for more greetings. Finally! Finally! eyes were glowing like pearls on a burning fire. It was an alarming situation for me as well as for my modicum breaths. Sometimes, you find out yourself standing at a point where nothing seems to be true ,every gesture of your dream world extracts the main passion and fetches detachments. This stage of life calls itself a mental disorder when you never find serenity in prosperity . Let's plunge in the journey again, so, I was standing in my dream world, every leaf was showing its brown shine with the dusky smoke . There, the environment was emitting it's baking sounds in the air, a stream of coconut powder was diving in the crunches of little brown pieces. The aroma of velvety mocha involved me in helping the chocolate bakers for making more warm hazelnuts. Suddenly, something crapped my attention

How massive? A click sound left my mouth. A huge monster was coming from the cocoa mountains, it was out of my range to see such a horrendous structure around the timid characters. Hello !! Hello !! (Heavy dripping voice) it was not my choice to develop fear in your heart . Behind the one face there was an another face. He gave me a basket which was completed by the humble flavors of different chocolates. Oh ! Thank you (while hesitating).

Readers, do you know the scenario was very captivating. I had got a fire in my belly, few chocolates were tinny Minnie and some of them were large and young, while some were old, standing on caramel brushes. They all were engaged in relishing the time hours more than humans .I literally fell smoothly in their features, examining the regular activities, as they were enhancing my energy. All things were changed from my blur blue world. At that place few clouds went in hidden flowy restaurants for a good feast like the salad of crushed chocolates and the melted muffin lava, rice made up of chocolate nuts, dessert of smooth cocoa beans. Everything was on point, like berries on chocolate cake. A curious wave discharged itself and fetched a family for my hunger. It was a chocolate family who invited me in its warm brown walls. Cheerful voices were waiting for a proper sound. I gathered myself and had a cool seat. They introduced every version of their family members. Little innocents were holding epic names like KitKat, Dairy milk, Snickers .

KitKat held a special corner in my heart drive because of its waffery bites. It was their younger child having a height of ranks. At that time, I was experiencing my treasure of height too small. (This situation could remind the nostalgia of expired desires. The density of that chocolate was reminding the importance of one's dreams, a situation in which you feel very low and tired. It was resembling to the viscosity of my measurements towards the achievements, the things I dreamt and discovered, a journey which never spoke by itself .

The theory of revealing the real beauty of life leads you to the bottom of excuses. Look!! Few things are hard to hold as a bubble in the air, nothing can make you die, until you want it to do so. There is something in the world which never demands you. It can be a profession, any sort of dream or a person. Go further as fast your desires come on every single day.

Dairy milk a soft milky texture, a flow of smooth butter aroma, a complete therapist (I can relate the treasures of this chocolate with the realities of life. Sometimes, your long way of goodness destroys the inner surface of your body parts. The sensitivity, softness, and a humble behavior beg for their own self respect. It is good to be good, but up to an extent, where you can breath easily. Third one Snickers, full of nuts, holding treasures of crunchy bites with a huge monstrous look. This chocolate has all the luxuries, expensive northern nuts, but the absence of few a things never let it be happy. A dilemma, when a series of running hours demand solace and company. The things you have been dreaming for many centuries suddenly approach and knock with a scream. At this crying clock, you never find it a blessing.

The people you loved, the things you begged for, never let you free to relish mirror lights. The esteem of your life shadows always wait for something which never exists (Extinct)(Extinct). Well! I spent a healthy time with that chocolate family. They all were vibrant in making my sides smile. Lastly, I was continuously gazing at a creamy butter filled chocolate, and it was my urge to jump, catch, and eat it. Due to a heavy eye, chocolate parents got angry. I was best in digesting that chocolate fastly. The parents were coming towards me and suddenly, I escaped myself out of the dream. Actually the storm originator was in my mother's hand. It was her voice, asking, how lazy? You are still sleeping Aww!! I was still experiencing the taste on my buds.

**Think
BIG**

*"Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world.
Today I am wise, so I am changing myself".*

-Rumi



A RED ROSE FOR YESTERDAY

Fatima-tu-Zahra



“You too should have died that day....” The words echoed in his ears, slicing through each vein in his body, only to find release in the quiet trickle of his tears. Dementia, people say, can make you forget faces, places, moments and even your very sense of self—let alone what someone said decades ago. But people can be awfully wrong sometimes. Our brains may hold the faces, places, and fleeting moments of our lives, but what about the words that pierced through the heart like a dagger, making it bleed drop by drop? Dementia might blur the memories of people and places, but can it erase the scars left by words that once cut to the soul—especially the words delivered by the voices we once adored?

The man rubbed his eyes roughly with trembling hands, as though trying to wipe away not just the tears but the memories too. His face was a silent testament to those very words, still etched in his mind, even though time had dulled so much else.

“You’re still up, Grandpa?” said the boy, stepping in the room. The boy’s voice startled him out of his thoughts, but the ache in his chest lingered, unshaken.

His name was **Williams Wilson** but everyone here called him Grandpa—not only because he was old, but because he was living with dementia too and would forget his name every other time. Like, when they sang him a birthday song last time, he stopped them mid-chorus, frowning, and asked, “Who’s this lucky guy you are singing for?” After half an hour of convincing him that the celebration was for him he shrugged and said, “Okay, if you say so—but are you sure that’s my name? Don’t waste your cake on the wrong guy.”

He was a man in his early 70s, yet his spirit remained that of someone in their early 20s. He spent his days playing chess with Uncle Jones, watching the news, debating whether green tea was better than milk tea, and reminiscing about a past that never existed. But since Uncle Jones left, it felt as though he aged overnight. Now, he spent his days in his room, either sleeping, staring at the wall, or sometimes recalling a past that actually existed.

“It’s quite late”, said the boy sitting on the other bed in the room. “You should sleep. Remember, we’re visiting Uncle Jones tomorrow.”

He nodded quietly in response. Not wanting to press him further, the boy quietly got up but paused before leaving. “Grandpa...”

He raised his eyebrows in the anticipation of what was to come. “Good night,” the boy added. As the boy walked out, he stared at the door for a long moment before murmuring, “Good night.”

There are nights when solitude feels like a gentle refuge, nights that are like a breeze of heaven, where you cherish your own company, speaking silently to yourself. Then there are nights when the weight of loneliness presses too hard, and you desperately long for someone to hold you, to let you rest your head on their shoulder as they lull you to sleep. And then, there are nights that are dark and dull, where you simply don’t know what to do. That night he didn’t sleep a wink. Perhaps it was the excitement of seeing Uncle Jones, or perhaps it was the haunting rail of memories that refused to stop any time sooner. He would sit up every few minutes, pour himself a glass of water and then abandon it untouched as if the simplest action felt too heavy. He paced the room in silence, his shadow stretching and shrinking across the walls like a restless companion. His eyes often wandered to the empty bed beside his own, a hollow reminder of something lost, before returning to the clock. Each ticking second seemed to mock him, pulling him closer to the morning yet offering no comfort in the passing hours.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity, the morning sun crept through the gaps in the curtains, painting soft, golden patterns on the walls. Before stepping out of the room, he paused in front of the mirror, his gaze lingering on the face staring back at him—a face both familiar and strange.

He was wearing a beige checked suit, paired with brown chestnut monk strap shoes, their polished surface betraying their age, while his socks, slightly frayed at the edges, looked well-worn. His golden cane and flat cap complemented the outfit, though the navy blue pocket square seemed out of place against the muted tones. Still, he wore it with quiet pride—gifted to him by his wife on their 16th wedding anniversary, it was a piece of her he refused to leave behind even though they were not speaking much these days. But that’s not something new in married couples, especially in old married couples who are in love too. Even in anger, the sentiment behind a gift remains unchanged—a truth that older couples understand better than the young.

Though what caught his attention wasn’t his outfit, but what lay beneath it. Had he always looked like this? When had his face sagged so much? The wrinkles on his forehead—weren’t there only two distinct lines before? Yes, that’s what he remembered. But now, his entire forehead was a map of creases. What was most sorrowful, however, was the slowly dying shine in his olive-green eyes.

A soft knock at the door broke the stillness, pulling him out of his thoughts. He wiped a hand across his face, clearing the lingering heaviness before his hoarse voice echoed in the room. “I am coming.” The drive seemed endless, the silence between them stretching into something heavy, until finally, they arrived at a small flower stall. The boy stood frozen in front of it, his brow furrowed, fingers nervously tugging at each other as he hesitated over which flowers to choose. Time seemed to stretch, each second thick with uncertainty, until the man in the beige coat with navy blue pocket square decided to break the silence

“Buy lilies.”

The boy spun around, his face brightening with a wide smile, “Thank you, Grandpa.”

He turned his attention back to the florist, purchasing a bouquet of fresh lilies and a single red rose. As he paid, he glanced around, only to find that Grandpa had already taken a few steps ahead on the road. Without hesitation, the boy hurried to catch up, his heart pounding a little faster than usual.

“Wait a minute, you marathon runner, this is for you.”

The man in the beige suit, with his navy blue pocket square, tilted his head, narrowing his eyes in slight confusion, as though trying to make sense of the boy’s words.

“Here, take this,” the boy said, holding out the rose. “I know you like red roses.”

Before he could say anything, the boy pressed it into his hands. His smile, wide and full of earnestness, a mixture of pride and affection. He looked at the boy, and for a fleeting moment, it seemed as though the spark in his olive green eyes flickered back to life.

“Are you tired, Grandpa? Should I bring the car?” The boy hesitated, glancing at the narrow street ahead. “Not that it would fit here anyway...” He chuckled nervously, his words trailing off as he noticed the man in the beige suit with the navy blue pocket square walking on, unbothered. “The weather... it looks like it might rain. I checked the forecast before coming, and it said no rain, but who can trust anything these days? Good thing I brought an umbrella. Smart of me, right, Grandpa?”

The boy smiled at his own rambling, hoping for a response, a nod, anything. But the man said nothing. His olive green eyes were fixed at something else, something far beyond the present, something the boy couldn’t see, the world couldn’t see...He kept walking, his cane tapping rhythmically against the cobblestones, a lonely and steady sound almost hypnotic. The boy’s footsteps lost their earlier certainty, slowing into a quiet rhythm. He couldn’t tell if his words were helping or if his presence alone was a better companion for Grandpa.

Soon, both of them reached a large gate, its towering structure imposing yet worn with time. The cane, which had been tapping rhythmically against the cobblestones, came to a stop. The gate itself seemed to groan under the weight of its years—the once bright, vibrant grey paint now peeling and rusting, revealing the silent passage of time. The boy took a deep breath and slowly pushed the heavy door open. It protested with a squeak, as if it had been startled from a long, peaceful slumber, disturbed by their arrival.

The boy muttered under his breath, his voice tinged with disappointment. “Last time I came, there weren’t these many leaves scattered around. Looks like the cleaners have given up on this place.”

The wind picked up a few stray leaves, carrying them around them, as if welcoming the newly arrived guests. The boy didn’t seem to notice; his focus was now on guiding the man forward. The path was lined with old, crooked gravestones, some leaning at odd angles, their writings almost faded, others nearly hidden under overgrown vines and grass. A sense of neglect and forgetfulness lingered in the air. Not the neglect of the graves, but of the people beneath them who had once mattered the world to someone.

The boy paused for a moment, glancing around, and then, almost as if by instinct, he turned to the right, guiding the man towards a more secluded part of the graveyard, where the trees grew taller and the shadows deeper. It was quieter here, almost too quiet. He stopped in front of a grave, its marker modest but faded. He knelt down and placed the bouquet of fresh lilies on the grave, its soft petals resting against the weathered stone. For a moment, he stayed there, looking down at the grave with a soft expression. The wind swirled around them, as if offering to carry some of the burden off their shoulders. The boy’s hands lingered for just a moment longer on the bouquet, and then, with a deep breath, he straightened up and stood there unmoving.

“Whose grave is this, your relatives?” the old man asked, his voice breaking the stillness.

The boy looked at him, struggling to say something but changed his mind midway. A simple “yes” escaped his lips. The older man looked at the gravestone, his hand reaching out to pat the boy’s shoulder gently. “Such a beautiful name,” he said, his voice soft, almost wistful.

The boy nodded, his throat tight. “Grandpa, would you mind sitting here for a minute? I’ll just tidy it up a little bit.” The old man nodded silently, settling himself beside the boy. Neither of them spoke, but in that quiet moment, it was as if the space between them was filled with everything words couldn’t say.

The man in the beige suit with the navy blue pocket square stared at the grave, as if trying to see the person beneath it. Death had always terrified him. But it wasn’t his own death he feared most—it was the death of those he loved.

When someone comes into your life, someone who lets you lean on them, who stands with you through every storm and every sunshine, who loves you when you’re weak and humbles you when you’re strong, when they share everything with you—your joys, your heartaches, your dreams—and then one day, they’re gone...That’s when summer feels unbearably hot, and winters, unbearably cold. That’s when nights stretch on, long and dark, and days become dry and dull. That’s when rain no longer feels like a blessing, but just wetness falling from a sky that seems too indifferent. That’s when the stars turn into nothing more than distant, indifferent balls of fire, and the sky becomes a big, blue blanket, unable to provide any warmth. And in those moments, you realize—no one will ever live a life with you and for you again. The emptiness of that truth can swallow you whole.

But what if your loved ones wished for you to die? That’s when you’re faced with two torments at once—your own death and the death of your loved ones. The worst part is that both are still alive, but something inside them has already gone. They may still be there physically, but they’ve already let you go, and you’re left trying to figure out how to keep going when you’re no longer wanted. It’s a kind of living death, where you’re still breathing, but everything you once held dear is slipping away, piece by piece.

The wind blew again, this time carrying a chill that seemed to change the expression of the man in the beige suit with the navy blue pocket square. The words “You too should have died that day...” began to echo in his mind, relentless and unforgiving. He closed his eyes, the sting of those words sharper than any physical pain. The memories came flooding back—the day he had accidentally spilled the glass of milk, his son’s face contorted with anger as he lashed out. And the next day, when he was unceremoniously dropped at the old age home, his belongings packed in a small suitcase. Not a single word of love, not even a flicker of guilt on his son’s face, just a look that said, I’ve done my part. The door of the car slammed shut with the finality of a chapter being closed, and the man was left standing there, alone.

And now, as the memory swirled around him, he realized the glass of milk wasn’t the reason. It was too small, too insignificant for what had happened. Years of dreams and laughter, of football games in the yard, of cuddles and tears, all boiled down to a single moment of anger. To be left behind like that, after everything they had been through, Yet, he didn’t hate his son. How could he? Maybe his son had too much on his plate. Maybe he was too busy, too overwhelmed to visit him in three years. Maybe he was taking care of his own children, trying to make a life, just like he had. Maybe he was tired. Maybe his son wasn’t as cruel as the world thought. Maybe.

Or maybe it was because he had grown old, his mind fading little by little, unable to remember things as clearly as he once did. Maybe, his son had simply gotten tired of the thought of him becoming a burden, someone who would forget names and faces, someone who would need more care than he could give. Maybe it was better this way—better to leave him behind before his mind failed him completely.

But he still remembered running through the pouring rain, his clothes soaked through, just to make it to his son’s hockey game, his heart racing with pride as he watched his boy play. He remembered saving money for months, scrimping and sacrificing to buy his son those shoes he’d wanted so badly. He remembered the joy in his son’s eyes when he received them, how his face lit up as if his world had just been made whole.

He still remembered how he reacted to his son’s first steps, his first cry, his first time when he said ‘dad’. But he wasn’t angry at his son, maybe just a little bit sad, but not angry. Their relationship was of a father and son, not of a giver and a taker. He did everything without expecting anything in return. He gave his life to his son, not to an investment.... But, maybe in the end all relationships are of a giver and a taker...but of course he wasn’t angry..

At least he still had his wife with him, his love, though they didn’t talk much these days. Now, as he thought about it, he wondered how she had been. She said, she would return in a month—or was it two?—but she would. His love for her felt almost unreal, like something from a story, too perfect to be real. He remembered how beautiful she had looked in that pink lace dress on her birthday, the two of them dancing all night long, laughter echoing through the quiet. How she always made his favorite dish when he was feeling low, how they would take long walks under the moonlight, hand in hand. How she would make a mess of her face every time she ate chocolate ice cream, even though she was far too old for that, and how she’d hide behind him every time she saw a dog. All those moments flooded back now, and his heart ached with longing. When had she said she would return? A month? Two? She would surely scold their son for abandoning his father in an old age home.

Suddenly, the boy’s voice brought him out of his haze. His face was momentarily blank, as if he hadn’t fully returned from the depths of his memories. His eyes, clouded with a mixture of confusion and melancholy, slowly shifted toward the boy, as though finding his way through a fog.

“What happened, Grandpa? I’ve been calling you for quite some time. Let’s go, it looks like it’s going to rain soon.”

He said, helping the old man to his feet.

“Uncle Jones must be waiting for us,” the boy added.

The man rose with the boy’s help and the aid of his cane, but stopped. “Wait,” he said as he pulled a single red rose from his pocket and gently placed it on the grave. “This is for your relative.” He murmured.

The boy gave him a sympathetic look before they both turned and began walking back to their car, the distance between them and the grave growing with each step...as the boy cast one last glance over his shoulders.

A bouquet of fresh lilies and a single red rose, placed gently by the gravestone that read:

In the loving memory of Rebecca Williams (1954-2003). Wife Of Williams Wilson.

The sky roared, and the rain began to fall—soft at first, then quickly growing stronger.

And far back in time, a man spoke to his aging father with dementia, his voice fraught with anger “You too should have died that day with Mom.”



WHERE MADNESS MEETS POSSESSION

Farah Afzal



Sometimes, I take delight in what has happened to my own family. For how long can a person mourn his sorrow? The time tempers grief, and now I'm over the phase and mock my own tragedy.

What's the shame to admit the truth that I'm a possessed man in my 30s. Not just a damaged but a danger to my own family. The presence within me that has grown since childhood, feeds on my pain. It whispers cruel thoughts, urging me to unleash its fury. That's why I live alone, isolated from those I love. My family thinks I'm healing, that I've found closure. But the truth is, I'm harboring a malevolent force. It's a symbiotic relationship. I provide the pain, and it fuels my dark humor. But deep down, I know I'm losing control.

I'm trapped in this abyss, torn between my humanity and the darkness that's creeping inside me.

It is the start of December, and it has been raining since morning. Streets, slick with rain, reflect the faint glow of a lamp. Just like any other day, I roam around the same streets. It has become much of habit, more like a ritual since past few years blurred together like the rain drops. My footsteps weighed heavy and it seemed to mark insignificant impact on the road I'm trudging on. The night pulses with life like any other night since the October started, the only difference is that the sky is more dark yet peaceful and there is softness in it as if it has witnessed storm from above there. I stopped and for a moment time stood still. I gazed long at the sky till my eyes turned painfully cold as raindrops stung my face, and just then I realized, I have reached the point where it doesn't matter if it cuts my eyes open with its icy reach or numb my very soul. I breathed the cold air in, and the chill seeped into my bones. As I stared long into the sky with heavy breaths, the realization hit me hard like a lightening bolt that how small, how unnoticed I'm. The thought I often have on these kind of a night is both liberating and suffocating. The chilly rain echoed the beating of my own questioning heart.

"Does it make any difference if I make myself blind or end this mortal existence for the time being?" If I kill myself and for in that case to say I'll be dead for this world but how would the world be like? Would this world still be existing for it would be dead for me at least.

Yet, the prospects of rebirth stirs the contradictory longing in me. If I were to be born again, I would certainly wish myself not to be born unaware of my consciousness. But then, it is also a curse and a blessing to be conscious of your existence, to see the cruelty and beauty of this world, side by side. If one loses all his senses would he show gratitude or act more insane making him regain his consciousness? I say, it is more nobler to know what it's, with eyes wide open than to live in blissful ignorance though the truth make the wild mad out of a man.

I returned home and the door creaked shut behind me, sealing me in like a prisoner. The air of December clung to my skin weighing heavy on my weary soul. I gazed upon the noose, its cold, dark coils beckoning. My fingers trembled as I reached for it, the temptation to surrender is almost irresistible. Yet, as I stood, the rope tightened around my throat, a sudden realization struck: taking my own life would be a sin, for as the world may surely call it. But is not that the madman has a privilege to commit this sin and to end this mortal flesh? Cowardice gripped my heart; what if the afterlife proved more wretched than this woeful existence? Would I be trading one torment with another? I opened the drawer of my table. A diary stared back at me. Days have passed since I last penned my turmoil. Almost everyday is same as before, so what's the point. I reached for it, tore its pages and ripped it apart. The shreds of paper started fluttering to the floor. I yanked more pages and in a familiar rage, I destroyed it. I felt a kind of a satisfaction in doing so. The next thing that caught my attention were the pills scattered around the corner of a drawer. My hands reached for them. Two pills left. "Take one every eight hours as needed." My mother would tell me.

I laughed maniacally, pouring both pills onto my palm. **"when have I ever followed rules.?"**

I shoved them down my throat, feeling the bitter taste. The room began to spin and I collapsed onto a chair, exhausted.

I found myself entombed, surrounded by unfamiliar faces, their blank stares mocking my silent screams. Their eyes seemed to bore into my very soul. A thing, dark and formless, grasped my throat, choking the life out of me. Its grip was like an anaconda's deadly coils, squeezing the air from my lungs. I struggled to awaken, but my body felt heavy. I tried to move, to get myself free but my feet were rooted to the spot, unable to escape. Its hand tightened around my throat, its nails dug into my skin like razor-sharp talons. Panic consumed me; what was this torment?

"Was it punishment for begging death?"

My mind reeled, scrambling to recall some redeeming act from my wretched existence. Had I ever harmed anyone?

The sky was dismal grey, casting morose shadow over the mourners. A chilling realization dawned on me. I felt a lump form in my throat but no tear came. I felt a sense of detachment as I watched them bury me alive. Who were these people, really? Why couldn't I recall their faces? How had I forged these connections? What had I shared with them and what had they shared with me? As the dirt piled onto my body, I realized I didn't know myself.

Who was I really? What had I lived for? What had I left behind?

I woke up with the jolt, gasping for air. My heart pounded. I slowly opened my eyes, grogginess clinging to my mind like a shroud. I realized I wasn't on bed. The dream still lingered, vivid and unsettling. I stood amid a crowded city square. People rushed past, their faces distorted with fear. A figure approached me, eyes sunken and urgent.

"The world is ending," they whispered. "We're the last generation. The Earth's core is destabilizing, emitting radiation that will transform us all."

I felt a chill run down my spine. "What transformation?" I asked.

The figure's eyes locked onto mine. **"Into monsters, Beasts driven by instinct, devoid of humanity."** I tried to ask more, but the figure vanished.

I jolted awake. My surroundings were unfamiliar, a ruined, abandoned apartment. Dust coated everything, and shattered windows allowed sunlight to filter in.

As I stumbled out, the world outside revealed its horrors. Creepy figures roaming around my house. I couldn't believe my eyes that it's happening for real. I wondered if it's another dream. I thought maybe I'll get to open my eyes in another dream but every coming moment was proving itself worse than before.

"How long have I been asleep?" I wondered, stunned. In the dream, it felt like mere moments, but here, years seemed to have passed.

Why hadn't I transformed? Was it because I was asleep, not considered "alive" to be altered?

I scanned my surroundings and wondered "Are there others like me?"

The silence was deafening. I began to ponder, driven by a desperate hope. Perhaps, somewhere, others remained, untouched by the transformation. The multiple questions swirled in my mind:

What triggered the transformation?

Why was I spared?

How many others remained human?

I don't remember exactly how many days it took me to get over the hope of waking up into another dream. One morning, I dared open the creaky door, hesitant to step outside. Hunger gnawed at my belly. The cramps were unbearable. I had to find food.

As I stepped into the bright sunlight, the world assaulted my senses. The ruins of civilization stretched before me. The sky was a sickly yellow, casting an eerie hue over the devastation. I noticed the silence first. No birds sang, no wind rustled through trees. Only the distant growls and snarls of unseen creatures broke the stillness. The air reeked of decay and smoke, a noxious mixture that made my stomach churn. I covered my nose, gagging.

Every step echoed through the empty streets. I felt exposed and vulnerable. I scanned my surroundings, searching for signs of life or perhaps danger. The buildings seemed to loom over me, their shattered windows seemed like empty eyes. I spotted a few twisted creatures in the distance. The very sight of them horrified me. Their bodies were a grotesque fusion of human and beast. Their limbs contorted at unnatural angles, skin slicked with pulsing markings. They seemed to be watching me, their white gazes fixed with an unnerving intensity. My hunger forgotten, I froze, wary of attracting attention.

Suddenly, a gust of wind swept through the streets, carrying a faint scent. Freshly baked bread. My stomach growled, and my mouth watered. Hope rose within me. I trailed the enticing aroma. The scent of freshly baked bread grew stronger, mingling with the stench of decay. As I turned a corner, I spotted a makeshift market. Tattered stalls stood amidst the ruins. But something was off. The vendors' eyes seemed... wrong. Their irises were milky white, and their pupils had shrunk to pinpricks. I approached cautiously, unsure what to make of this eerie gathering. A vendor caught my eye, her face twisted into a grotesque grin. I hesitated, sensing danger.

"What's for sale?" I asked, trying to sound calm.

"Bread," she replied, holding up a loaf. "Fresh from the oven."

My stomach growled, but I hesitated. Something wasn't right. I tried not to pull conversation any longer but she asked me to follow her. I always trust my gut feelings. Something in me told me to take notice of what she was about to show me but part of me also restrained me from doing so. The vendor's grin widened as I trailed her. We entered a crumbling building, the air thick with the scent of baking bread. But beneath the aroma, I detected something else – a sweet, acrid smell.

Inside, I saw.... Human bodies. Charred, twisted, and still smoldering. My mind reeled. Her grin grew wider. I stumbled backward, tripping over my own feet. This was no market. This sounded like hell. "Bread of the damned," I whispered, my voice trembling.

The vendor chuckled with a low, menacing sound. My mind reeled as I turned to flee. I pushed through the crowded stalls, shoving aside whatever came my way. I ran, my heart pounding in my chest. The scent of charred flesh clung to me, haunting me. Finally, I stumbled into an abandoned alleyway, gasping for air.

What had I just witnessed? Was this the world now? A world where humans were baked into bread?

I leaned against the wall, my stomach churning. I would rather starve than feast on such horrors. As I stood leaning against the wall, I recalled a book I'd read before the world ended, mentioning dandelion greens, chicory, and plantain as safe options. My search began in abandoned parks and green spaces. Amidst the overgrowth, I spotted a cluster of dandelion plants. I knelt, carefully plucking the leaves to avoid bitter stems. The earthly scent filled my nostrils as I gathered a handful.

Next, I sought chicory, identifying its distinctive blue flowers. I dug up the roots. As I moved further, I spotted a stream. I knelt cupping my hands to drink. It revitalized me but my hunger pangs persisted. Plantain leaves proved trickier to find, but I finally spotted them near a crumbling wall. With my pockets filled with foraged greens, I felt a sense of accomplishment. Enough for a few days, at least. As I walked, I noticed other potential food sources; Wild berries on bushy shrubs and unripe fruits on abandoned trees.

My feet aching from hours of walking. I ducked inside my apartment thinking how many more days I'll be able to ramble around these lanes. I couldn't sleep, hoping to wake up from this never ending nightmare. But sleep evaded me, as if it had abandoned this world along with humanity. I lay on the cold, dusty floor, staring at the dark ceiling, willing my eyes to shut. But they refused.

Just as I was starting to drift into a restless doze, faint whispers pierced the night air. I froze, my heart skipping a beat. Voices mourning outside.. I hadn't heard human sounds in so long; my curiosity overrode my fear. I cautiously emerged into the night, the moon casting an eerie glow. A figure huddled on the ground, sobbing uncontrollably. As I approached, I saw a man, roughly my age, clutching a small, lifeless body. His eyes were vacant, his face etched with grief.

"Hey," I whispered, trying to sound gentle. "I'm sorry... I didn't mean to intrude."

The man looked up, startled. His eyes, though red-rimmed, held a deep sadness.

"It's... it's okay," he stammered.

"What's your name?" I asked

"Albus," he replied, his voice cracking.

I asked why was he crying and he told me that he lost his family

As we talked, Albus's sobs subsided, replaced by a hollow calm. I listened, offering what little comfort I could. This shared humanity or so I thought bridged the gap between us.

But then Albus's expression shifted, his eyes locking onto mine.

"We're not... what you think we are," he said, his voice barely above a whisper. "We're all monsters here."

My mind reeled. "What do you mean?" Albus's gaze drifted toward the moon.

"Night masks our true forms. But when dawn breaks... you'll see."

His words sent a shiver down my spine and I couldn't move.

A knock at the door shattered the silence.

I woke up, drenched in sweat, my mind foggy. Everything is back again. I didn't even noticed when sleep claimed me. I found myself disoriented slumped in a chair. My neck aching from the awkward position. Was it again a dream? I couldn't tell. My fever-addled brain blurred reality and fantasy. Life has become an endless episode of dream within dream. I lost count of what was real.

Albus's anguished face. The lifeless body in his arms.

His haunting words: "We're all monsters here."

Were they just fever-induced hallucinations? I couldn't shake off the feeling that there was truth hidden within the dream.

Life, that monstrous and cruel deceiver that takes delight in taking man's all fragile expectations and dashes them upon the rocks of despair, and then he is left pondering "Is that what I was born for?" Beneath his form is a demon who wants to dominate and who relentlessly threatens his whole existence till he surrenders or rather overpowers him. When his mind, like a tempest-torn sea leaves him hanging between doubts and fear, he hears the din from a void Of all the things of what could've been, but then how long a person can scream? How long a person can sit idly and with his parched eyes, gaze upon the decrepit landscape of his despair? Of course, he musters up some courage then, to make a change? Hoping things will be better, If not today, then someday, somehow, when the day will be fairer than today, but like every dying moment, the coming day doomed to be a Yesterday. But still, he dreams and lives. The pathetic Homosapien lives in hope because it's this hope that begets life. A useless ridiculous hope. But still how long a person can sit and accept what it is? He has to dare and hope...!!



It was a shady, misty and cold night, presenting the view of full moon, in winter when Elora, after having the periodic nightmare since her childhood, strolled out of her little hut, leaving her best friends; Tallhart and Aldon; two tiny elves in the hut; behind, to a cold wonderland. Velvety snow falling down as a sign of virtue at the top of her, from the sky; and the deliberately increasing flickery light from the pit of fire enlightened her features marvelously. She found herself falling through space. She was standing near the pit of fire folding her arms around her chest. Over her head, blackish-gray sky was struggling with twinkling Stars and smoky clouds, blocking the darkness between them. The pale crescent moon shone like a silvery claw in the cloudy sky. The moon, like a sly pearl, enriched the loveliness of the dark night sky. It seemed a bewitching hour of night, spreading all the magnificence, covering the world like a white feathered protector. The shower of glittery rays, with a sweet smell of fire, far from the chimney inside her hut made the view breathtaking.

The night sky was blazing with colors. White hot flames shimmering through fierce yellow to burnt orange as they licked the trees. A blanket of smoke covered everything. Elora was standing still and the surrounding made her flawlessly elegant and unblemished. All of the sudden, when Elora was dissolved into her thoughts, A huge phoenix, resembling an eagle but with rich red-gold and scarlet plumage, came from nowhere, flying over her head, screaming and cawing aloud like a wounded entity. Elora felt herself breathless and became frightened because she never saw such bird in her life. She took few steps back in a great hurry, unknowingly. Phoenix was holding a magical talisman in one of its claw revolving around her head. Seemed like casting a spell on her. Slowly, the bird started alighting down close to her feet near the burning pit and threw that talisman into it. And disappeared in a beat. Elora was thoroughly perplexed and could not make any head or tail out of the matter.

When the talisman fell down into the burning fire, it started transforming itself into a horrible giant creature out of nothing. It was growing vastly. The time seemed to be stopped by the eyesore of the existing entity. It had many hands, a terrible big mouth, with foul smell arousing all around. The place where, few minutes ago, the serenity and composure, of feelings and emotions was playing the leading function, was now, nowhere to be found. The scenario was now precisely opposite to before. The huge giant was demolishing everything and the snowy kingdom was getting transformed into chaotic and hazardous outlook. It felt like, the giant was doing this on purpose, or it was a sign of something else, but Elora was clueless of the purpose and mastermind behind the devastation. The Phoenix, the Magical Talisman and the formation of that Giant causing devastation all over the locale was unnerving Elora to a massive extent.

Because of the thunderous voice, Tallhart and Aldon came outside following the voice. From a farther view, the immensely huge creature was looking terribly dangerous. But there are some reasons for the beast to be the beast. When both elves watched this unknown creature from the back of the hut's door with the edge of their big shiny eyes, they started shivering, but still moving forward to save Elora; walking hastily side by side. Nothing would deviate them from their promise they made to Lady Tide. Both the elves always took care of Elora. They were with Elora since her childhood, when Lady Tide, her caretaker came under the spell of a werewolf for the sake of Elora's safety. Only Tallhart and Aldon knew about it, and they never told Elora about Lady Tide. Elora found only two of them near her ever since she gained consciousness.

Elora stood rigid and motionless in the moonlight. The huge giant with insane bright bloody-red eyes came in front of Elora. The giant hold her neck firmly and raised her from the ground. Elora was watching the happening of the moment vulnerably. The giant looked in the eyes of Elora. He turned his back to Elora and started moving away from her. He walked towards Tallhart and whispered to him, "I'll be back Tallhart, Wait for my comeback." The way it appeared from nowhere; magically, vamoosed in the instant of time, leaving Elora; bewildered and astonished. But there was something she remembered. His eyes.

As the giant disappeared, Aldon and Tallhart ran towards Elora and held her feet tightly in order to show affection. Elora was still shocked and unable to utter anything. She felt like she had encountered this happening once before, but she was unable to recall what exactly happened. She was just thinking and analyzing the whole scenario. All of the sudden, she felt a change in her body. She screamed in agony as her knees reversed direction and her bones shifted inside of her. She felt an unbearable pain and shrieking pangs all over her body. She fell down unconsciously. Tallhart and Aldon now understood that the appearance of giant was not a mere happening of night, but the indication of the entrance of Gonzolo. After twenty years, back again, becoming more mightier and braver. They looked at each other hopelessly, because the time had arrived when the promise was going to be fulfilled. The scene took a turn to many years back.

20 years Ago

Lady Tide just came back to her home after the burial of Ms. Amanda. She cried for the fate of this little baby who born few days ago. She was with Ms. Amanda for a long time span. But now, she was dead and never to be seen. This all catastrophic failure of life made her extremely dreadful. She had no idea whether to mourn over her late lodger or on the destiny of the little infant who just opened up the eyes to see the viciousness of this undying world, while looking at the small face of her.

"She is so week. I do not know how she will bear this pain" Lady Tide said to Tallhart.

"I am sure, she will gain her power within few days" Tallhart replied hopefully.

Unaware about the future of this delicate little baby with rosy outlook, Tallhart, in a grave tone, looking at the pendulum, said, "Her weakness will enlighten her devastated present and her bright courageous future."

"I hope that your prediction comes true." An unknown voice arose from the back of door. "But I will not let this happen."

Their eyes started filling up with water. Tallhart and Lady Tide wanted to say something to him, but the pain at his face made them unable to speak. Collecting a power of few words, Lady Tide said politely, "She is not the reason of the end of your family. She has just born few days ago. Her mother has gone to eternal world. Her father is nowhere to be found, and the reason of all this to be happened was your father. He shattered the powers of Alpha werewolf in covetousness and greed of authority. You can not punish her for the act she doesn't even know about"

Lady Tide stopped speaking when she saw the ferocious and brutal face of Gonzolo squeezed with anger. He kicked off the plant vase and said with serious tone, "Only she is the reason of everything, she is a major threat to me now. Her father destroyed my family and now she is here to take my powers. I hate her for her birth. She has no value of her existence."

Lady Tide looked at his face hopelessly and took a suspire. Gonzolo resumed his words, "Only Humans are tuned for relationships" looking at the broken pieces of vase.

Nostalgic moments popped up into his mind and he wiped out his tears emotionlessly.

He whispered again, "When you are dead.... All you see is, darkness." He sighed and said, "But I do not think that she is supposed to see darkness." He came near the baby laying down in the cradle. He peeped up into her eyes. Something stopped at the moment. Within a second, the sudden ambivalence changed into absolute hate. Gonzolo destroyed everything in a second. he had to remember his true motive of being there. He has to wait until she will be grown.

Then he walked towards Lady Tide. He took a charm out of his pocket carefully. He held Lady Tide from her arm. The grip was so strong to bear by Lady Tide. Then with a sudden jerk; he put the magical charm into the neck of Lady Tide, as a sign of owing them all, becoming master of all. As the charm fell in to her, she disappeared into nothing. Tallhart with that little baby, left alone in the room. Tallhart got astonished when he found out that he will never see Lady Tide again, but was unable to resist against this huge creature.

Gonzolo moved towards Tallhart and said in a lowest possible voice, "You will give her to me, and I will give you back, your Lady Tide" he promised; mischievously.

Gonzolo considered her the reason of the fight between Omega werewolves, to be an Alpha male werewolf, their fathers. The father of Gonzolo and that little baby Elora, both died in the rivalry of being major part of their own stories. Neither Gonzolo nor Elora had anything to do with it. But someone who lived close to both, was involved to plot whole devastation.

Now Gonzolo had to take revenge as the last wish of his father. He was unaware of the greed and avarice of his father. He was just following the path of his father to spread hostility and abhorrence. But he had no idea, that his purposeless hatred towards this baby, will destroy the future of both of them, unknowingly and ignorantly.

For this he had to wait, to see what was going to happen to them.

Present time

Aldon and Tallhart raised her up and took her to the hut. When Elora woke up and gained consciousness, Tallhart decided to tell her the reality about Giant, Phoenix and magical charm.

Two days had been passed since the devastation.

Everything outside was devastated and completely ravaged. When Elora woke up, she felt severe pain in all of her body. She was unable to be up straight. She laid down. Tallhart and Aldon came back to room when Elora started sobbing.

Aldon looked at Tallhart because he knew the real story of it. Elora looked Tallhart suspiciously with her red bloodying eyes. Like she was asking him to tell the truth. Tallhart and Aldon, both were terrified of Gonzolo. They never wanted to say this to Elora. But now, circumstances were completely different. Although, She eves-dropped everything when Tallhart was telling it to Aldon. But as, Elora was their best friend. They always stayed together everywhere. They did not want to harm her. They always protected Elora and now they were wretched and distressed, so Elora did not tell them because she never wanted to hurt those little helpers.

As they both were thinking about telling Elora, Gonzolo suddenly appeared horribly. "Now is the time of revenge baby Elora." Gonzolo said in a tough tone.

Elora looked at him unknowingly. She never saw this man in her life.

Tallhart came in between and pleaded Gonzolo to go away. But he punched at his little face and pushed him hard to the side wall. Elora was not feeling well and was traumatized because of the destruction and horror of that Giant. She did not know that the person in front of him is the same creature in a disguise.

Gonzolo walked towards Tallhart and said quietly, "Do not you want to see your master, Lady Tide?..... You do not seem excited little creature. Aren't you going to prove your loyalty to your master?"

In few milliseconds, he rushed towards Elora and held her tight from her head and dragged her out of her little dwelling. She was screaming and crying. She was a delicate girl with no power to fight this huge man. She struggled with him, but to no vain. It was all the anger and hatred towards her, that he didn't focus on the fact the Elora was unaware of everything that happened 20 years ago.

He looked in to her eyes, and again, his heart pounded harder, but he ignored the hubbub of his heart and slapped her rosy cheeks. Her lips started bleeding by this sharp smash. She was watching Tallhart and Aldon with hope that they would come to save her from this monster. But they went back to hut ignoring the fact that Gonzolo is here to kill her. Now there were only two of them. Elora was crying bitterly, and asked him to leave her. But he acted like a deaf with emotionless gestures. He threw her hard to ground and kicked in to her belly. Her eyes got swelled of crying. She was laying on the floor crying at her misfortune. She heard everything and now she was waiting to close this chapter of her life where she had nothing to do with anyone's death but still she was the ultimate reason. As Elora's father was a werewolf but only Gonzolo and Lady Tide knew about this, so Elora was waiting for her death unaware of her power and its use. When Gonzolo carried her like a wounded animal, he threw a parrot to Tallhart wearing a magical talisman. As the bird on ground, it changed into a human being. It was the breakdown on Lady Tide's spell.

On the other sides of the time, Gonzolo threw her into a dungeon and beaten her up for half an hour. She completely lost her mind. There were scars everywhere at her body. The torture was beyond her energy, but she was still alive.

Aldon and Tallhart seemed so happy and elated after watching Lady Tide back. But for Elora, their hearts were crying. They didn't want to leave her in the hands of that cruel, but for the freedom of Lady Tide, they had to stay quiet. Later on, they kissed Lady's hands as greetings. She asked about Elora, because the most awaited moment of her life was to see her as a young beauty. She was nowhere to be found. Lady Tide groped for her. Her heart was alarming. She asked brutally, then both elves told her the whole of some. They asked her to help Elora because only she was the one except for Gonzolo who knew the use of Elora's powers. She wanted to save her because Elora was the last retention of Mrs. Amanda, her daughter.

When Lady Tide heard about this mishap, she left everything there and went for searching Elora. At Gonzolo' the condition of fragile Elora was miserable. Gonzolo came back again with some food after four hours. There was a magical scepter, that Lady Tide had with her to fight Gonzolo and save Elora. When she reached the point where Gonzolo kept Elora, she took the shape of a small rat to get inside the house. She passed in easily. There was no one in except these three, the one Gonzolo and Elora were unaware of the presence. She hid herself behind the ceiling of the room.

She took her wand and attacked Gonzolo with her full power. Due to sudden unknown smash, he felt incredible pain. He lost his consciousness and fell down, while Lady Tide came forward and got her actual self. She came in front of Elora and tried to get her up. She was so weak and powerless to stand by herself. She looked astonishingly at her because Elora never saw this woman in her life. Lady Tide, aware of her thoughts, said to her, "O! My little Elora, I'm sorry for this all. I was waiting for your growth so you may know what really happened to your father and mother."

Elora was still looking at her unconsciously. Without stopping to listen Elora, Lady Tide started, "You know, Gonzolo wants to kill you, but I don't want him to kill you, because it's my chance to get your power. Elora, it's my authority that you're holding. Now I'm back and I'll take my powers from you. You're just like your mother... she always trusted me because of her innocence. But look, I got her magical and most powerful scepter. Now I'll have your powers to be immortal entity. You little poor soul....get ready to meet your brave and enthusiastic parents, just like you."

After saying this, she stabbed into her heart. Elora didn't say anything. She was enduring all alone from the first day of her birth. It was not the time to resist or to wish for more life. There was complete silence.

No... you will get nothing... mark my letters.... Lady Tide..... Stop. Something inside Lady Tide said. But she ignored it as the time made her blind to everything.

"Look here.... Get up....." Lady Tide laughed mischievously."You shouldn't die this peacefully poor Elora. I like making people suffer."

Then, for Elora, there was nothing but darkness. She was losing herself. After much agony, it felt better to die...

Gonzolo strived to get up, but Lady Tide, at that time was sucking and smelling Elora's blood to expand her powers.

It was too late.... She got accomplishment after yearning for forty years of her life. There was a point when evil won, because of unnecessary hate and wrath for an innocuous human. It lead both towards dead ends.

Now, She is going to be immortal. The powerful wand of Elora's mother was so powerful that kept Gonzolo dazed for a long time. But his consciousness was of no windfall, now.

Gonzolo was under her spell. She smiled at the dead Elora and helpless Gonzolo.

There was silence.... Complete stillness.

This was a worst pause. The silence that had the power to break hearts, to destroy peace and the power to abolish all hopes of life.

Within the limited minutes.....a laughter awakened, evil laughter... coming to be immortal...

Now, Gonzolo felt the injury of his life that he inflicted upon himself on his own. Now, was the time to see the aftermath of his purposeless motive to end someone's existence.

Nevertheless, it was the end of their world.

This was the kingdom of diverse shadows.

A shadow of wicked lady who bridged every margin to get power.

A shadow of a hopeless human, who wanted to take revenge from the one who had neither seen anything bad nor did.

And a shadow...

Wonderful of all,

Unfortunate of all,

Terrible of all,

A shadow emissary for a dead body of a girl who saw nothing, did nothing, felt nothing and got lost into nothing.



WHERE HAVE ALL THE SOCKS GONE?

Iqra Rasheed



The spacecraft landed in the kingdom of Lilienia, where the clouds were gentler than feathers and mountains were made up of driven snow. Where the birds flew as if they were looking for their home and the river flowed like whispers of nature. From the spacecraft, Sir Dino stepped out. He was from another planet. He wanted to visit and stay for a while in the kingdom. He could sense a disturbance in the air. The cold wind was blowing. His feet got frozen, so he wore his socks. Everywhere, People appeared to be occupied with their work. Though they were not doing work of great energy, but they appeared fatigued and sleepy. Sir Dino decided to drink a hot coffee in a nearby tea-shop. When he entered the shop, every stranger he passed by was glaring at his socks. He found it quite weird that everyone is staring at his feet rather than his face. He asked the barista to give him the most energetic coffee.

The barista handed him coffee and said "I made it strong enough to let you win the race with cats."

Sir Dino chuckled and said I'm more of a "watching cats race" kind of person. The shopkeeper told him if that was the case, then he should attend tomorrow's cat race at Royal Grounds.

Sir Dino nodded and left with his coffee. On the next morning, Sir Dino went to the royal grounds, which were located in the royal palace of Queen Liffi I. The guards at the entrance of royal gate greeted him with special treatment because he was a foreigner. The guard told him two rules at the entrance of the palace. The first rule was to take care of his socks, and the second was to obey the first rule. Sir Dino was sure of one thing: everyone here is obsessed with "socks." Rather than watching the race of cats, Sir Dino preferred to visit the palace. He was escorted by a soldier in the palace. The palace was decorated with exquisite sculptures of the king. Every detail of the sculpture, from the gentle curve of a smile to the twinkle in King's eyes, was evoking a deep sense of gratitude and love. Sir Dino believed that the Queen must have adored the king so much that his monuments were scattered around the palace. As he leaned in closer to sculpture, completely adsorbed in it, the guard approached him with a stern expression and said Sir Dino "please don't touch the sculpture". Because of guards slow pitched voice, Sir Dino was unable to hear him. he reached out to touch the sculpture's nose, but just as he did, a hidden mechanism activated, and a nearby suit of armor suddenly spring to life, rattling and clanging around. Jumping back, sir Dino said "I didn't know it was a magical masterpiece". Guard shouted that its not some kind of magic, it's a security feature. Sir Dino chuckled while watching the armor wobble clumsily. The guard was calming the chaos of dancing armor when Sir Dino left him behind and roamed around admiring other sculptures. He explored the palace for the Entire morning long. When sir Dino was about to leave the Palace, The guard, at the entrance of the palace stood up from his seat in astonishment. He pointed to Sir Dino and proclaimed that "this man is our savior. He will save our kingdom. Listen to me, people of Lilienia, this man had been walking for four hours, and none of his socks had disappeared. This is a great miracle. Finally, someone came to save us from a great disaster." Sir Dino was taken to the Queen. Queen Liffi stared at his feet, then his face, and addressed her people.

Remember, remember the sixth of December when my most favorite sock disappeared. That was my beloved king's last memento." Sadly , her Majesty said, "Sir Dino, In the kingdom of Liliania, there is a grave issue that plagues its citizens. No, it isn't dragons, famines, or violent storms. It is not even devastated floods. It is far worse—the missing socks." One morning you'd wake up with two socks; by afternoon, one would vanish into thin air. They did disappear into the mysterious void known as the laundry abyss". 'Sir Dino' Queen proclaimed, setting on her throne in mismatched socks, "you have been chosen as the sole savior of this nation" "But... why me?" Sir Dino stammered, "I am allergic to wool". The queen nodded gravely. "that is why you are perfect. You shall not be temped to hoard the socks".

The queen, donning a woolen hat that drooped like a wet spaghetti, stepped forward "Sir Dino bring back the socks, and Lilienia will reward you handsomely. In your honor, I will build a Sculpture and give you the status of Sockless Warrior".

The whole room erupted in cheers. Sir Dino was not sure what felt worse: his terror at the thought of adventuring or the sneaking suspicion that his statue would look ridiculous with colorful socks.

Sir Dino commenced his quest in the Forest of Fresh Linen the following morning. He had been informed by one of the queen's courtiers about a legend claiming that this forest was home to enchanted laundry trolls.

According to the tale, these trolls collected socks to line their nests. The forest was shrouded in a veil of mystery. The air was thick with the scent of damp wood and mingling with the sweet aroma of wild lavender. towering trees, their rough branches entwined, formed a natural cathedral, which obstructed the sunlight to kiss the ground of forest. Dino walked cautiously, keeping an eye out for any unusually soft trees. "Oi!" a gruff voice called from above. A troll the size of a toddler covered in lint stared down from a tree. "What are you doing in my forest, shiny-head?" Dino looked up, meeting the troll's small, gleaming eyes. "I... I seek the missing socks of lilienia

The troll rolled his eyes and huffed. "Oh, you're another one of those knights. Lemme guess, the Queen told you to 'save the kingdom' and all that nonsense?"

Dino nodded.

"Well, good luck," the troll snorted. "We only take socks that fall off from the hole of holey socks—you know, when you put your laundry in the dryer and it comes out smaller."

Dino, perplexed and mumbled, "Why would you want socks?"

The troll leaned in close, whispering, "They're warm, mate. You got no idea how cold a tree gets at night." Sir Dino sighed and asked the troll to share the location of the hole of holey socks. The troll replied, "I'll take you to the stash of socks, but I'm not crawling into that hole. I really value my neck and don't want it getting chopped off! If I wanted to visit the heavens, I'd totally go with you, but nah, buddy, no way."

Sir Dino responded, "I'll be grateful even if you lead the way." With that, the troll grabbed his backpack, and the two began their quest together.

As they made their way through the thick willow trees, the troll strolled along, nodding his neck rhythmically as if he could hear music in the air. Each of his footfalls echoed softly on the forest floor. "Ah, what a lovely day for a stroll! No worries, just me and the trees!" he said, clearly enjoying himself.

His leisurely pace sharply contrasted with Sir Dino, who hurried to keep up with him and looked a bit flustered. "Hey, Mini Tini Troll! Can we pick up the pace a bit? We have a journey to complete!" Sir Dino exclaimed. The troll just chuckled and continued swaying his head from side to side, relishing the moment.

After a few steps, Sir Dino inquired about the troll's happy behavior. The troll replied, "**Yo! I'm happy because I'm not that smart and sensitive.!**"

Sir Dino chuckled. "**You know, intelligent folks don't usually have much to be happy about**" the troll added. Sir Dino convinced to the conviction that perhaps the troll was wiser than he appeared.

They continued their journey and eventually reached their destination. Sir Dino descended into the hole, his torch casting a faint light that barely illuminated the tunnel's walls, which were intricately decorated with polka-dotted socks. As he moved deeper, a voice echoed through the darkness—deep and menacing.

"Who dares enter the Hole of Socks?" it boomed.

Sir Dino swallowed nervously. "I—uh—Sir Dino... of—um—Lilientia," he stammered.

From the shadows, an elderly wizard appeared, wearing a long robe with a single sock swinging loosely from one sleeve and mismatched slippers on his feet. "I am Lord Elli, Keeper of the Forgotten socks," he declared, his voice dripping with dramatic flair. "Why do you came here?"

"I... I need to find the missing socks," Sir Dino said, trying to sound more assured. "The kingdom is in chaos."

"Chaos?!" Lord Elli exclaimed. "I'll show you the chaos!" With a snap of his fingers, socks suddenly flew from every corner, swirling through the air like colorful butterflies. "Chaos, young one, emerges when socks lack freedom; see how they dance upon my fingers. They must be liberated from their mundane lives!"

Sir Dino, trying to avoid a particularly aggressive socks, babbled, "But... but they're—well—they're socks! They belong to feet!"

Lord Elli paused, lowering his arms. "Feet?" he repeated softly, as if the idea was absurd and weird. "My dear boy, socks are far more than mere footwarmers. They are symbols! Symbols of individuality and freedom! And they should be free from the tyranny of shoes!"

Sir Dino sighed deeply, realizing that talking sense into Lord Elli was like convincing a duck to wear pants. Sir Dino inquired the wizard whether he would return the collection of socks. In response, the wizard waved his magical staff, revealing a hidden trove of socks beneath a small hole. The pile contained thousands of socks. Sir Dino began to cough, as he was allergic to them. The wizard remarked, "My boy, these socks are numerous, and their power is equally great due to their abundance. "And you, look at yourself—you are but one. Are you, my boy, some kind of a Prophet or Deity, alone as the representative of your nation, capable of winning the battle and breaking the curse?" the wizard continued. How could a lone wolf, possibly break a curse?

That's like expecting a single sock to warm the feet of the whole nation. The socks of Lilientia bear the weight of a relentless curse, each thread woven with despair. Yet, they lie still, longing for a hero or a divine spirit to unravel their fate. Bound by their own softness, they hesitate to seek the freedom that requires sacrifice, hoping instead for a miraculous intervention to restore their vibrant colors and joyous dance. "Well, my boy, you may go; I won't take your socks, as you have traveled far. I trust, you know your way back to the kingdom," the wizard said. Sir Dino hesitated, stammering, "But—" The wizard cut him off, "No ifs or buts, unless you wish to stay here and serve me." Sir Dino left the hole and began his journey back to the kingdom, traveling the entire way with determination. At long last, he arrived at the kingdom, only to find that few had awaited his return—merely two or three courtiers.

The others, having lost all the hope, had assumed he had perished. With a solemn heart, he presented himself before the Queen in a manner both humble and contrite. The Queen, perceptive as ever, had already surmised the outcome, for Sir Dino had returned without the precious cargo.

Sir Dino, his head bowed in shame, spoke with a heavy heart. "My Queen," he began, "I was grievously mistaken in believing that a solitary man could bear the weight of safeguarding the socks of an entire nation. I—"

But before he could finish, the Queen, with her unwavering expressions, interrupted him. "And the wizard?" she inquired, her voice calm but firm.

"What of his reasons?"

Sir Dino, hesitating for a moment, explained, "The wizard refused to return the socks unless all of us were willing to take up arms in defense of them. He was not prepared to relinquish his hold unless we stood united in our resolve."

The Queen sighed "Ah! No worries, we'll just find another Messiah to leap into the river of troubles and magically solve everything!"

"Now, Sir Dino, off with your socks! Hand them over to my Lady-in-Waiting and make sure you're out by sunrise tomorrow."

With a shy glance and a humble nod, Sir Dino murmured, "Very well, my Queen. I shall do as you command. Sir Dino turned and exited the court, his heart heavy with the belief that the curse would never be lifted, not in a thousand lifetimes. Though he felt a pang of sadness, not from the curse itself, but at the prospect of having to purchase yet another pair of socks.

Think
BIG

"What if everything you think you know about yourself and the world is a carefully constructed illusion? False consciousness reveals the hidden mechanisms that distort your understanding and keep you in the dark."

Literature, Hi(story), and Politics

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Assistant Professor, UOC

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Literature, Hi(story), and Politics

Prof. Syed Ali Raza

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Literature explores the dark continents of the human mind and affects the way people make sense of the world and its material realities. Literature is widely considered a discipline that involves questioning and problematizing the narratives and stories we read and tell, which are deeply implicated in the process of our subjectivization.

In the broadest sense, a narrative is simply an account of a series of events, real or otherwise. This definition entails that stories are a subset of the broader category called narrative; the story inherently involves the delineation of fictionalized events, but both terms are largely used interchangeably. Intriguingly, dictionary definitions of both terms complicate the relation between them; both are inevitable for each other's explanation. Stories are necessarily fictional, but narratives may or may not be so.

The thought that narratives are a ubiquitous part of all life, not just the world of fiction, emerged from Structuralist theory, which holds that representations of history are constructed in accordance with certain ideologies. The eminent French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard used the phrase "**grand narratives**" to illustrate ideologically shaped, overarching cultural and political narratives that laid claim to truth; such narratives are there to legitimize rather than explain their authority. These totalizing narratives enjoy almost unrestrained authority in the realm of epistemology. It is the tyranny of these hegemonic cultural narratives that shapes our ideas of the world and the position of the human subject/object in it.

The genealogy of the word "**story**" can be traced in the longer word "history"; it records real incidents that happened in the past and are usually believed to be true. There exists an inalienable relation between the story and the storyteller (narrator). The narrator shapes the subject and the sequence of events for their audience, for whom the story is recounted. However, the use of the word "story" is not restricted to the field of fiction alone; any fabricated account of events is interpreted as a story. It is this slipperiness of the idea of story that led Lyotard to question various monopolized versions of truth-telling.

It is rightly maintained that every life is in search of a narrative, and every human subject wants to seek a story that will give meaning and purpose to the dizzying unpredictability of their existence. It is a surprising coincidence that the structure of life is similar to that of most stories; both have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Narratives are not related to individuals only; they can appeal to human collectivity as well. The meaning-giving narrative can be a grand and overarching narrative, a shared religious doctrine, or a national narrative. The idea of the American Dream is one such narrative that claims every American, irrespective of their race, ethnicity, and class, can be successful in the US. Sometimes, the meaningful narrative for an individual is not a grand narrative but quite an ordinary one; however, the narrative is there, and it is because of humans' deep-seated craving for stories that they are designated as "**homo fabulans**." Hence, it is these narratives that shape and construct our individual and group identities.

Every word on a page has its materiality and is engaged in a certain kind of textual politics pertaining to different socio-cultural institutions, as there is a deeply intertwined link between literature and politics. Hence, the primary task of a student of literature is to tease out the labyrinthine structures of literary texts and explore how they portray human relations and the human situation, and to uncover insights of enduring value.

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Ecofeminism: What It is and What it Talks about

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The nexus of ecologism and feminism gave birth to a new theory and movement in early 1970s. This theory, named as Ecofeminism, addresses issues which are not only the concerns of ecology but also of feminism. The term Ecofeminism (ecological feminism) was first used by a French feminist Francoise d'Eaubonne in 1972 in her book *Feminism or Death* with this claim that the planet earth was destroyed by man to satiate his profit motif. "D'Eaubonne saw pollution, destruction of the environment, and run-away population growth as problems created by a male culture" (Merchant 194). The term is a representation of the potential which women have in order to bring revolution in ecology. This, in turn, would ensure survival of human beings on this planet, Earth by giving a new dimension to the links that exist between the treatment of women and Others on one hand and the treatment of nature on the other. The fundamental tenet of ecofeminist theory is rooted in the structures of domination which exists amongst women, Others and nature. According to King, ecofeminism is "a global movement that is founded on common interests yet celebrates diversity and opposes all forms of domination and violence" (152). With regards to ecofeminism and the basic areas it should address, Ruether highlights what ecofeminism should discuss and what discipline it draws on:

Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crisis within a society whose model of relationships continues to be one of domination. They must unite the demands of the women's movements with those of the ecological movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socio-economic relations and the underlying values to these societies. (Ruether, *New Women* 204)

Though Ruether discusses the tenets of ecofeminism in the context of religion, yet the definition gives ample insight into the basic areas which it should/does discuss. Therefore, the basics of ecofeminist philosophy lies in the field of feminism and ecologism, and at the intersection, rests the issues which confront women, nature and all those who are marginalized and oppressed on the basis of colour, gender, class, age, sex, religion, ethnicity, caste and abilities.

Ecofeminism as a term took its birth in France. Since then multiple ecofeminist voices have appeared on academic platforms to articulate an interweaving perception about the interconnections between women and nature. The theorists like Ruether, Susan Griffin, Carolyn Merchant, Noel Sturgeon, Val Plumwood, Karen J. Warren etc. present ecofeminist theory in the western perspective. Their debate regarding twin domination of women and nature is embedded in the study of western cultures and social setup. "The diversity of ecofeminism is illustrated by its geographical spread, having a significant academic and activist presence in the US, Canada, Northwest Europe and Australia" (Twine 1). Plumwood's debate on dualism is embedded in the western hierarchy and she suggests to dismantle these dualisms in order to have a life-affirming social system. She traces the presence of value dualisms in the western philosophy of Plato and Descartes. Similarly, Warren presents her perspective of ecofeminism in the western context by tracing the oppressive ideologies in the western system of patriarchy. In the eastern hemisphere, Chipko Movement is significant in the Indian culture where women rose to resist the felling and hewing of the trees. Moreover, Vandana Shiva and Bina Agarwal have added significantly in ecofeminist theorizing. However, this is in fact a critique on the western policies of reductionism and colonization which relate to the Indian economy.

Sturgeon's definition of the term ecofeminism confirms the claim that it is a multidisciplinary philosophy and activism. She states that "Ecofeminism is a movement that makes connections between environmentalism and feminism, more precisely, it articulates the theory that the ideologies that authorize injustices based on gender, race and class are related to the ideologies that sanction the exploitation and degradation of the environment" (Sturgeon 23). This explanation not only establishes connection between feminism and ecologism (environmentalism) but also highlights the issues that ecofeminism addresses. It articulates the relatedness between the ideologies that exploit and dominate women, Others and nature on the bases of sexism, racism, classism and naturisms. The presence of connections and the existence of oppression and domination are the two main premises which ecofeminist theory articulates and incorporates in its epistemology. Greta Gaard goes beyond general understanding of ecofeminism as a mere overlapping of feminist and environmentalist theory. For her ecofeminism "approaches the problems of environmental degradation and social injustice from the premise that how we treat nature and how we treat each other are inseparably linked" (Gaard 20). The treatment of nature and treatment of human beings are intimately connected in the sense that both have their roots in the unjust domination on the bases of certain beliefs and attitudes which sanction and perpetuate this oppression and degradation of marginalized and inferiorized entities. The major claim of both Gaard and Sturgeon is that issues related to feminism and ecologism are indivisibly knotted with core reference to oppression and domination of women and nature.

Mack-Canty debates on ecofeminist understanding in terms of its domain and areas of concerns. For Mack-Canty, "Ecofeminism has developed, and continues to focus on developing, a body of complex theory in its attempts to explain and act upon the interconnected subjugations of women, other humans, and nonhuman nature" (175). This perspective differs from Ruether's statement as it encompasses "other humans" in its concept. The inclusion of this identity makes the theory more inclusive and accommodating which helps to make the process of ecofeminist theorizing broader in the location of "interconnected subjugations" of more identities.

Taking thread from the same texture which Gaard and Sturgeon knit regarding issues which multidisciplinary approach – ecofeminism discusses, Warren unfolds more explicitly the premises of concerns for ecofeminist theorizing. She explicates the fundamental claim of ecofeminist theory as both ecological and feminist. She argues that at the point of convergence lies the views which are fundamental to ecofeminist theory. Warren is of the view that ecofeminism has feminist spirit because it concentrates on the development of theories and policies which aim to eliminate gender discrimination. She further opines that ecofeminism is ecological because it commits itself to the "importance of valuing and preserving ecosystems" (*Ecological Feminism* 2). Out of multiple definitions of ecofeminism, one way towards the understanding of the term, as Warren would suggest is that it is "the position that there are important connections between how one treats women, people of colour, and the underclass on one hand, and how one treats the nonhuman natural environment on the other" (*"Ecofeminism, Culture"* xi). This definition suggests that despite the confluence of diverse ideas from different disciplines, the core of this philosophy is to expose "the underlying mentality of exploitation that is directed against women and nature within the patriarchal world" (Philips and Rumens 96).

The main motif of the ecofeminist movement waged by women was to sustain those which surrounded them: their families, their self and their communities. The movement was launched by women against patriarchal thinking and multinational corporations or NGOs that degrade environment on the name of development, which Vandana Shiva terms as “maldevelopment, which then becomes synonymous with women’s underdevelopment (increasing sexist domination), and nature’s depletion (deepening ecological crises)” (5). Ecofeminist movement and activism was launched with a purpose “for environmental balance, heterarchical and matrifocal societies, the continuance of indigenous cultures, and economic values and programs based on subsistence and sustainability” (Murphy and Gaard 2). Ecofeminists do not aim to dismantle only the value dualisms which they unanimously declare as the major reason behind the domination of women, nature and the marginalized others, rather they wish to formulate life-affirming strategies with a goal to transform subsidiary theories of feminism and environmentalism in terms of domination and subjugation. The tenants of ecofeminism do not rely on the recognition of the interconnections between the domination of women and nature but also with the realization that “these two forms of domination are bound up with class exploitation, racism, colonialism, and neocolonialism” (Murphy and Gaard 3). The inclusion of domination on the bases of racism, classism, colonialism or in simple terms ‘isms of domination’ make this theory more inclusivist and holistic in terms of unearthing concepts and practices of domination against women, nature and against Others.

In her book, *Feminism and Ecological Communities: An Ethic of Flourishing* published in 2001, Cuomo addresses the issues related to ecofeminism. She traces the connections between different forms of oppressions and domination. She is of the opinion that all epistemological and active strategies must be formed in order to locate these connections. She raises core questions in the postmodernist perspective that a reader should be mindful of while reading the ecofeminist philosophy. Henceforth, she moves to the discussion that marginalized ‘Others’ including non-male, non-white and non-owning have been misrepresented in the history of philosophy. Even the great philosophers like Aristotle and Descartes degraded women and the colonized entities i.e. Others in their philosophical discussion and theories. Inclusion of Others in the philosophical debate has helped emerge many parallels in the feminist and environmental philosophy. She supports Warren’s inclusion of other human others (Others) in terms of their oppression and subjugation in ecofeminist philosophy in order to make it more inclusive and acceptable discourse.

Cuomo criticizes the inadequacy of the feminists’ thinking where a gendered position of women is formed out of context of social constructs. The social categories construct the gendered relations and identities. Therefore, to talk about the feminism that neglects oppressions based on these categories is weak and shaky. It leads to the point that women and nature are interconnected on the basis that “both women and nature are categorically devalued with their distinct and similar qualities” (Cuomo 6). The analysis of the functioning of the oppression is another way of noting these interconnections. In this way, ecological feminism spotlights the links and patterns among the maltreatment of these devalued and subordinated classes i.e. Others. This focus leads to the notion that different forms of oppression are interwoven and consequently strengthen one another.

Henceforth, she presents her standing in ecological feminism by claiming that her perspective “begins with the recognition of the connections among various types and aspects of oppression and exploitations” (Cuomo 7). She does not reject ecofeminist positions altogether and says that it is important to recognize the interconnections between treatment of women and nature. This will result in the understanding of their ontology. She acknowledges the multi-perspectival approaches of feminisms, ecofeminism and environmentalism because they represent the global voices and articulations but at the same time the voice of the third world is missing in the field of ecofeminism.

As mentioned earlier, ecofeminism or ecological feminism is a broader term which is primarily concerned with the unjustified domination of women, people of marginalized groups and the unjustified domination and exploitation of nature. Karen J Warren calls these links as “women-other human Others-nature” interconnections (Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy* 38). My inspiration of using this term is from Jytte Nhanenge *Ecofeminism: Towards Integrating the Concerns of Women, Poor People, and Nature into Development* in which the author calls these interconnection as “women-Others-nature” interconnections (98).

The interconnections between women-Others-nature are “conceptual” (Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy* xiv) in nature which are of principal concern in the Western societies but that needs to be analyzed in the Eastern societies as well. Warren advocates and discusses theoretical positions regarding these interconnections in the context of “Western, Euro-American” cultures. However, my contention is that there is a need to explore these interconnections in the Eastern cultures in order to draw a parallel between these two hemispheres. Women, other human Others and nature are global identities and the validity of the western ecofeminist theory needs to be checked in their representation in literary works. I borrow the conception of ‘Others’ from Warren’s theory wherein she mentions that these are unjustifiably dominated groups “who are excluded, marginalized, devalued, pathologized or naturalized ...in Western systems of unjustified domination-subordination relationships” (Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy* xiv). These “Others” are further categorized as “human Others” and “earth Others”. In my research design, the Others “highlight issues of domination, exploitation, and colonization” (Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy* xiv) of those who have low (subordinated) positions in social spheres. Many ecofeminists identify some of the premises that are culturally situated. They license the domination and repression of women Others and nature. In this regard, Warren’s analysis of conceptual frameworks enjoys a central position in the comity of such accounts. The basics of ecofeminist philosophy, according to Warren, is that it analyses the systems of “unjustified domination (isms of domination)” (Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy* 37) present in societies of the West. She is quite eloquent and clear about the role of these ‘isms of domination’ and how a well-balanced, care-sensitive society can be established with the elimination of these isms. These ‘isms of domination’ like racism, heterosexism, ableism, speciesism, naturism, patriarchy and more literally perform twin functions: these become tool for the subjugation of women, nature and the inferiorized human groups and a reason for the justification of this domination and oppression. Here Warren speaks loudly against these ‘isms of domination’ by reiterating that this domination based upon these isms of dominations is “neither justified nor inevitable” (Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy* 37). These ‘isms of domination’ impose certain limitations to the Others, which stop them from coming out of the oppressive system, which legitimize their domination. She is a strong advocate of this ideology that for a social setup free of oppression and domination, these ‘isms of domination’ need to be eliminated on priority. Anything that is associated with the naturist sexist, classist or racist thought and practice which “reinforces or maintains isms of domination” (Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy* 67, 98), has nothing to do with the ecofeminist philosophy she defends. The presence of these ‘isms of domination’ help the domination and subjugation of these interconnected identities. Therefore, her understanding of ecofeminism largely rests upon the concept that any “ism of domination” including “sexism, naturism...racism, classism, ageism, anti-Semitism, heterosexism” (Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy* 68, 98) should never be a part of it, if it is to be made a liberation and ethical theory.

The name of the term ecofeminism should not make one suppose that it is limited only to the 'women-nature' interconnections. It expresses a wide range of concerns which are implicated in these interconnections, which spring from race, religion or other social and cultural issues. On conceptual level, the crucial point lies in the interconnectedness amongst "isms of domination" (Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy* 43, 56, 67, 68) which includes 'sexism, racism, classism, adultism etc. In this regard, ecofeminists insist that 'logic of domination' functions a crucial role in the justification of nature and women and also of the underclass people. It is the extension of this 'ism of domination' conception which influences ecofeminism for the inclusion of naturism as an 'ism' that needs to be addressed to get further insight about the interconnection of oppressive and exploitative ideologies.

In the context of Pakistan, where subjugation of women, inferiorization of Others on the basis of their class, creed, profession, ethnicity, caste and destruction and exploitation of nature are open secrets, ecofeminist debate is quite pertinent. Many stories in the headlines of the leading newspapers daily report the violence against women. "The woman in Pakistan is still unfree, sold as commodity, liquidated without the law and held hostage by an exploitative combination. Gender injustice to the weaker sex is the disturbing concern of all men and women..." (Chitkara 89). The gender discrimination is commonly experienced by Pakistani women in social and domestic spheres. Moreover, atrocities are waged against socially low human groups by those who possess power of money, status, authority and privileges in the society. The ruthless destruction of nature in the form of deforestation, environmental pollution and poisoning of crops because of pesticides have endangered the lives of human beings at the verge of death. The use of sewerage water for watering the vegetable and fruit plant is another fatal practice which is resulting into poor health of the people. Mumtaz et al state that like other developing countries of the world, Pakistan is also facing the problem of poverty and environmental destruction. Pakistan remains "vulnerable to both the threat of climate change and depletion of the ozone layer... It is suffering a loss of biodiversity: animal and plant species known to have existed in the past have vanished, and many more are under threat of extinction" (53). Hence, these three interconnected entities are suffering a lot due to anthropocentric and androcentric ideologies which use these beings for their profits.

The awareness regarding ecofeminist issues in Pakistan is not sufficient, especially the common masses have but little knowledge about it. In this scenario, the need for conducting researches on ecofeminist issues in social sciences and literature gains more importance. Ecofeminist theoretical voice within Pakistan is missing. However, in many universities, the students are conducting researches, in a limited number, on ecofeminist issues which are faced by Pakistan. The ecofeminist issues find a limited space in the literary writings in English. Amongst the contemporary writers, Uzma Aslam Khan addresses the issues which can be associated with ecocritical and ecofeminist understandings. Her renowned fictional works *Trespassing* and *Geometry of God* discuss issues which are related to the domination of nature and subjugation of women and low human groups. In the present context, there is a need to conduct more researches in the field of ecofeminism in order to address the issues which underwrite the oppression in the Pakistani society.

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The Impact of Technology on Human Connections: A Double-Edged Sword

Iqra Nayab

In the fast-paced world we live in, technology has become an integral part of our daily lives, reshaping the way we communicate and interact with one another.

From the early days of written letters to the digital era of instant messaging and social media, the evolution of communication has been both fascinating and transformative.

The way we connect with one another has been totally transformed by technology. Letters used to take weeks to reach their destination, and international phone calls were rare and costly. Now, a mother can watch her son's graduation live, no matter where she is in the world. Friends can instantly share precious moments, no matter how far apart they are.

Staying in contact has never been simpler; thanks to social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. However, these platforms frequently blur the line between our private and public lives. They enable us to establish a digital presence that allows us to communicate with a large audience simultaneously. Technology has also made it easier to create an emotional connection that lessens the anguish of physical separation. Emojis add color to our words, video calls provide virtual eye contact, and voice messages offer an intimacy that texting lacks. The ability to communicate instantly has been a lifesaver for long-distance couples, helping to maintain ties that might otherwise break under the strain of distance.

However, beneath this facade of connectedness lies a deeper reality. Although, technology has made communication easier, it has also rendered it less meaningful. The lack of genuine engagement is often masked by the immediacy of messages. We live in an era of rapid responses and fleeting interactions, where emoticons replace emotions and "likes" stand in for dialogue. It begs the question: **Are we truly more connected, or are we merely attached to the illusion of connection. Ironically, we often feel more alone on platforms designed to bring us together. Social media presents a paradox, making us simultaneously visible and invisible. We share pictures, post updates, and create narratives about our lives, but how often do these online interactions transcend the surface?**

In his play *The Tempest*, Shakespeare's Prospero declares, **"We are such stuff as dreams are made on."** This sentiment resonates with the modern experience of digital relationships; ephemeral and fleeting. The depth of conversation, once the cornerstone of human connection, has become a casualty of our fast-paced, technology-driven lives. When was the last time we sat with a friend, devoid of distractions, and conversed without the background hum of a phone or the urge to check for new messages?

The art of conversation is becoming lost in the noise of constant connectivity. We have grown accustomed to bite-sized exchanges - the quick check-in rather than the deep dive. The philosopher Henry David Thoreau once wrote, **"The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation."**

Today, it seems this desperation is amplified by the pressure to be constantly available, constantly responsive, yet seldom truly present. The very nature of friendship has evolved. In the digital realm, friendships are often measured by metrics: the number of friends or followers, the frequency of interactions, or the visibility of our shared memories. While there is comfort in knowing that we can reach out to anyone at any time, this hyper-accessibility has its downsides. It has bred a culture of convenience, where friendships can become transactional or fleeting.

We are quick to unfriend, block or ghost, a stark contrast to the steadfast bonds of earlier generations, who navigated misunderstandings without the escape routes of the digital age. In essence, technology has turned us into both participants and spectators of our own friendships. We scroll through the curated highlights of others' lives, often feeling envy or inadequacy, comparing our behind-the-scenes with their main act. We have become, in many ways, both closer and more distant; we are aware of the milestones but may miss the moments in between; the intimate fragments that once formed the glue of relationships.

It would be simplistic to view technology solely as a villain in the story of human connection. It is a tool, a conduit, and, like any tool, its value depends on how we wield it. The challenge lies in finding a balance, in rediscovering the essence of connection, while embracing the conveniences that technology affords.

The poet John Donne famously wrote, **"No man is an island, entire of itself."** It is a timeless reminder that while technology can bridge distances, it cannot replace the warmth of shared silence, the comfort of a hand held in times of grief, or the joy of unspoken understanding.

We must learn to be mindful users of technology, to resist the urge to replace every in-person conversation with a text or video call. There is power in unplugging, in creating spaces where we can be present and undistracted. Perhaps we should reserve certain moments for face-to-face interactions, save the most meaningful words for a voice that can carry their weight, and remember that while technology may facilitate connection, it is the human element that sustains it.

In the final analysis, technology has reshaped human connection in profound ways, offering a blend of opportunities and challenges. It is an enabler of relationships, but also an enabler of distraction. The key lies in our approach: embracing its benefits while guarding against its pitfalls. We are at a crossroads where we must decide whether to let technology define our relationships or use it as a bridge, not a substitute, for deeper, more soulful connections that are the true essence of our humanity. In the words of T.S. Eliot, **"The communication of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living."** Let us ensure that, in our communication, the fire of genuine connection remains unquenched.

August 1947 (14 silent as the rest of history) marks the death of a troubled subcontinent and the birth of a long-suffering nation. It rests on the precarious foundation of an appeal to authority that keeps people trapped in restless days and sleepless nights.

Freedom is a luxury reserved for the elite, while the poor remain bound in invisible chains. Beneath the guise of democracy and liberty, it heavily operates on the mechanism of ideological and repressive state control, and whatever remains is ruled by the whims of the mob.

Behind the facade of knowledge, institutionalized education is artfully used to implant engineered ideologies. Schools and colleges are the surveillance centers and factories for producing docile slaves, while universities are the crucibles and incubators of propaganda. The capitalistic system has created a profound dichotomy between the never-do-wells and high achievers with separate education, health, justice, and social status. In the middle of these disorders, it is quite evident that it is a state where the constitution is subordinate to the institutions.

A country of open arms and closed-minded people, it is disliked by most of its neighbors. Over years of grave economic and political unrest, the agricultural backbone of the state has been replaced with a war economy. Cross-border animosities are deliberately sustained because these are not only the means of securing funding but also the sources of considerable privileges for the people involved, hampering the beneficial outcomes that could have been gained by friendly relationships.

Objectification of women is a pervasive issue, perpetuated by the leaders and citizens alike. The mocking and belittling of women in homes, workplaces, and on national television is a reminder of the misogyny of a society where women are treated as spectacles, not equals. Moreover, there is a disturbing trend of increasing obsession among individuals for their cult political leaders, who, once in power, ruthlessly disregard their promises and the well-being of their followers.

There's no doubt, all these individuals are like the prisoners in Plato's cave, while Frankenstein's monsters project their desired images onto the walls through social media. People mistake these shadows for reality, but the truth lies far beyond what they perceive.

All the individuals are like the prisoners of Plato's cave, who are unaware of the intellectual realities beyond their limited scope. Meanwhile, the Frankenstein's monsters skillfully project their desired images onto the walls through social media. With the assistance of these projections, they influence both the grand, overarching narratives and the minute, everyday details. As a result, people mistake these shadows for authentic reality, but the truth lies far beyond what they perceive.

Modern age, this absurdity has exceeded its limit. Our world is totally fragmented and this fragmentation lies everywhere. Man has become the victim of social isolation. This is due to increasing demand and control of social media on his mind. Social media has taken up a significant portion of our personal space. In fact, it has become addicted to it. It has become our basic need, and leads to a very unrealistic human behavior. Moreover, it has increased idealism among individuals. Social isolation, fragmentation and disconnectedness with others is increasing. Apparently, it seems that the distance has been vanished but inwardly, too much distance has been created.

Now, man itself has become an island. He has become a victim of existential boredom. But, every disorder has great order in it, means that, disorder is the cause of every order. This existential boredom leads human being to some basic level questions. Who am I? What is the purpose of my life? Why am I? How can I live this life? or How can I make my life meaningful?

Without purpose, man is just like an animal. Now, the question is that, how we can identify our purpose and give meanings to life? So, this stimulating and triggering question "Who am I?" is the key for it. That's why Socrates said that "Know Thyself", it means understand yourself, realize and analyze yourself critically, deconstruct yourself and discover your hidden abilities. Listen your inner voice and search your uniqueness. Our DNA is 99 percent similar to each other but there is only one percent difference, due to which, apparently our faces are different. So, it means we all have some uniqueness therefore, try to discover it, try to search your own signature. Build a strong relationship with yourself, with your inner being, then you would feel that the whole universe lies in yourself and all the powers and energies exist in your inner being not at outside. "**Be true to yourself then you will be true to the whole world**". Discover your face and feel your existence with full consciousness, then only in this way you can understand what you actually want to understand and experience the true essence of your existence which is the essence of all human beings, which is the essence of this universe, this is actually "you are", "I am" and, "we are". You will experience at heart that this is "I am". From that time, your life starts in true sense because now you are fully aware of your inner being and liberate from all your disillusion, that are created by your ego in mind. You see the reality of life, that apparently we all are different because this difference is beauty of nature, but in essence, we all have the same dual nature as that of light, it is a concept of quantum physics which is closely related to life. So, firstly, understand yourself, then you can understand this whole universe and will feel that "I am the core of this universe". This is the meaningful life.

After understanding yourself and your existence, then search your passion, utilize it and through this passion serve the humanity. Serving is the ultimate purpose of your life, consistent serving gives you happiness, peace and harmony. In the world, in which we live, this is like a play, every person has its role, so choose the role according to your interest then follow the committed to excellence and give "the best" to it. This attitude and genuine approach towards life makes your life journey beautiful.

You are responsible of your existence because you have choices, need to be understand, take care of your face, existence and mold your personality in the best manner.

"It is neither kith nor kin, nor the color of the skin, it is something within that makes a man".

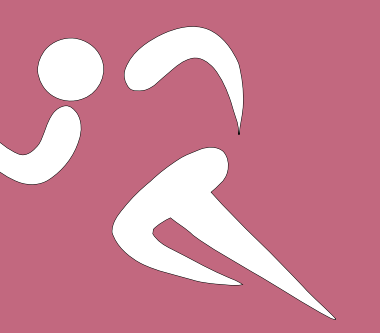
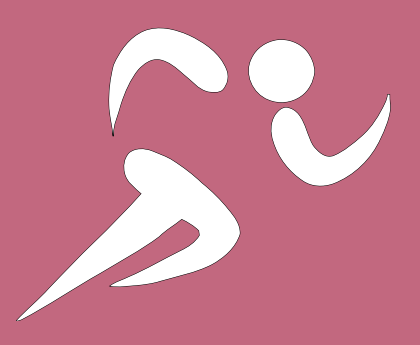
Pursuit of Meaning in Fragmented World

Sania Parveen

Life is a walking shadow full of sound and fury signifying nothing." When a man is born into this world, a proper societal structure and systems has already been existing there. Then, with a passage of time he is surrounded by a lot of ideologies which start working in mind and effect his personality unconsciously. There is a lot of order as well as disorder in front of every human. He starts to feel a little bit absurdity unconsciously. But, he himself is consciously unaware to this state and chaos of inner being. He feels like a stranger in this universe. He cannot involve in anything due to this absurd feeling. Absurdity means purposelessness and meaninglessness of ones life.

Think
BIG

"Zeitgeist is the invisible force shaping the beliefs, values, and trends of a generation. What if the ideas and movements you follow are not your own, but reflections of the era you live in?"



The land of Chakwal has always been fertile in producing brave individuals. Since independence till now, Chakwal has given many dauntless men to the country. It is also called the “**Land of Martyrs**”. Subedar Abdul Khaliq was one of them. He opened his eyes in a native village of Chakwal, *Jand Awan*, on March 23, 1933. The village is at a distance of 34 km from the city. Jand Awan” is also known as the village of Lt-Gen (retired). Abdul Majeed Malik, who has been MNA five times, and his nephew Major Tahir Iqbal, the current MNA, also belong to this village. However very few people know that the soil of Jand bears the smell of “**The fastest man of Asia.**” Abdul Khaliq had a strong and athletic build from an early age. He studied at a government school in Hasoola. On returning from school, he would play kabaddi. During his school days, his agility and strength were well known in the region. Abdul Khaliq's luck shone when he was playing a kabaddi match in Peer Phullai (a town in District Chakwal). Some members of the “**Pak Army Sports Control**” were also there to witness the match. The head of PASC, Brigadier Rodham selected him in the Army's Boys company for his brilliant performance in the game. The task of the Army's boys' company was to prepare athletes. During training, it was revealed that Abdul Khaliq was very energetic and agile, and he was well suited to be a sprinter.

He represented the Pakistan Army in national games as a sprinter and never looked back. Khaliq made his first international appearance in the 1954 Asian Games, which were held in Manila, Philippines. He stunned everyone by setting a new record of 100 meters in 10.6 seconds by beating his previous record of 10.8 seconds, held by Lavy Pinto of India in 1951. Because of this splendid performance, he was awarded the title of “**The fastest man of Asia.**” He grabbed gold and silver medals from the 100-meter and 4×100 m relay races, respectively. During the prize distribution ceremony, Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indian Prime Minister at that time, dubbed him as “**The flying bird of Asia**” for his outstanding and record-breaking performance. Then came the first Indo-Pak games in 1956.

These games were to be held in Delhi, India. The Indian media reported that there was no competition for Khaliq in the 100 meters race, but in the 200 meters, Khaliq will not be able to see the flying dust of Pinto's feet. Contrarily, Khaliq not only won 100 meters by defeating Indian athlete V.K Rai but also defeated Lavy Pinto in 200 meters, and set a new record of clocking in 21.4 seconds. In the same year, Abdul Khaliq was a semi-finalist in both the 100 meters and 200 meters at the Melbourne Olympics. In the 1958 Asian Games, Abdul Khaliq defended his title in the 100-meter race by defeating “**Kyohei Ushio**” of Japan. He secured a **gold in 100 meters, a silver in the 200 meters, and a bronze in the 4×100m relay race.**

Because of this splendid performance of Khaliq, Pakistan secured 2nd position in athletics and 6th in overall rankings. He also represented Pakistan at the Commonwealth Games, 1958, in Cardiff. He was the semifinalist in 100 yards, clocking 9.8 seconds. In 1960, to nurture the relationships between India and Pakistan, the then president of Pakistan hosted Indo-Pak games in Lahore. There were also other players competing in the games, but all eyes were on Abdul Khaliq and Milkha Singh, who were competing for the 200-meter dash.

The luck was kinder to Milkha Singh, and he won the 200 meters by the margin of 0.3 seconds. Abdul Khaliq secured gold in the 100 meters, bronze in the 200 meters, and another gold in the 4×100 meters relay race. This event is depicted in an Indian movie, *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*. After retirement, Abdul Khaliq started his coaching career with the Pakistan Army. He coached in 1965, 1970, and 1975. In the 1971 war, he was taken as a prisoner of war. The Indian government allowed him to be released, but he refused, preferring to support his fellow captives. Abdul Khaliq was a great athlete and patriot. The government of Pakistan awarded him the first-ever “**Pride of Performance**” award in 1958. As a nation, we are indebted to his services. The brave son of the soil died on 10 March 1988 in Rawalpindi. May his soul rest in peace.

The Inferiority Complex of Our Elders

Riqza Maryam

The persistent claim that the West is responsible for promoting vulgarity and demoralizing our youth must stop. It's time to realize that blaming Western Culture for everything is unjust. It's on us to take responsibility for our actions. Blaming others for our moral, ethical, political, or economic weaknesses is unfair. As a society, we often denounce others for our shortcomings and failures, thereby revealing our hypocrisy. The younger generation is frequently accused of being obsessed with Western culture. But, in reality, it's not the culture of the West that we are boxed into but, the inferiority complex of our elders.

Regrettably, we often resort to blaming women's attire for issues like harassment and rape, instead of addressing the root cause. Sadly, when we ask people about the causes of excessive rape cases, 99 percent of them answer that Western-style dress is the main cause. If they dress like this, they have to face consequences. These are people with a sick mentality. Unfortunately, in the last few decades, our society has produced explosive and unemployable brains unable to keep up with the way other societies are developing.

It's time to stop passing judgment and instead evaluate our own moral compass and ethical standards. Whenever we talk about reform and cite examples of Western countries, we are silenced with the argument about the vulgarity in their culture and the destruction of their family system. This raises the question: have we only adopted immorality and unethical practices from them? Why have we not emulated their advancements in technology, industry, inventions, and software?

As a nation, we have become mere consumers of the intellectual product of others, without creating much ourselves. In an era where countries focus on artificial intelligence, we must make substantial advancements. We must move away from a dogmatic mindset and embrace rationality to progress as a society. We lack a lot, especially in social sciences even if we contributed to science to some extent. Social sciences are essential in shaping human behavior or making significant contributions to both individual and societal development. So, it's time to wake up and smell the coffee.

The conventional landscape of work is undergoing a dramatic transformation in our modern era, driven by the rapid rise of the gig economy and an ever-increasing emphasis on hustle culture. The interplay between these dynamics is reshaping how we perceive employment, success, and work-life balance.

Gig economy refers to a labor market characterized by short-term contracts or freelance work, as opposed to permanent jobs. In recent years, the gig economy has expanded significantly, facilitated by digital platforms like Uber, Lyft, Fiverr, and Upwork. These platforms connect independent contractors with customers, offering flexible work opportunities that often appeal to both skilled professionals and those seeking supplemental income.

"The gig economy is empowerment. This new business paradigm empowers individuals to better shape their own destiny and leverage their existing assets to their benefit."

– John McFee

Technological advancements have simplified the process of connecting with clients and accepting employment for gig workers. Many professionals appreciate the flexibility that comes with working for themselves, which enables them to strike a balance between their personal interests and professional goals. Economic necessity has also forced many people into gig work due to the lack of traditional employment alternatives.

Moreover, **"The culture of hustle"** has become a defining feature of modern society, perpetuating the idea that constant striving, productivity, and busyness are essential for success. This mindset is fueled by social media platforms showcasing entrepreneurial achievements, self-help books and podcasts emphasizing productivity, and co-working spaces fostering community and competition.

The hustle culture celebrates individuals who push themselves to the limit, sacrificing self-care, relationships, and personal well-being for the sake of professional advancement. Phrases like **"Grind 24/7," "hustle head,"** and **"sleep when you're dead"** have become mantras, reinforcing the notion that rest and leisure are luxuries reserved for the weak. As a result, burnout, anxiety, and depression have become epidemic, with individuals feeling pressured to conform to unrealistic expectations and maintain a façade of relentless productivity.

Independent professionals and gig economy workers face the challenge of balancing professional responsibilities with personal fulfillment and performance.

"Focus on being productive instead of busy."

– Tim Ferriss

**Think
BIG**

"Curious about the forces shaping society's inequalities? Dive into Marxism and explore the revolutionary ideas that challenge the foundations of capitalism and envision a classless, equitable future."

The enlightenment of mental health in literature brings a more nuanced view, emphasizing reason and individual experience. This shift in perspective has

paved the way for writers to delve deeper into the inner lives of characters facing mental health challenges. For instance, Virginia Woolf's exploration of her own mental health struggles added a layer of authenticity to her narratives, encouraging readers to engage with the complexities of mental health.

In this type of literature, characters are often shown facing various psychological problems. Such depictions can reinforce societal fears, but they can also foster understanding. Almost all writers show the reasons behind the health issues faced by characters, which can be attributed to societal behavior, lack of self-esteem, or other factors. This helps readers to understand the reasons behind a person's misbehavior and empathize with their struggles.

Literary narratives play a vital role in unpacking mental health, providing a platform for authors to explore complex issues and spark essential conversations. They humanize mental health struggles, normalize discussions, and promote awareness. By exploring mental health through literature, we can deepen our understanding of the human experience and cultivate a more empathetic society.

The portrayal of mental health in literature influences public perceptions. Historically, it was considered a source of horror and character flaw, but in recent years, it has become an increasing trend, with writers challenging those stereotypes. They believe that readers can gain a deeper understanding of psychological conditions and the fluidity of thoughts, ultimately fostering greater awareness and understanding of mental health issues.

Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, for example, explores the invisible battles of the character Pecola Breedlove, revealing the effects of societal rejection and unrealistic expectations on women's mental well-being. Similarly, Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* is a semi-autobiographical novel that explores the mental health issues faced by the protagonist, Esther Greenwood.

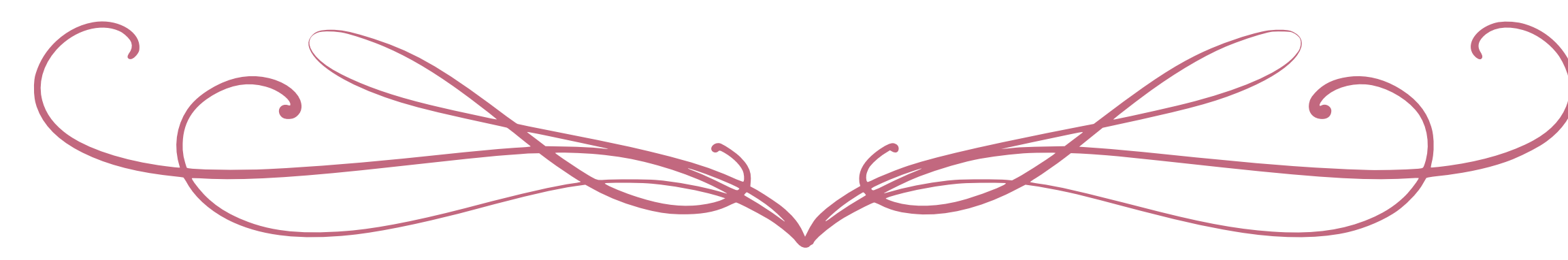
Hence, literary narratives provide a unique lens through which readers can see the triumphs of individuals struggling with mental health complexities. They illuminate the resilience of the human spirit, providing solace in shared struggles and hope in the healing power of storytelling.

**Think
BIG**

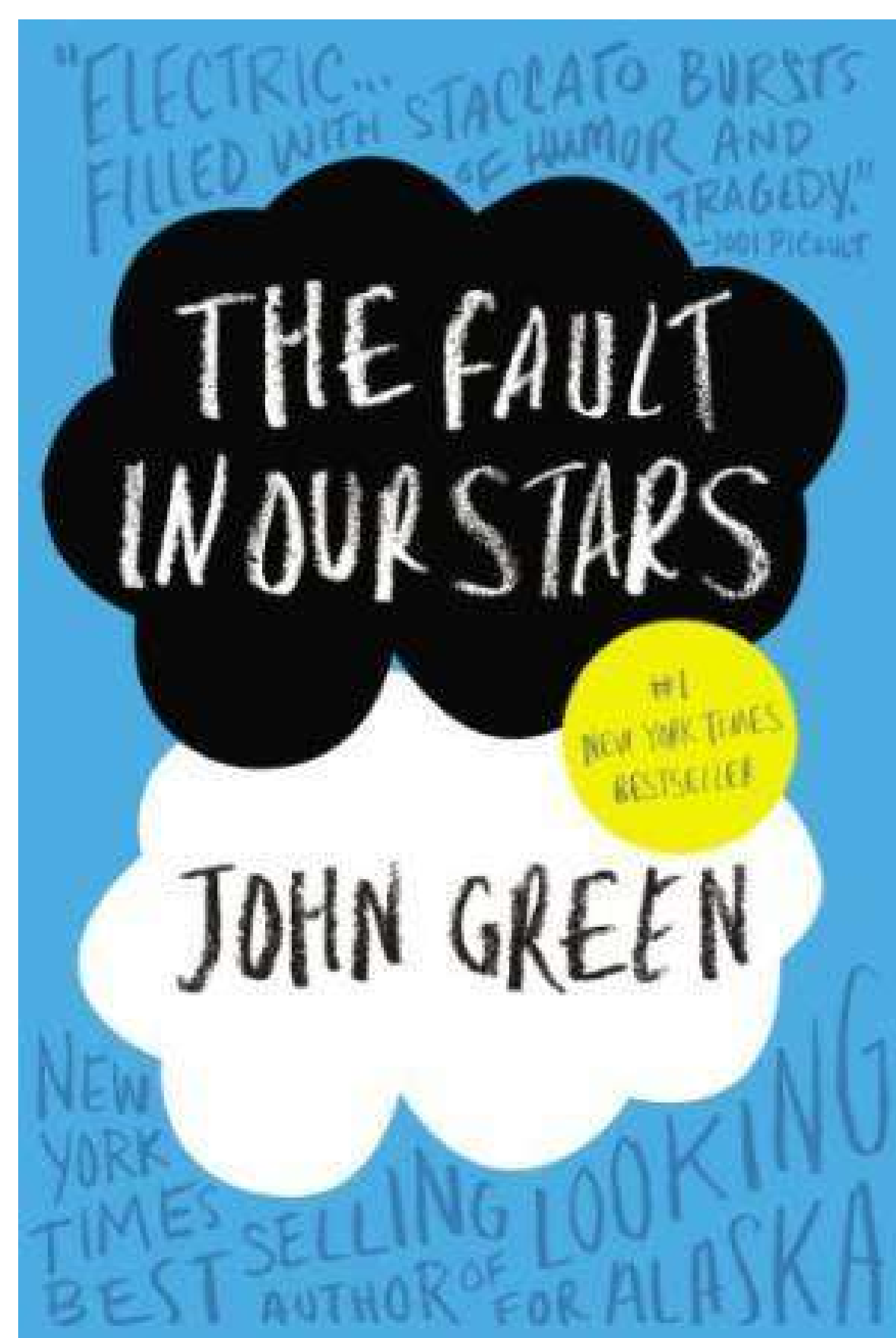
"Are personal attacks and insults a legitimate way to win an argument, or do they reveal a lack of substance? Discover the pitfalls of Ad Hominem, a fallacious reasoning tactic that can derail even the most important discussions."

Bibliophile Beginnings: Handpicked Books to Get You Hooked

It is a specially curated segment in **DhanScribes** for those taking their first steps into the boundless world of books. Here, we present stories that enchant, inspire, and linger long after the last page is turned. Each recommendation is a doorway to a new perspective, a spark to ignite your love for literature. Whether you're seeking a thrilling escape, timeless wisdom, or the comfort of a beautifully told tale, these books are the perfect companions to awaken the reader within you. Start your journey today—because every great reader begins with a single story.

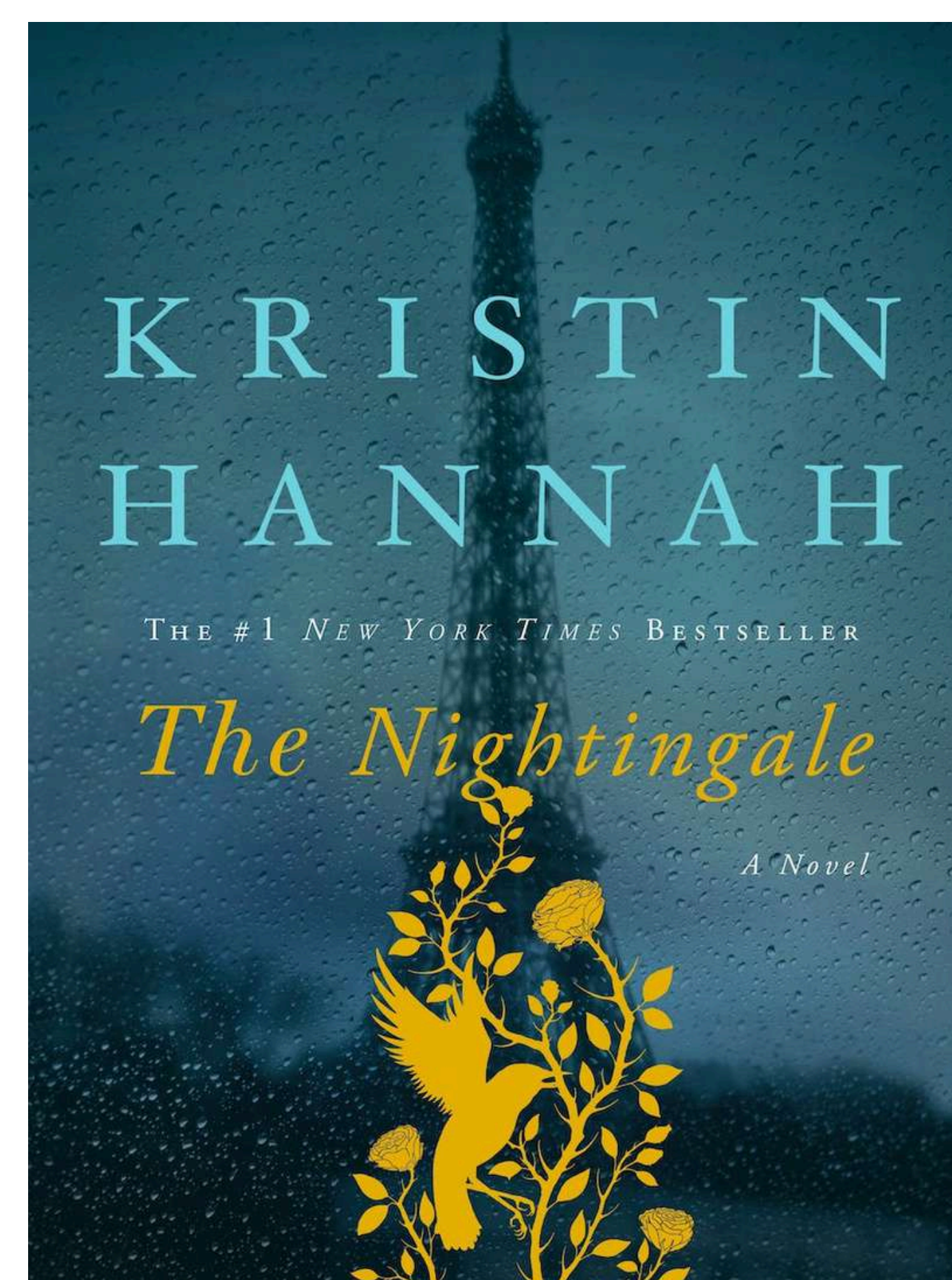
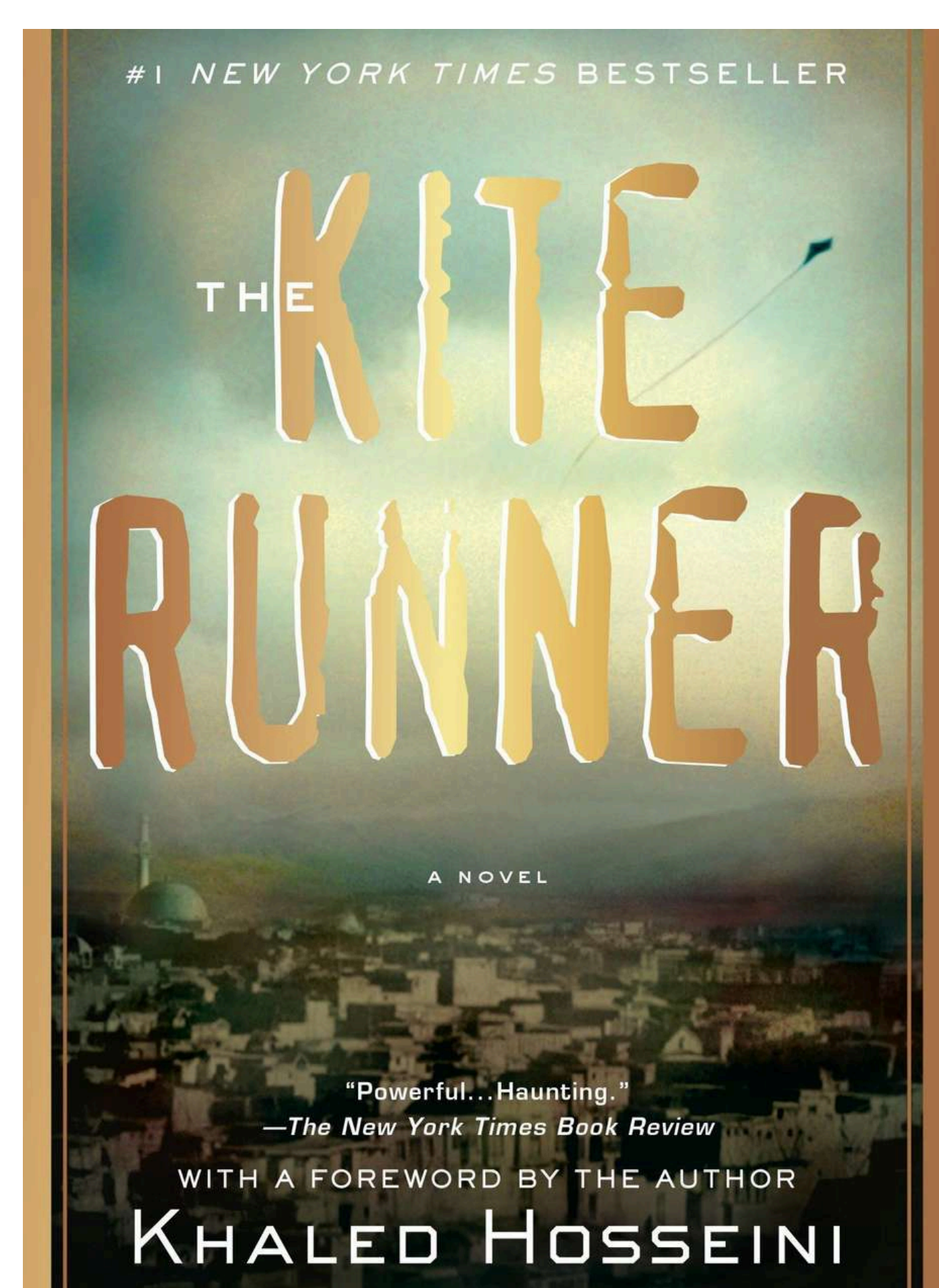


This Section is Dedicated to Recommending our Readers Something Novel and Innovative!



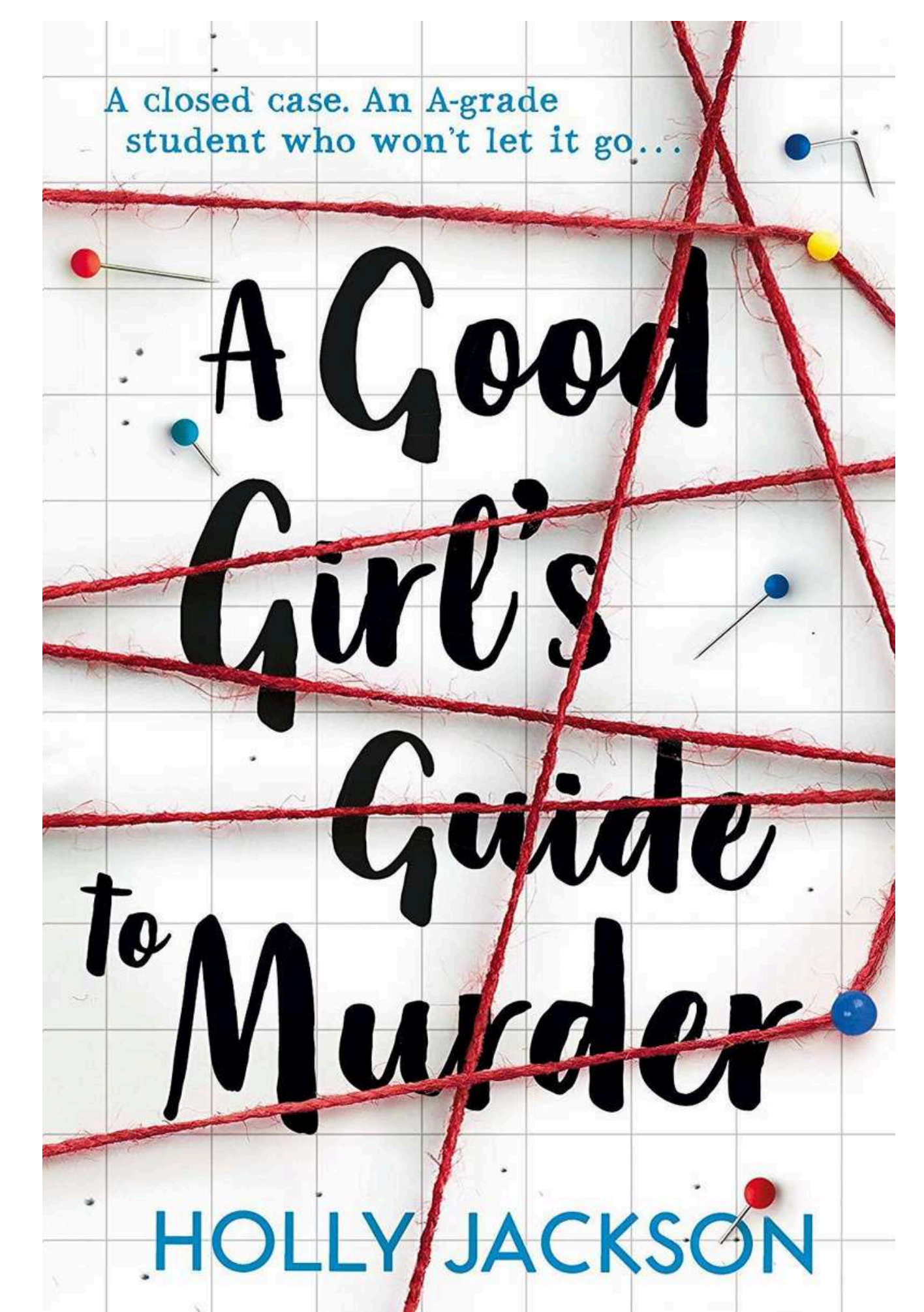
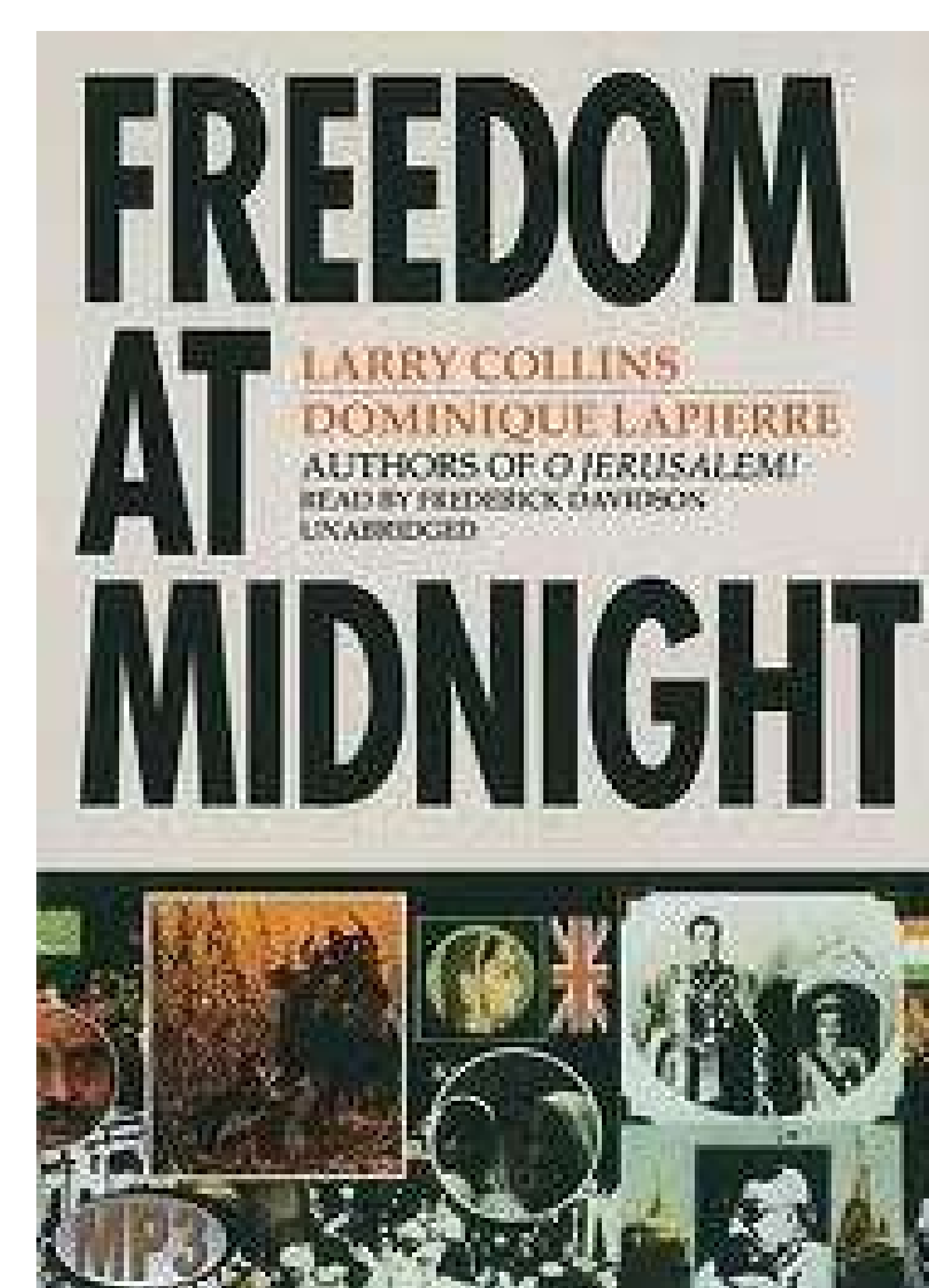
The Fault in Our Stars by John Green is a heart-wrenching tale of love, hope, and loss. It follows Hazel and Augustus, two teenagers battling cancer, as they navigate life, romance, and the fragility of time. Witty, poignant, and deeply moving, it reminds us of the beauty in imperfection.

Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini tells the powerful story of Amir, who betrays his childhood friend Hassan and spends years seeking redemption. Set against the backdrop of Afghanistan's tumultuous history, it explores themes of friendship, guilt, and the healing power of forgiveness. A heart-wrenching and unforgettable journey.



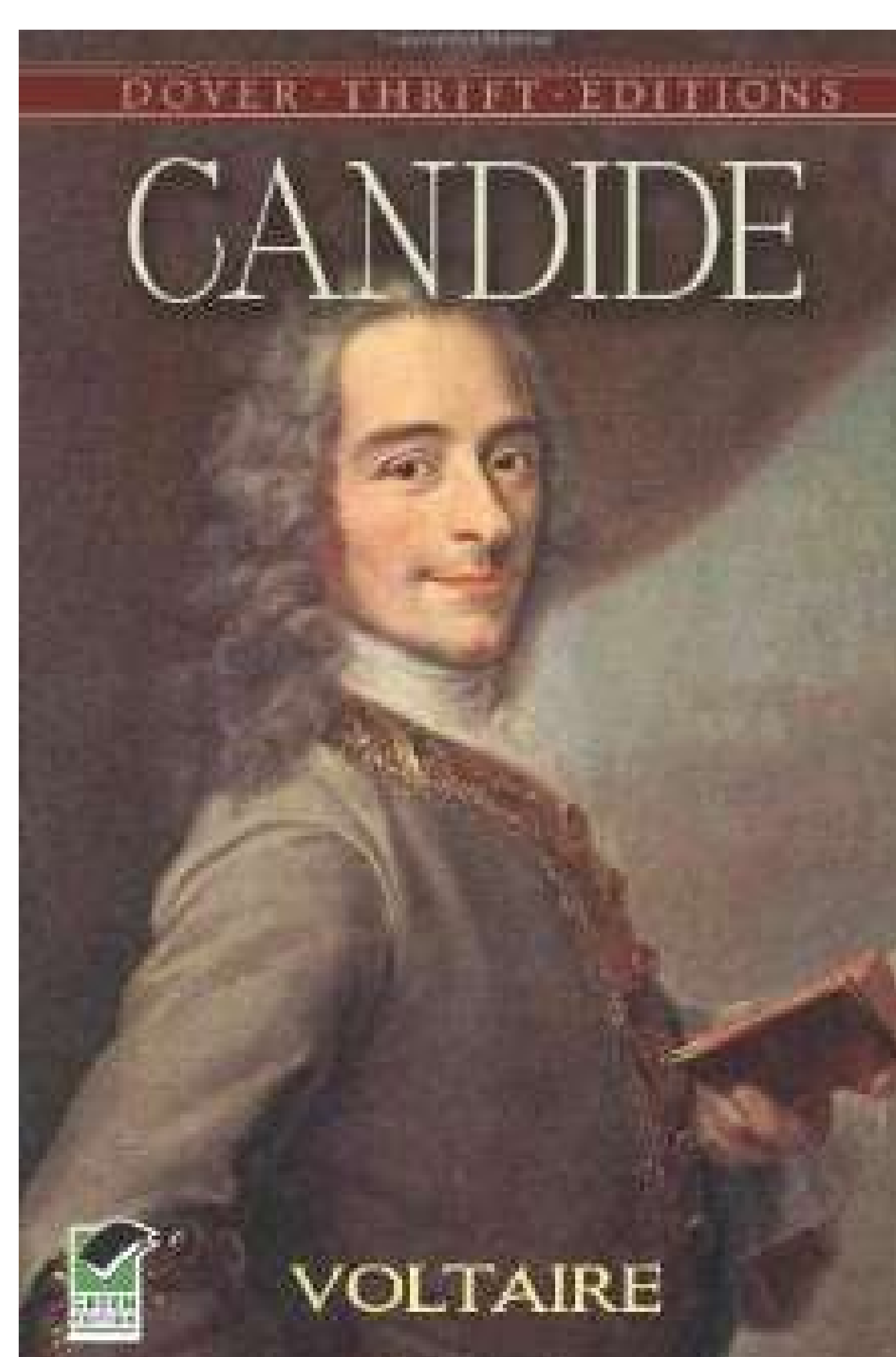
The Nightingale by Kristin Hannah is a powerful story of two sisters in Nazi-occupied France during World War II. While Vianne fights to protect her family, Isabelle risks her life in the resistance. A tale of love, sacrifice, and resilience, it honors the untold heroism of women in wartime.

Freedom at Midnight by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre recounts the events surrounding India's independence and partition in 1947. It highlights key figures like Gandhi and Mountbatten, exploring the struggles and decisions that shaped a pivotal moment in history.

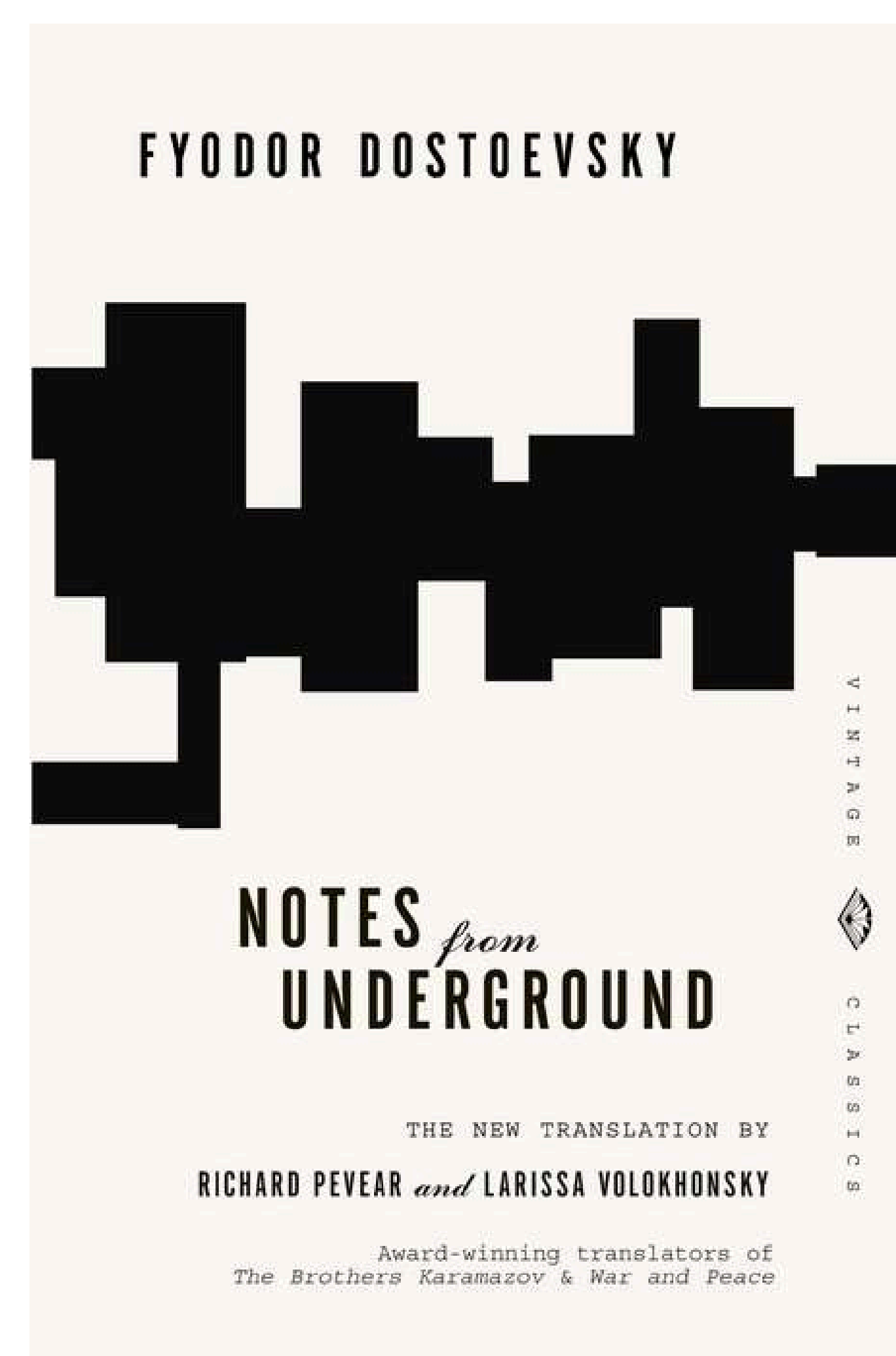


A Good Girl's Guide to Murder by Holly Jackson is a gripping young adult mystery about Pip Fitz-Amobi, a determined teenager who reopens a closed murder case for her school project. Five years ago, Andie Bell was murdered, and her boyfriend, Sal Singh, was blamed. But Pip isn't convinced of his guilt. As she unravels buried secrets and lies, she discovers that the truth can be far more dangerous than she imagined..

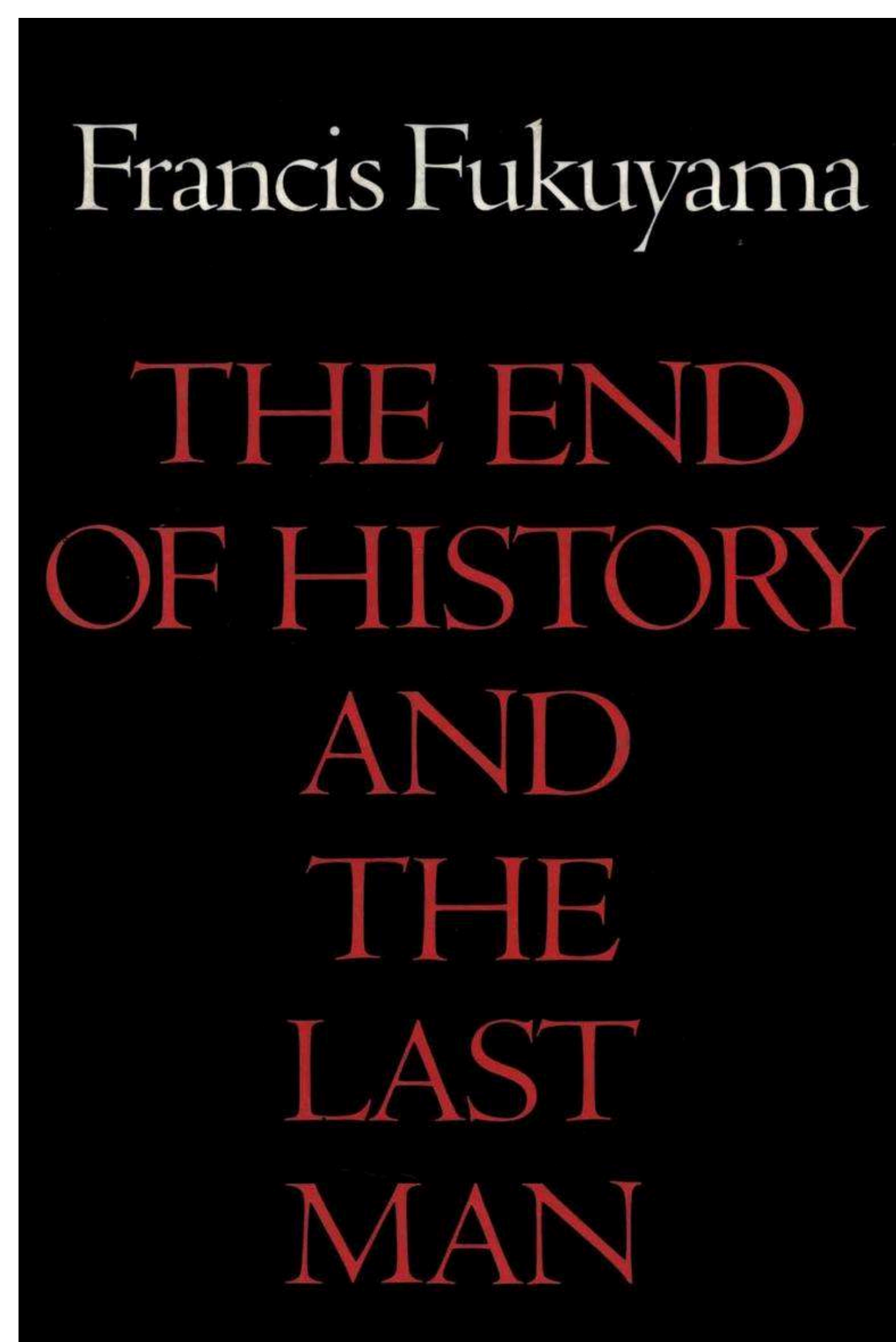
Candide by Voltaire is a satirical novella that follows the adventures of Candide, a young and naïve optimist, as he faces a series of misfortunes across the globe. Guided by his tutor, Pangloss, who insists that they live in "the best of all possible worlds," Candide's experiences challenge this philosophy. Through its wit and humor, the novella critiques blind optimism, organized religion, and the societal norms of the 18th century.



Notes from Underground by Fyodor Dostoevsky is a groundbreaking novella that delves into the mind of an unnamed narrator, often referred to as the "Underground Man." Set in 19th-century Russia, the story explores themes of alienation, free will, and human nature. The narrator, a bitter and introspective man, reflects on his isolation and his struggles with society, offering a profound critique of rationalism and modernity.



The End of History and the Last Man by Francis Fukuyama argues that liberal democracy marks the final stage of humanity's political evolution. Published in 1992, it explores whether democracy can fulfill human desires for freedom and recognition, while addressing challenges to this theory in a changing world.



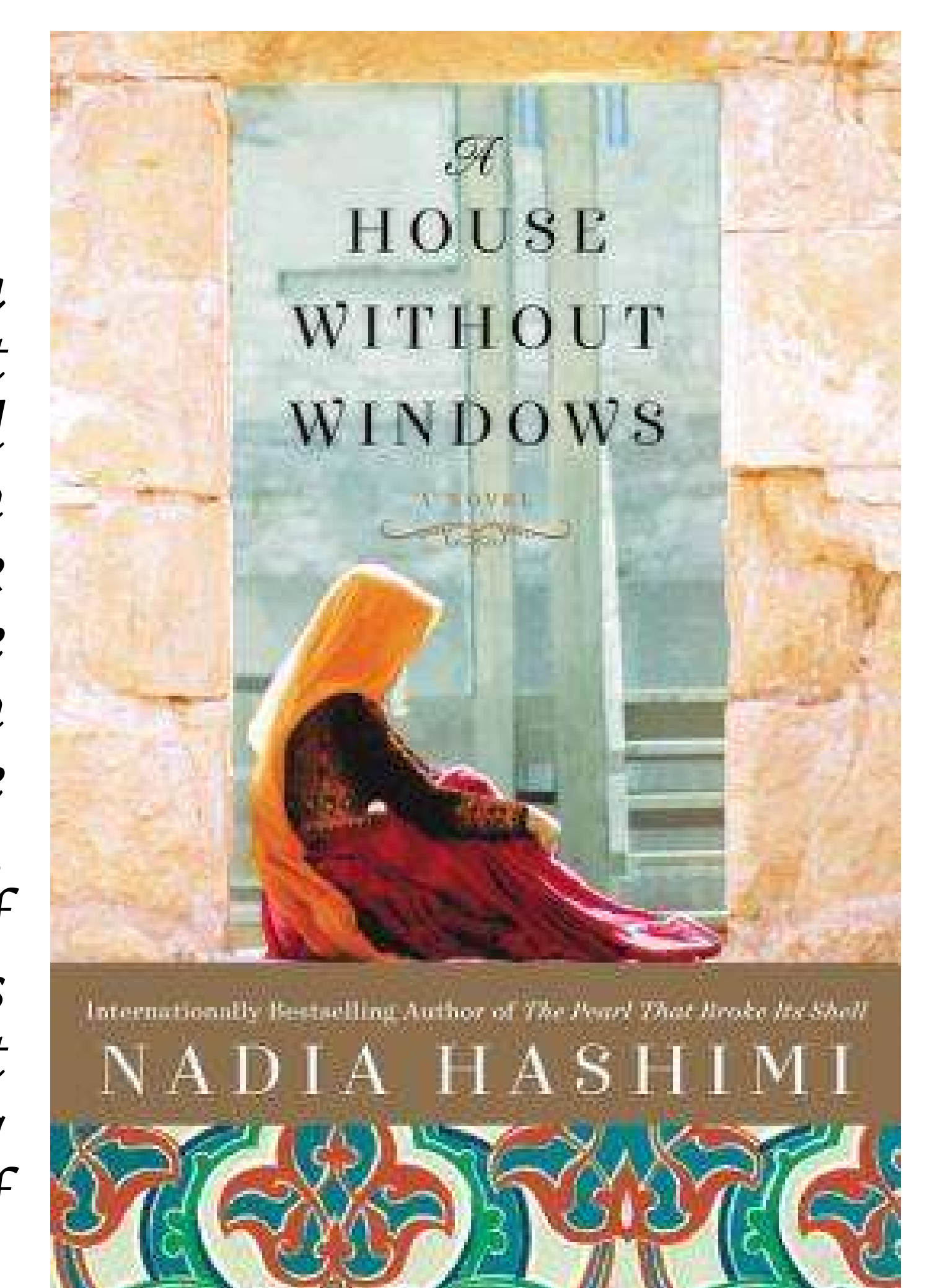
THE ART OF BEING ALONE

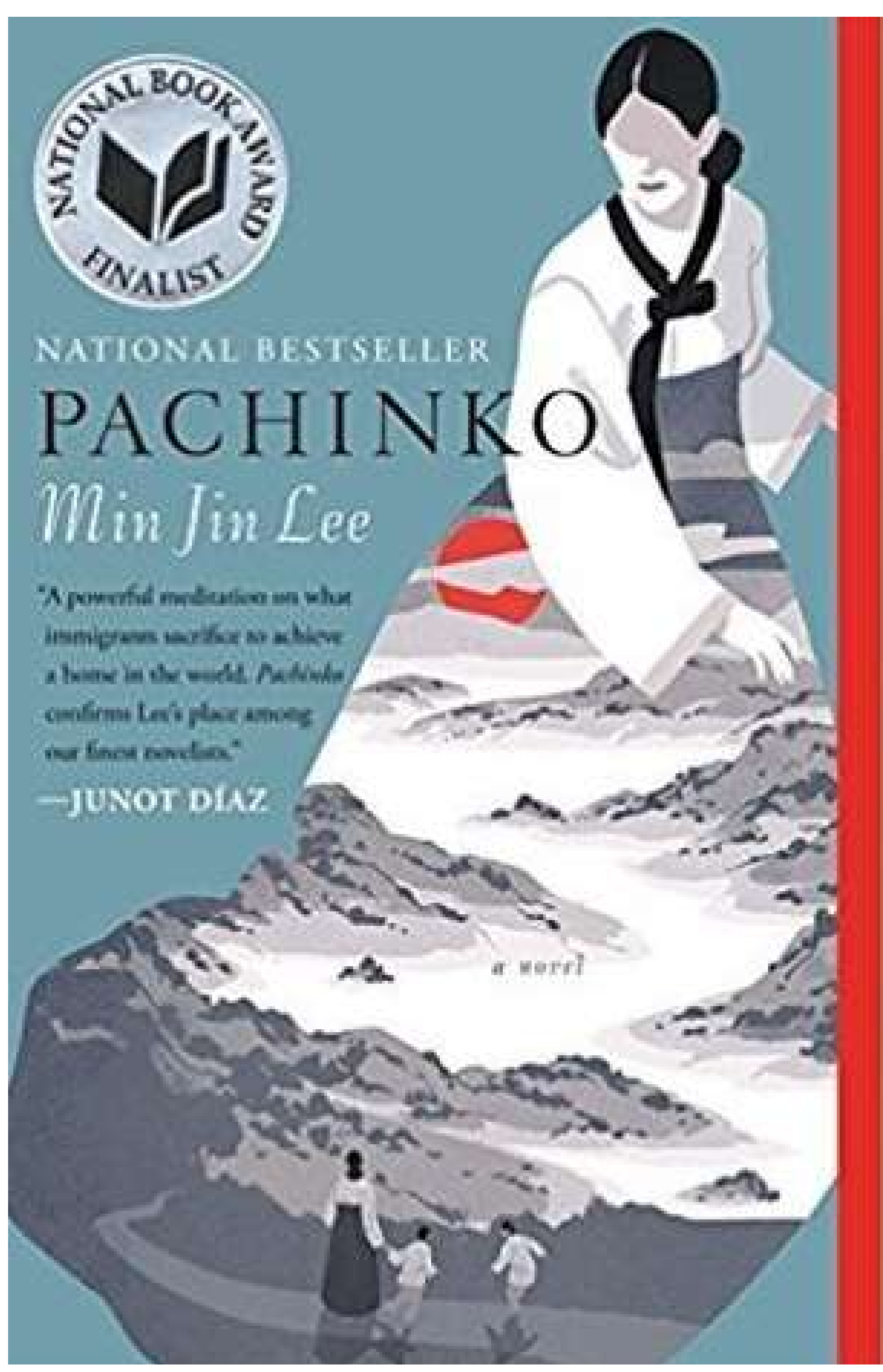
Loneliness was my cage

RENUKA GAVRANI

The Art of Being Alone by Renuka Gavrani is a reflective guide that explores the value of solitude and how it can lead to personal growth and self-discovery. The book encourages readers to embrace being alone, offering insights on how solitude can help improve mental well-being, foster creativity, and deepen one's understanding of life. Through personal anecdotes and philosophical reflections, it aims to shift the perception of being alone from loneliness to a source of empowerment and clarity.

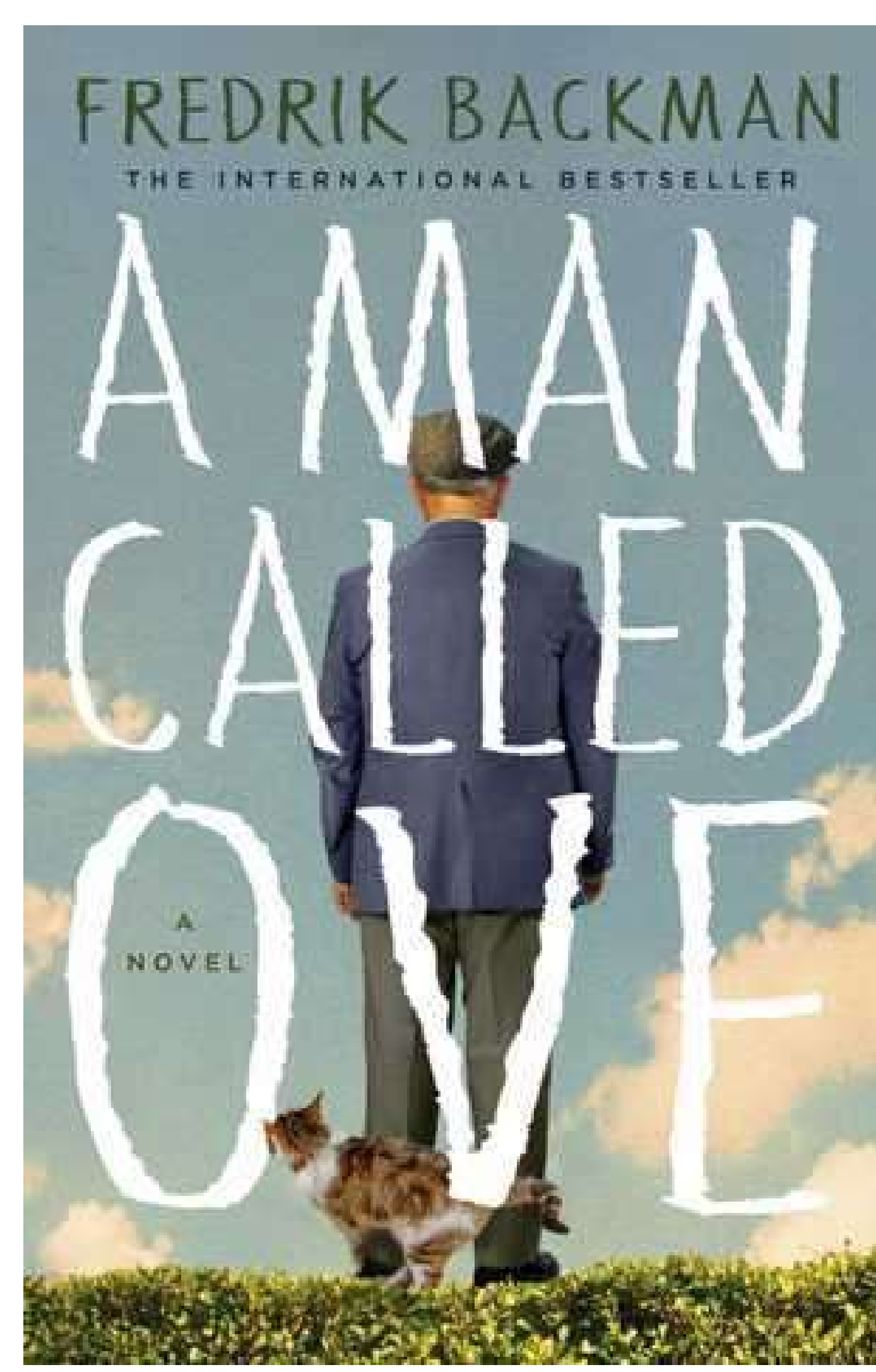
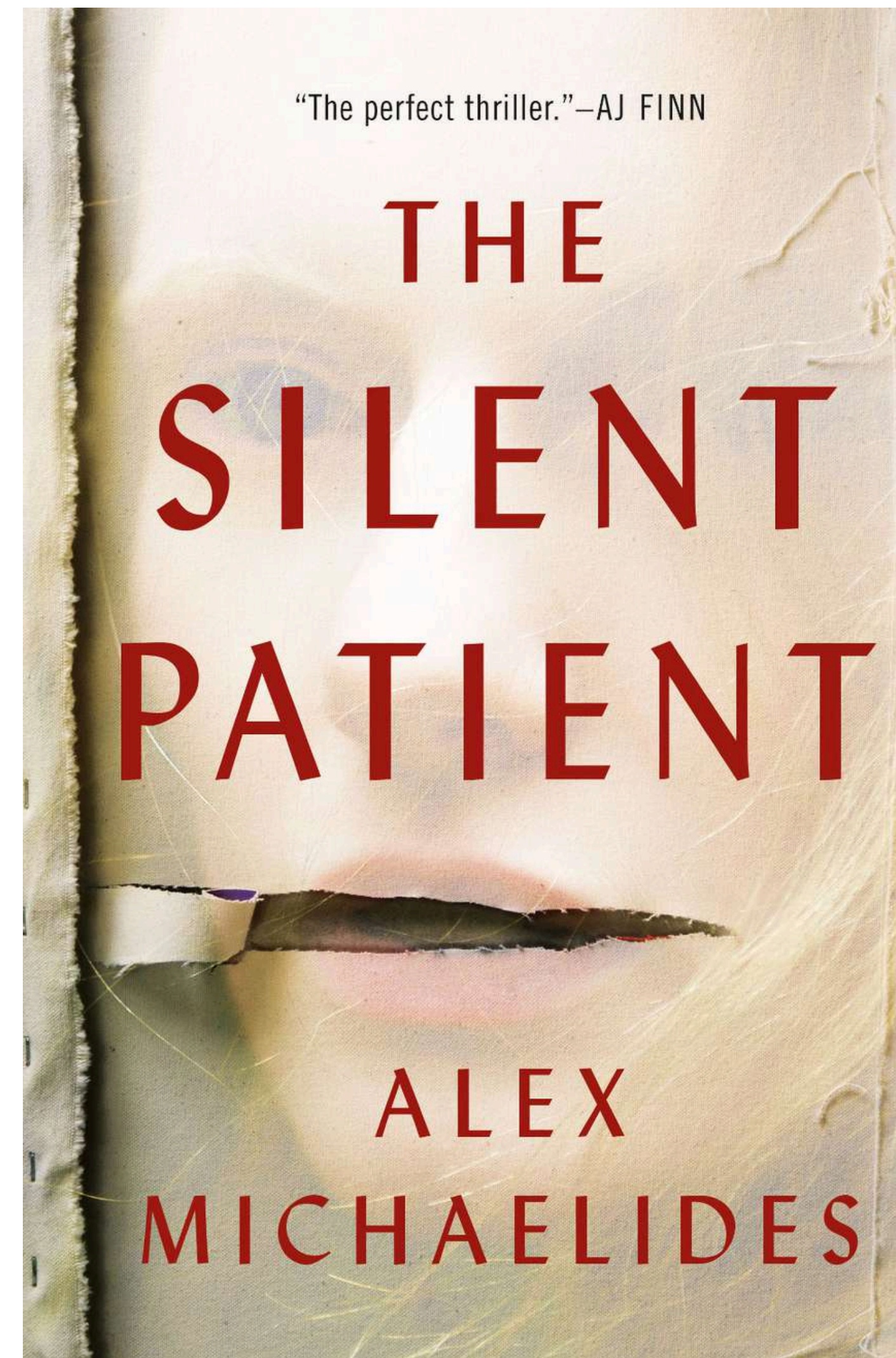
The House Without Windows by Nadia Hashimi is a novel set in Afghanistan that follows the story of a woman named Zeba, who is imprisoned for the murder of her abusive husband. The book explores themes of gender inequality, injustice, and the complexities of Afghan society. Zeba's journey within the prison walls reveals her strength and resilience, while also shedding light on the struggles women face in a deeply patriarchal society.





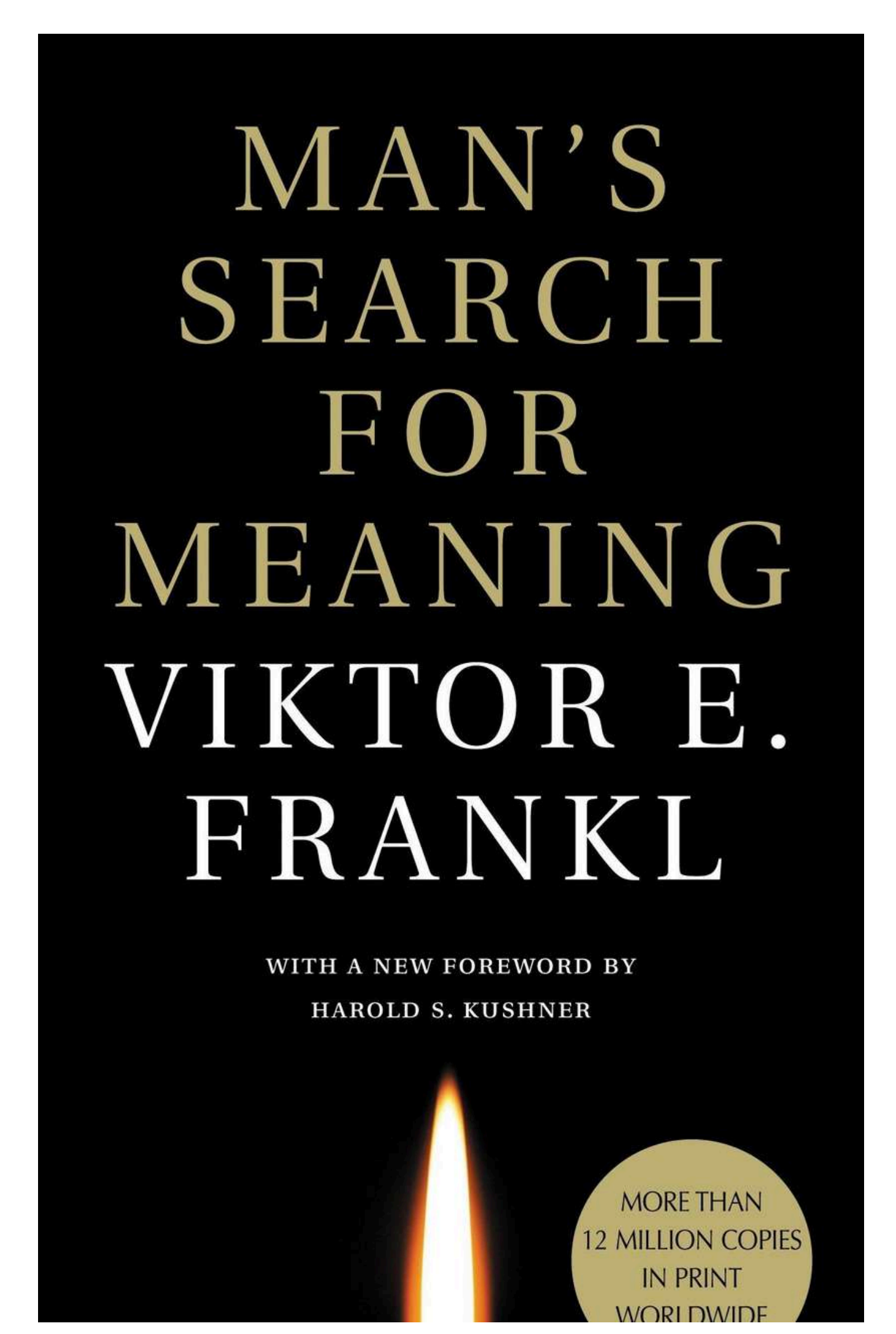
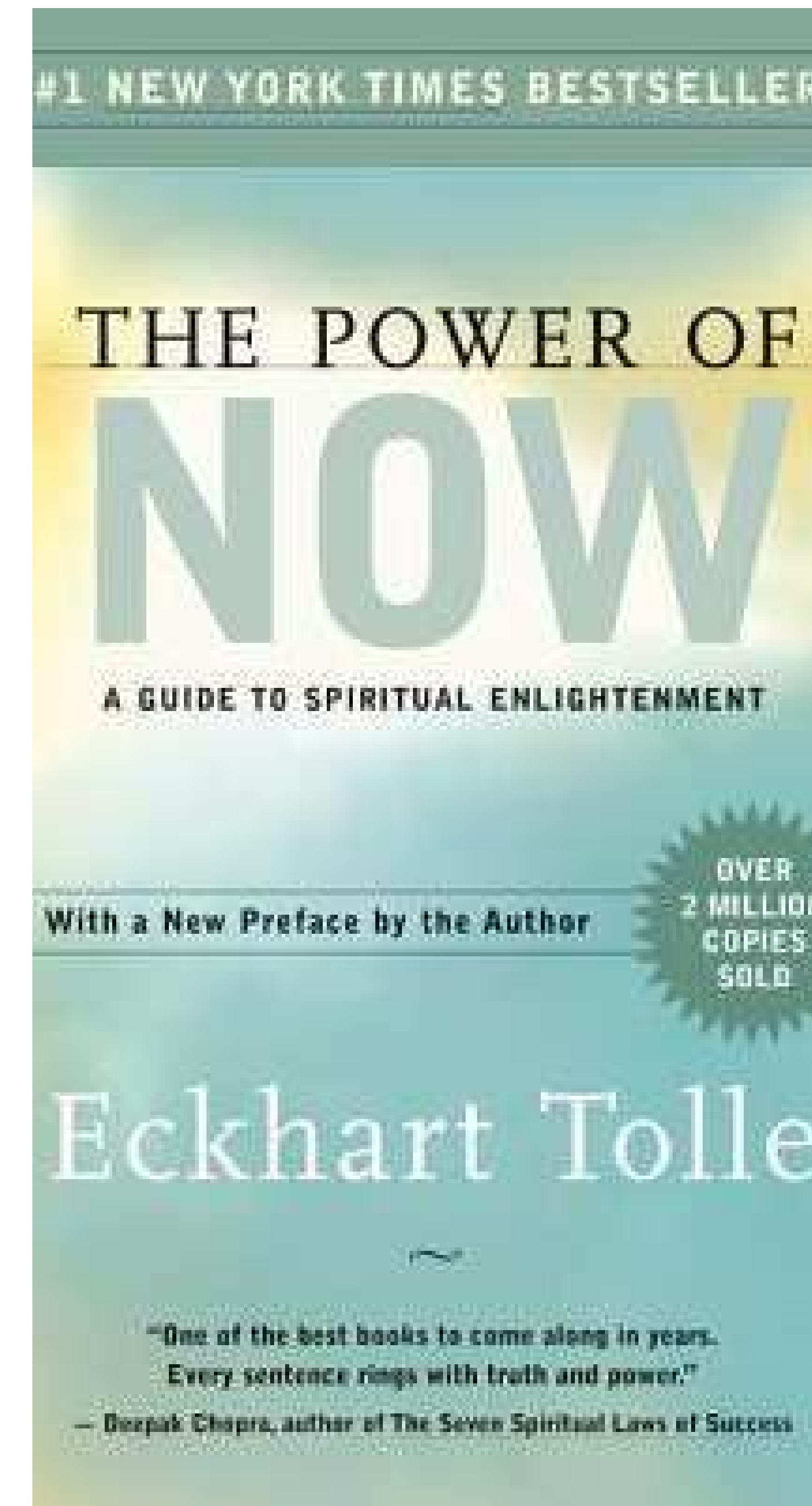
Pachinko by Min Jin Lee follows the lives of a Korean family living in Japan over several generations. Beginning with Sunja, who chooses a path of sacrifice to protect her child, the novel delves into themes of identity, survival, and resilience in the face of discrimination. Richly layered with history and emotion, it paints a compelling portrait of family, belonging, and the complexities of navigating cultural and societal divides.

The Silent Patient by Alex Michaelides is a psychological thriller about Alicia Berenson, a successful artist who shoots her husband dead and then falls mute. Theo Faber, a forensic psychologist, becomes obsessed with her case and seeks to uncover the truth behind her silence. As he delves deeper into Alicia's past, he uncovers shocking revelations, leading to a twist ending that challenges everything the reader believes about the characters and their motives.



A Man Called Ove by Fredrik Backman is a heartwarming novel about a grumpy, solitary man named Ove, whose life is transformed when a young family moves in next door. Initially annoyed by their noisy presence, Ove gradually forms unexpected friendships that help him rediscover purpose and meaning. The story explores themes of love, loss, and the power of community, ultimately revealing the deep humanity beneath Ove's tough exterior.

The Power of Now by Eckhart Tolle is a spiritual guide that teaches the importance of living in the present moment. It emphasizes letting go of past regrets and future worries to achieve inner peace and spiritual awakening through mindfulness and awareness.



Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor E. Frankl is a profound account of Frankl's experiences as a Holocaust survivor and the development of his psychological approach, known as logotherapy. The book explores how finding purpose in life, even amidst suffering, is crucial for survival and well-being. Frankl argues that meaning can be found in all circumstances, and that the pursuit of this meaning is the key to enduring hardship and achieving fulfillment.

Literature and Psychology: A Window into the Mind

Rhetorical Questions - THAT ECHO WITHIN!

What drives a writer to create? Is it the urge to tell a story or a deeper need rooted in the human psyche? Literature and psychology intertwine to explore universal emotions like love, loss, and hope, while offering unique insights into the human experience.

What is the true purpose of reading? Is it an escape from reality, or is it an intimate return to it—a chance to confront truths we often bury? Literature, like the mind itself, is a labyrinth. Every word, every character, and every metaphor is a doorway into another consciousness, a reminder that the world is both infinite and deeply personal.

Psychology teaches us that we are creatures of thought, shaped by memory and imagination. But where does the boundary lie between what we experience and what we create? When we read, are we merely absorbing another's vision, or are we weaving it into our own, reimagining their world as ours?

Stories, after all, are mirrors—but what if they are also windows? Through them, we glimpse lives we have never lived, emotions we have never felt, and yet they resonate. Why does the pain of a fictional character bring tears to our eyes? Why does a single line of poetry, written centuries ago, feel as though it speaks directly to our soul? Is it because the act of reading transcends time and space, uniting minds across the ages?

Perhaps literature is the truest reflection of the psyche—a delicate balance of chaos and order, dreams and reality. Just as the mind creates its narratives to make sense of the world, so too does literature. And as readers, we find ourselves in this dance of understanding, discovering not only the author's intent but also the hidden corners of our own consciousness.

So, when you pick up a book, ask yourself: Are you reading to escape or to discover? To understand the world or to lose yourself in it? Maybe the answer is all of these—and maybe it doesn't matter. Because in reading, we transcend the question of "why" and simply exist in the flow of words, suspended between what is real and what is possible.

Beyond Classrooms - The Departmental Odyssey

The Department of English: A Nexus of Innovation and Excellence

The Department of English at the University of Chakwal is blooming as a dynamic center for intellectual and creative growth, inspiring students to move beyond mundane classroom routines. Through seminars, art fests, and literary events, it fosters critical thinking and a passion for exploration, encouraging students to engage with literature as a tool for understanding and addressing real-world issues. While the faculty provides guidance, the department's true strength lies in empowering students to take initiative. From organizing literary festivals to publishing magazines, students independently lead projects that reflect their drive for innovation and productivity. With a vision to integrate interdisciplinary approaches and global perspectives, the department continues to nurture resilient thinkers and creators, shaping leaders who contribute meaningfully to society.



An Academic Seminar

Welcome Party - 2024

Orientation Ceremony - 2024



Dr. Arif Azad at UOC

Da Vinci Art Exhibition

Welcome Party - 2024

Dr. Uzma Abid Ansari - NUML



Da Vinci Art Exhibition

Islamabad Literary Festival - 2024

The Tasksmith

Essay Writing Competition

Threads of Campus Life

The University of Chakwal is a vibrant hub of academic and extracurricular activities, fostering holistic development among its students. The campus regularly hosts a variety of events, including sports competitions, literary gatherings, artistic workshops, and musical evenings, all aimed at enhancing students' skills and broadening their horizons. Book launches and interactive sessions encourage intellectual discussions, while book stalls and art exhibitions provide a platform for self-expression and cultural exploration. These initiatives not only provide opportunities for students to showcase their talents but also promote a sense of community, collaboration, and creativity, contributing significantly to their personal, academic, and professional growth.



The Heritage Vault of Chakwal

According to the District Gazetteer Jhelum 1904, the city Chakwal is named after Chaudhry Chaku Khan, from Jammu who founded it in 1525 during the era of the Mughal emperor, Zaheerudin Babur. It remained a small but central town of Taluka Dhan Chaurasi for many centuries. In 1881, during the British era, it was declared the Tehsil Headquarter. It was finally upgraded to district status in 1985.

Chakwal is situated in Dhani region of potohar in northern Punjab. Chakwal and surrounding areas are home to ancient Soan civilization and it has a very rich history. The history of the area dates back to the semi-mythical period of the Maha-Bharat. Chakwal is a site of famous encounter of Alexander the great with Raja Ambhi. Chakwal region's district capital is the city of Chakwal. Chakwal District has three tehsils i.e., Kallar Kahar, Choa Saidan Shah and Chakwal. For many early years, this region was under the reign of Dogra Rajputs and Khokhar Rajputs.

Chakwal city in itself, although heavily influenced by the village lifestyle, has more of an urban environment. Chakwal is also known as Military valley. Chakwal's unique culture and its rich history makes it a very interesting region. Chakwal has been bestowed by rich culture, history, art and extravagant environment. Once been known as a picnic spot of the Mughal Dynasty and the British Lords, Chakwal still offers a unique landscape to its visitors. World-renowned Kallar Kahar Lake, Takht-e-Babri, a stage built of stone by Emperor Babar to address his Army, Bagh-e-Safa and above all Katas Raj Temples (famous temples-fort and Medieval University surrounded by 100 temples built over a period of 1000 years by the Hindu rajas) are some ideal places for tourists. The famous temple of 'Katas' holds great significance for Hindus who come here for worship as Kitas's name is mentioned in Hindu holy book 'Maha Bharat' (written in 300 BC).



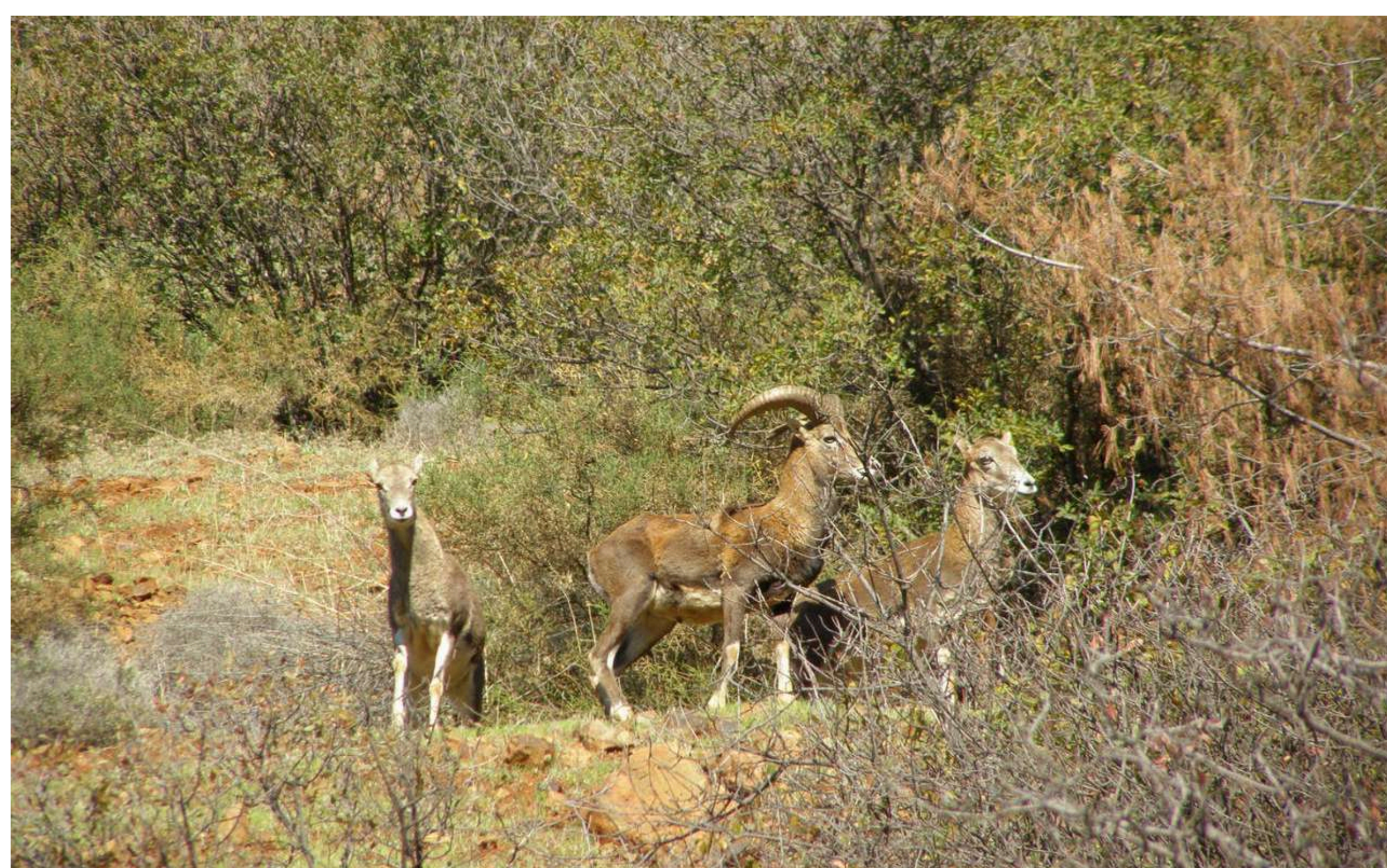
Nandana Fort



Dharabi Dam Lake



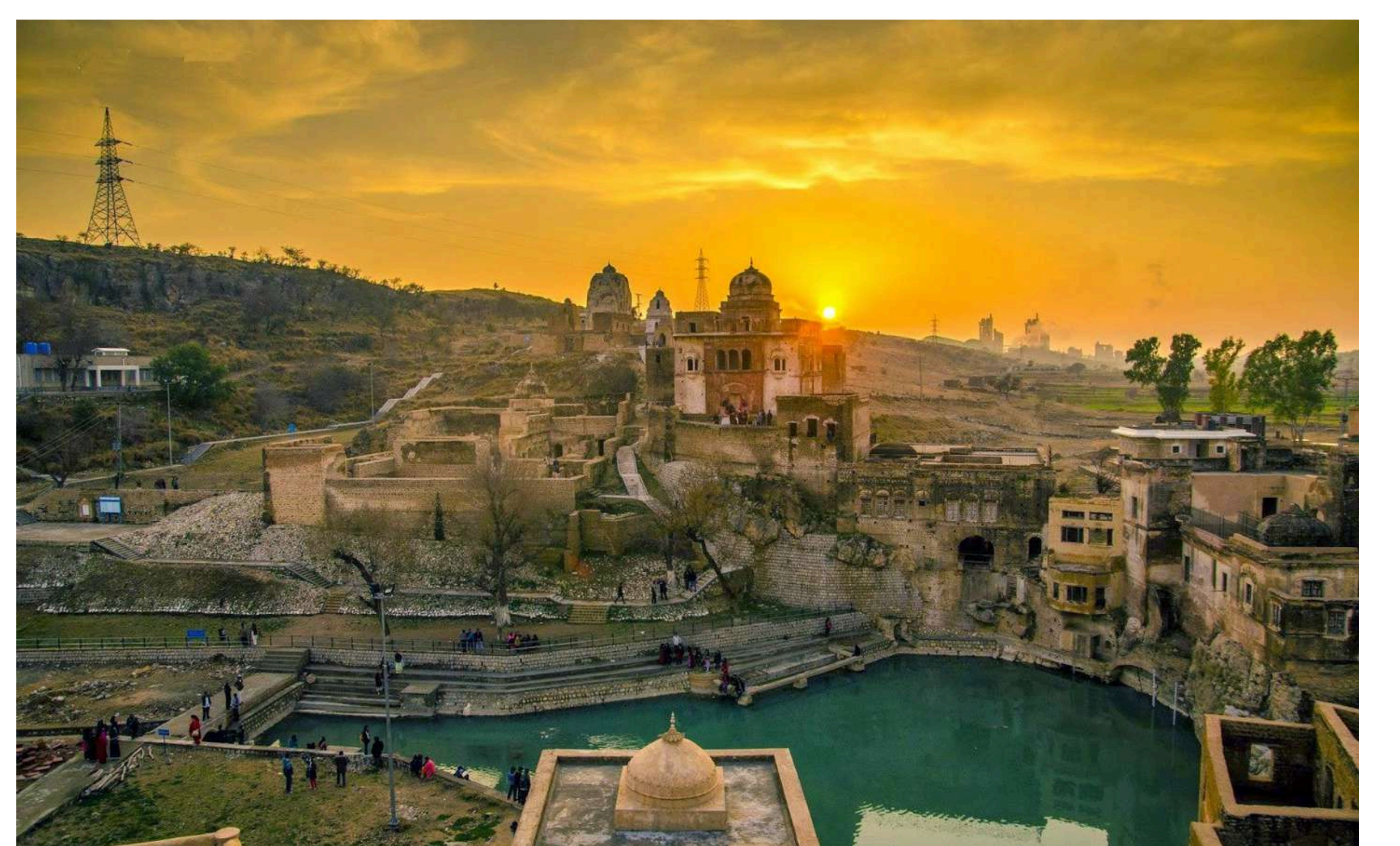
Cannon, Dulmial



Chinji National Park



Dunes of Thoha Bahadur



Temple of Katas Raj



Banglow of Kot Sarfaraz Khan



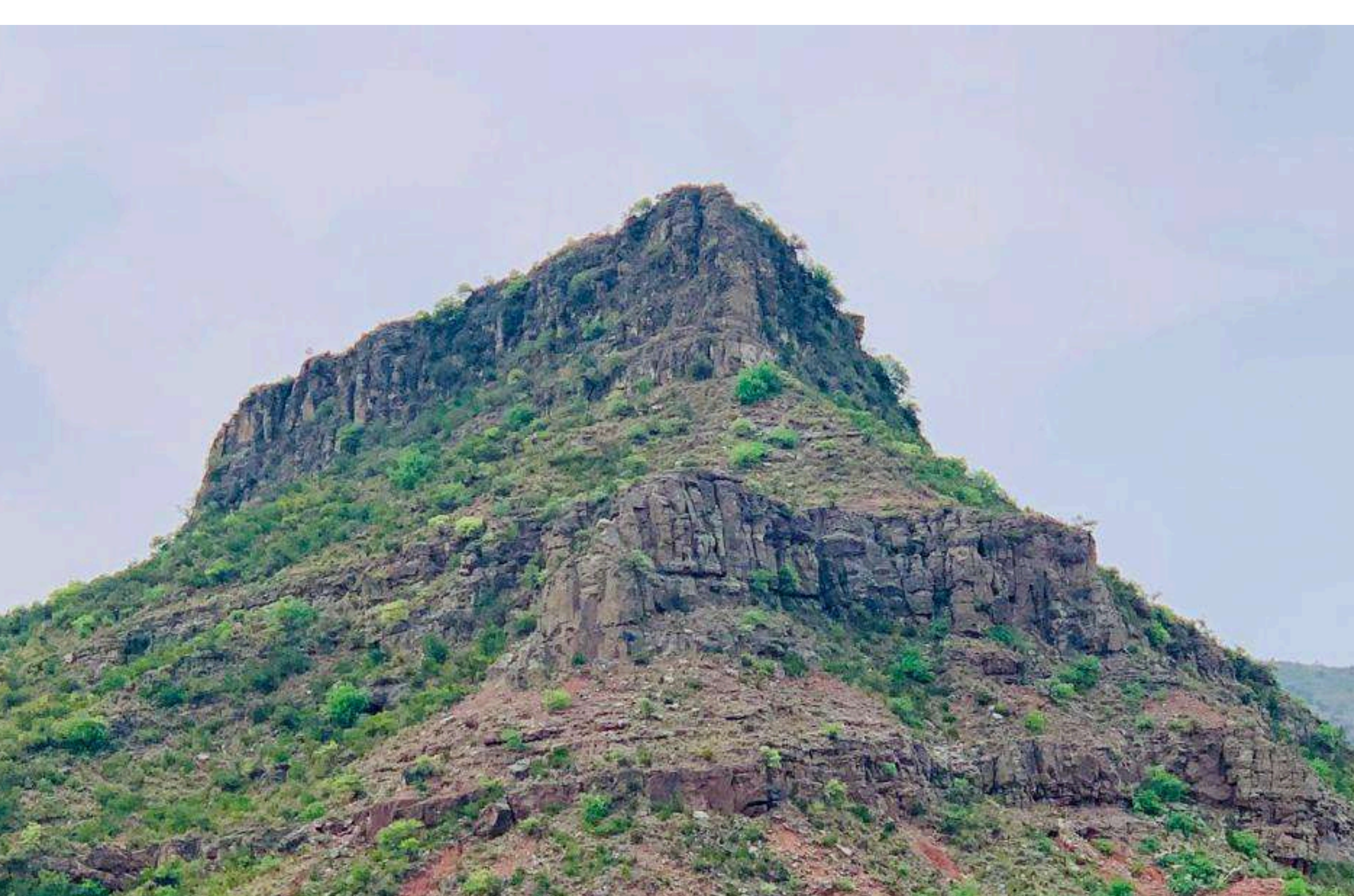
Old Building, GPGC Chakwal



Olive Cultivating Fields



Kalar Kahar Valley



Kusak Fort



Arya Block, UOC



Salt Range



Swaik Lake



Neela Wahan Lake



Malot Fort



Shrine of
Abdul Qadir Gillani's Grand Sons



Karah, Regional Festival



Railway Station, Chakwal



Shuhada Park, Chakwal

Raja Sarfraz Khan: An Unusual Feudal

Raja Sarfraz Khan, a visionary leader and philanthropist, played a pivotal role in the educational development of Chakwal. Born in 1905 to Raja Aurangzeb Khan, a prominent civil servant during British rule, Raja Sarfraz grew up in an enlightened environment. His father significantly contributed to the establishment of Lyallpur (now Faisalabad) and founded Islamia High School Chakwal. Following in his father's footsteps, Raja Sarfraz made education and public service his priorities.

After the partition of India in 1947, the Punjab government planned to establish new colleges but lacked funds and land. During a meeting of the Punjab Legislative Assembly (MLA) in Lahore, Raja Sarfraz Khan, representing Jhelum's rural constituency, offered both land and Rs100,000—a hefty sum at the time—on the condition that the college be built in Chakwal. His offer was accepted, and additional land was arranged through collaboration with other local Chaudhris, some of whom sold it at nominal prices or donated it.

On April 14, 1949, the Government High School Chakwal was upgraded to a degree college. It was the first college established in Punjab post-partition and has since become a prestigious institution. The college attained postgraduate status in the early 1990s and is now set to become a full-fledged university. Professor Aziz Ahmed Minhas, head of the history department, and many others regard Raja Sarfraz as a pivotal figure in Chakwal's development.

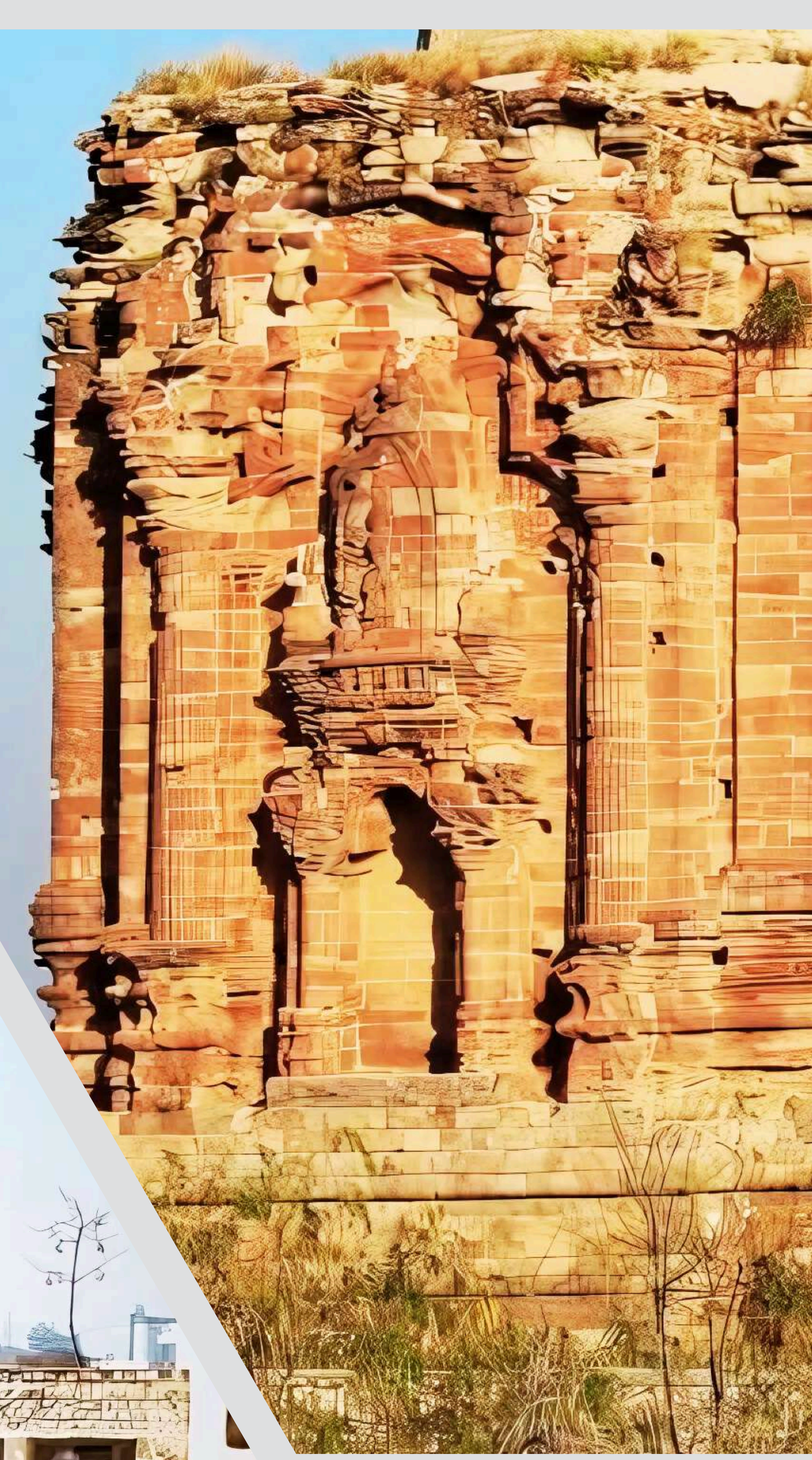
Raja Sarfraz Khan's philanthropic contributions extended beyond the college. He established Government Girls High School at his residence and funded a stipend program for needy students at Government Postgraduate College Chakwal. Additionally, he resettled homeless gypsies, creating a locality now known as Basti Malangan Wali. His efforts reflect his progressive vision and compassion, which were rare traits among feudal lords of the time.

His legacy continues through the establishment of the **UNIVERSITY OF CHAKWAL**, a transformative initiative undertaken by his grandsons, Raja Yasir Humayun Sarfraz. Their efforts reflect Raja Sarfraz Khan's unshakeable commitment to education and innovation, ensuring his ideals live on.

Despite his high-born background, Raja Sarfraz defied feudal stereotypes, prioritizing public service over personal gains. His enduring contributions to society are commemorated not only through the university but also through the preservation of his family's historic 52-room bungalow and his portrait in the college library. The University of Chakwal stands as a beacon of his values, empowering generations to pursue excellence in learning and contribute to societal progress.

As Raja Yasir Humayun Sarfraz aptly states, "I am greatly impressed by my grandfather's thinking about humanity and education. I am also trying my best to follow his footsteps." Through their dedication to education and leadership, Raja Sarfraz Khan's descendants have honored his vision, ensuring his legacy of progressive leadership and societal upliftment endures.

VOLUME 1



Welcome to **DhanScribes**, where the art of storytelling and literary expression comes to life. With every page, we invite you to immerse yourself in a collection of thought-provoking poems, captivating stories, and insightful articles crafted by passionate voices. Celebrate creativity, explore diverse perspectives, and witness the magic of words that inspire, challenge, and connect.

TEAM-DHANSCRIBES