A SLICE OF SAICE

ISSUE 8 | 2024



Editorial

Finally, after long, tiring months of hard work by our designers, countless drafts by our authors, and many late nights of drawing and sketching by our artists, the team is proud to present the 8th edition of **"SLAICE - A Slice of SAICE"**. This year's edition has no set theme. Instead, we wanted to give the students the freedom to let their creativity flow, whether through photos, artwork, poetry, or stories. As you turn these pages, you'll see what our students have been passionately working on. Some authors recount their experience during soup time or the excitement of watching a friend break records! Others take us into eerie tales or give us a sneak peek at their upcoming novel. And don't miss our featured interview, where we dive into the origins of our beloved aquarium. Our young poets have also shared with us their work, drawing inspiration from the fiery passion of the color red, the peaceful melody of wind chimes, and the blossoming of love. With the added beauty of our illustrators' drawings, their words leap off the page.

We also have the E4 class describing their experiences while working on their "5 Elements" program. From costumes to set design, to the thrill of being on stage, they offer a glimpse into what goes into putting up a theatre performance. And of course, we can't forget our talented artists. Be sure to check out the incredible artwork created by our students, exploring various mediums and methods of expression. Some ventured into digital portraits of favorite characters, while others captured serene landscapes like Lake. Additionally, we have a photo essay that is sure to stir up childhood memories.With all this and a lot more, I sit here wondering what more to add to this editorial, I realize there's nothing left to say. So, dear reader, I leave you to immerse yourself in everything the team has to offer.

Design & Production

Aumjyoti S
Auroprabha G
Krishna S
Miranandan S C

Illustrators

Aadya R
Anahita S
Aurelie S
Auroayush
Maitreyee P
Titirat M

Copy Editors

Aaryashree S
Ankit S
Surya-Savitri D

Editor-in-Chief

Ankit S

Photographers

Aumjyoti S
Sricharan

Contents

01 FEATURE

02 STORIES

03 POETRY

04 ARTWORKS

05 PROJECTS

06 PHOTO ESSAYS

07 NON FICTION

01

FEATURE

Kaanu: Kindling Interest
Diving Deep

Kaanu: Kindling Interest

Mirananandan S C | E5

From the ping-pong madness to memorable encounters with The Mother, we are now in conversation with our very own "Kaanu"! From his arrival to Pondy to kindling the interest of generations in table-tennis, we have an interview with our beloved Ramakant bhai.

Can you tell us about how you came to know about the Ashram?

Yes. You see, people come to know about ashrams for many reasons. People become interested in coming to the ashram for various reasons too. Mine is fairly simple. It is because my soul was destined to come here and stay in the ashram. That is the reason. It is not because my mind decided that I'd stay in the ashram. And how did my soul decide to come here? It surely has something connected with the past life. In the past life, when you have done Yoga Sadhana, at the time of dying, the soul is controlled from above. And Sri Aurobindo and the Divine Mother call the souls that are supposed to be here, they call them. That is why I am here.

The reason I came to know about the ashram dates back to that time when I was an architect engineer, in Bombay, in 1954. I used to catch a bus at 8 o'clock every day at a particular place where I used to wait to go to my engineering office. One day, when I was standing there, I saw two booklets in a small stall; on the first one, it was written “Sri Aurobindo on India”, and on the other, “Sri Aurobindo on Himself”. There were many other magazines which have been kept there. But, I somehow got attracted to those two booklets. Each booklet cost 40 paise, not even a rupee. I obviously purchased them. Why did I purchase them? Because my soul awakened. And then for the rest of the five months, I was constantly reading those two booklets. I was mad after what was written in them. Then after 6 months of reading them passionately, I wanted to find out who the publisher was, and that is when I saw the address at the back of the book. Sri Aurobindo Centre, Bombay. It was close to my residence. I remember. It was one of the Sundays I did not have to go to the office. I desperately wanted to visit that place, and when I went there, coinci-dentally, I found it was Sri Aurobindo’s birthday that Sunday. Oh. I was the happiest man there, I



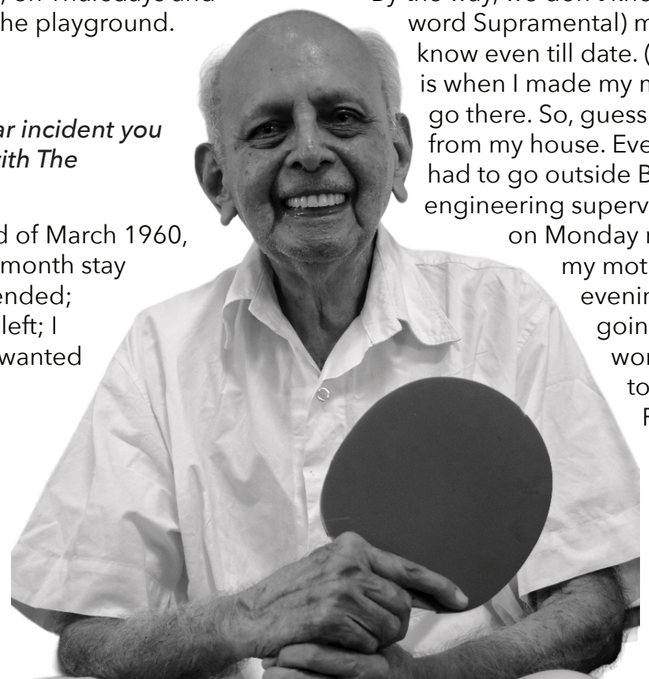
▲ Photos by Aumjyoti S

landed there on Sri Aurobindo's very birthday. See, for us, it is a coincidence. But to Them, They are ordering it. So I started going there every day…

Before going to the office, I started catching the bus to the office 45 minutes before so that I could go there and then in the office, and then in the evening, I would get home late because after the office, I started going there. This is how I did for six months. I always had a desire that one day I'll go to Pondicherry. So, one day somebody told me that there was this first celebration of the Supramental descent, which was going to take place on 29 February 1960 in Ashram Pondicherry. They said they were going to stay there for a month, they asked whether I was interested in coming or not. So I asked my office manager if they could give me a long leave without pay, that's how I came here and stayed for a month for the first time. Believe it or not, in that one month, I saw the Mother's Balcony darshan 30 times in the early morning. I saw Mother twice weekly, on Thursdays and Sundays, in the playground.

Any particular incident you remember with The Mother?

It was the 3rd of March 1960, and my one-month stay had almost ended; just one day left; I desperately wanted to meet the Mother personally, I went to the manager of the ashram, he was a Tamil gentleman, and his name was Amrita. Expressed my need to meet the Mother as I was leaving. He goes up to the Mother and tells her that there is this man who wants to meet you. She asked him to get a chit from me, asking her to allow me to come to meet her. I did as I was told. So the next day, I went to the first floor. Champakalal, who was the attendant of the Mother, was sitting there. He said, come, come; The Mother is waiting for you only, nobody else. Then I went there, I put my head on Her feet, and She put Her hands on my head. I felt ecstasy.



How did you come to Ashram, Pondicherry?

Oh, that is rather adventurous; let me tell you, I was 33 years old. Since I returned from the visit to Pondicherry, I had only three words running in my mind, Sri Aurobindo, Mother, Supramental… Sri Aurobindo, Mother, Supramental…

By the way, we don't know what it (the word Supramental) means, I do not know even till date. (Laughs)… That is when I made my mind up, I had to go there. So, guess what, I ran away from my house. Every weekend, I had to go outside Bombay for engineering supervision and return on Monday morning. I told my mother on Friday evening that I was going to my usual work. That is when I took the Pondicherry train and came here. Then I told the secretary that I had run away from home. He smiled and nodded. He talked to the Mother, and the Mother said all right, he has been coming here for so many years now, let him stay here. Then my mother came to take me back after a month. She soon learned that I ran away from home, as I was sending her a telegram for a year that I was doing no engineering supervision but ran away to Pondicherry.

After a month, my mom came to take me back, she came with an elderly person, how could she come alone? She is not a modern woman. She arrived, and the secretary called me to the office and said, "See, your mother is sitting here, she has come to take you back. So nowyou are free to go back." I told the secretary, you see, for so many years, I have been madly desiring to come here, I didn't come here to go back. And he said, your mother is crying; she will not return without you. I frowned. He was dumbstruck, he raised his head and said, Okay, I got an idea let me talk to The Mother. After some time, my mother was taken to Divine Mother, and Divine Mother did her usual Divine magic. She put her hand perhaps on her head. And my mother came down and told me, " You stay here, I am going back." This was the Divine magic done by the Divine Mother…v

How did you offer

your architecture engineer expertise to the ashram?

Well, much work, much work, park guest house, entire gymnasium building, Castellini project, so many, most of the works. with the help of other engineers, of course, we can't rub them away…

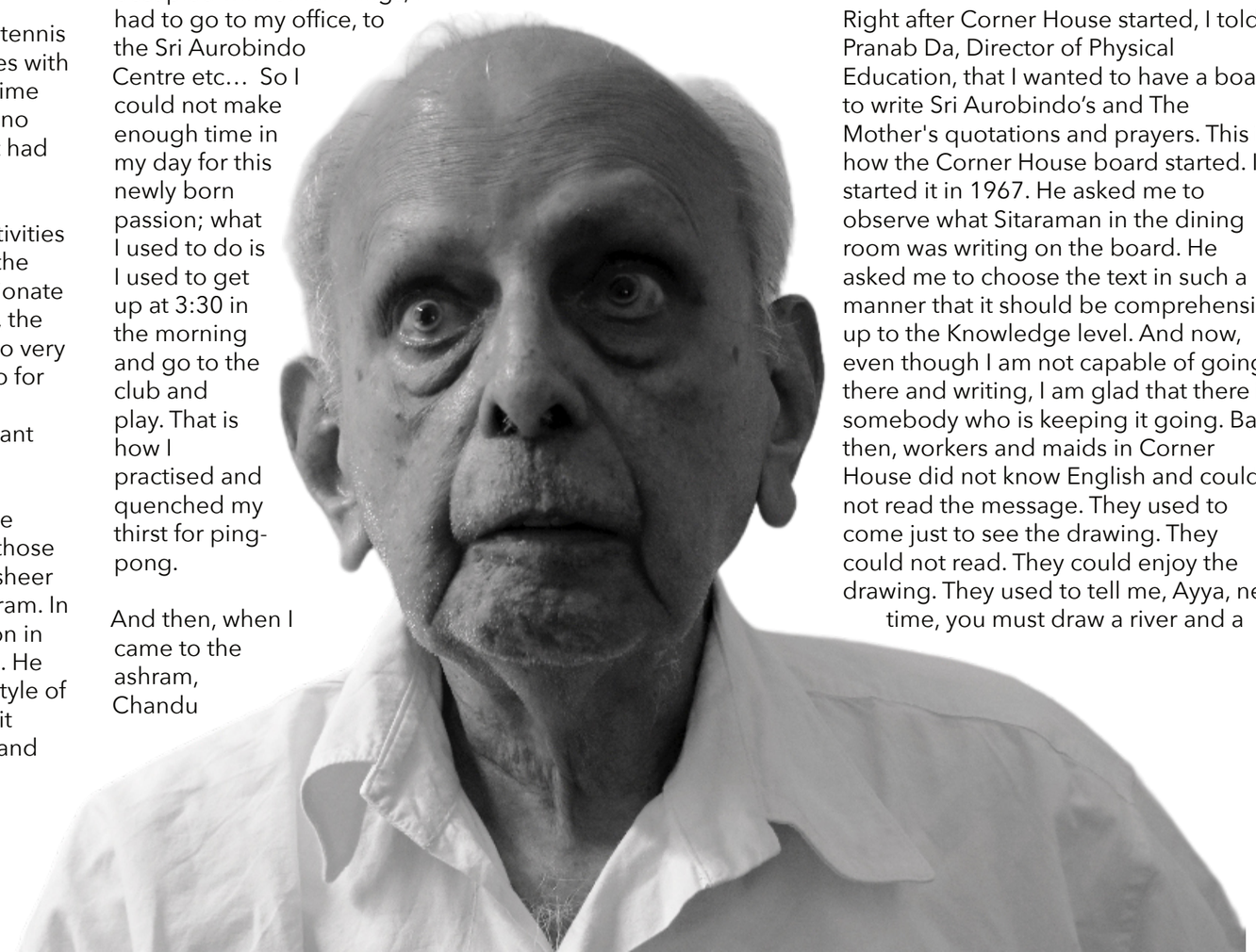
How did Table Tennis begin in the ashram? And can you give us a glimpse of how ping-pong was back then in the ashram?

Well, I was not present at the beginning of table tennis in the Ashram, but as far as I know, it was Chandu Bhai who began the whole idea of the table tennis ashram; we indeed made our tables with our very own equipment. It was a time when there was no tennis ground, no sports ground in the ashram. But it had seven ping-pong tables located in different places. As there were no grounds; there were barely any activities conducted. This was the phase of the ashram when everybody was passionate about this indoor sport. Obviously, the students and ashramites used to go very early in the day to practise, then go for breakfast and then go for their respective work. We did have brilliant gems in the ashram, like Maulai Bhattacharjee, and Manoj Bhattacharjee; they were one of the ones who kept Ping-pong alive in those days of the ashram. They showed sheer domination for 20 years in the ashram. In fact, Maulai was already a champion in West Bengal with a penholder grip. He was the one who introduced that style of playing in the ashram. That is how it was… It is as I told you that Maloy and Manoj are two brothers. Manoj, managing trustee? Manoj sir. The two brothers came and Maloy was already junior champion in West Bengal with that new grip.

What did table tennis mean to you? What's that madness you always talk about?

One day I happened to go to a past engineering college, and that is where I saw table tennis tournaments. Seven, eight tables arrayed in one of the clubs of Bombay. This was the trigger for my passion. Well, I was not jobless, I was occupied with other things, I had to go to my office, to the Sri Aurobindo Centre etc… So I could not make enough time in my day for this newly born passion; what I used to do is I used to get up at 3:30 in the morning and go to the club and play. That is how I practised and quenched my thirst for ping-pong.

And then, when I came to the ashram, Chandu Bhai was looking after table tennis, and as Corner House newly came about, he had to leave this job and take up Corner House; now, who will look after the ping-pong? Pranab da understood my ping-pong madness very well. So, he put me in charge of table tennis. Immediately, a notice was put in the ashram signed by The Mother that Ramakant Navelkar will be in charge of table tennis from today. Anybody who wants to learn table tennis can meet him and learn it…



What was the story behind the Corner House's quotation board?

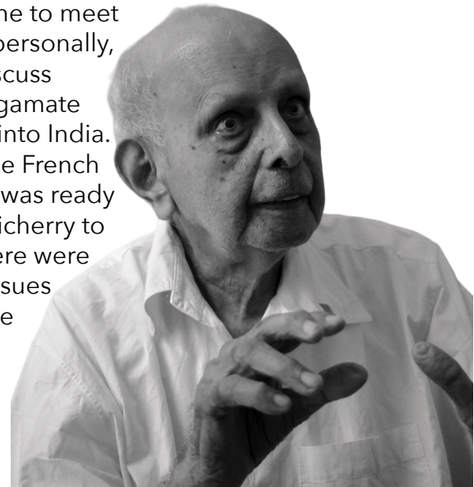
Right after Corner House started, I told Pranab Da, Director of Physical Education, that I wanted to have a board to write Sri Aurobindo's and The Mother's quotations and prayers. This is how the Corner House board started. I started it in 1967. He asked me to observe what Sitaraman in the dining room was writing on the board. He asked me to choose the text in such a manner that it should be comprehensive up to the Knowledge level. And now, even though I am not capable of going there and writing, I am glad that there is somebody who is keeping it going. Back then, workers and maids in Corner House did not know English and could not read the message. They used to come just to see the drawing. They could not read. They could enjoy the drawing. They used to tell me, Ayya, next time, you must draw a river and a tree. And I used to say… surely, surely… (Laughs)

Have you ever seen The Mother playing table tennis? Were there any memories you had?

I unfortunately could not witness The Mother playing table tennis. But I have got two exciting things to tell you about The Mother and Table Tennis. First of all, there was no tennis ground. There was no sports ground. The Mother used to play table tennis in Nanteuil. On the outer table which is called table number 2 now. Next to that is table number 1. Mother used to play on the outer table. Some people who had free time used to come and stand in the courtyard and see The Mother playing table tennis in Nanteuil. Well her game was simple, tip-top. There were a few people who used to play with Her. The ones who have played with her died long ago. They were the sons and nephews of Manoranjan Ganguli. Well, eventually The Mother stopped playing ping-pong as tennis courts were available.

Anyway, here is the anecdote:

There was a French ambassador representative, a very respected officer, who had come to meet The Mother personally, he had to discuss how to amalgamate Pondicherry into India. Back then, the French government was ready to give Pondicherry to India. But there were a few legal issues that had to be



addressed, so that person had come here. The Mother at that time was 90 years old. And that fellow was 45. He was a very significant figure. And guess what, The Mother shocked him by asking him, “Do you like to play table tennis? He said, “What Mother? I have come here for such a sophisticated work of how to amalgamate Pondicherry in India and you are talking about table tennis?” Gives a pause and says, I must have played in my young days. Then The Mother says, then what’s the problem? I would like to play with you. So, The Mother played with that French representative in the governor's very house…

What was the role you played in bringing up Table Tennis in the ashram?

The role was that everything was ready and then needed somebody to take care of it. Which I took care of, sincerely. My job was to supervise that on all tables, there were sufficient rackets, and balls, whether the nets were properly fixed, whether the equipment was in good condition or not… And then, every year, I used to update the notice and people used to give names, from children to adults. There came a time when physical fights happened due to the matches. I had to stop the blows. I had to solve those problems also. My other goal was to conduct tournaments every year, give notice of tournaments, accept entries, put up the programs, write down the results, give them to P.E.D, every weekend and finally distribute the respective prizes. Well, digitalising all of this saved a huge hassle, thanks to Kamal Shah who helped. Pranab da was a huge support to me, he always used to stand as a helpful pillar.



How were you as a player?

Though I was tremendously interested in table tennis, as a player, I was so good that when I played for the first time in Nanteuil, out of 21, I could score only one point against my opponent. See, I was not there because I was a top-class table tennis player, I was there for the service that I had to provide. But there were players far superior to me in Nanteuil. I was sincere in my job, in carrying out my work as a table tennis player. But as far as I remember, a forehand smash was my thing. We have to be clear that I was not at all an extraordinary player. I was never a top-class player even outside, in Bombay.

What do you want to say to the current players in the ashram?

Well, I will have to say the same thing as everybody has said before. Nothing special, you cannot become proficient in anything unless you work hard. That means unless you practise a lot, on the right lines, but if you practise on the wrong ones, it is no use. So this is what the message is, as anybody else or anywhere in the world will give. That is work hard, work hard. Then only you will become a good player. In any field, for example, if you want to become a musician, you have to spend months till such a point that you must live in it. So it takes everything in you, you have to labour for years and years to become top-class.

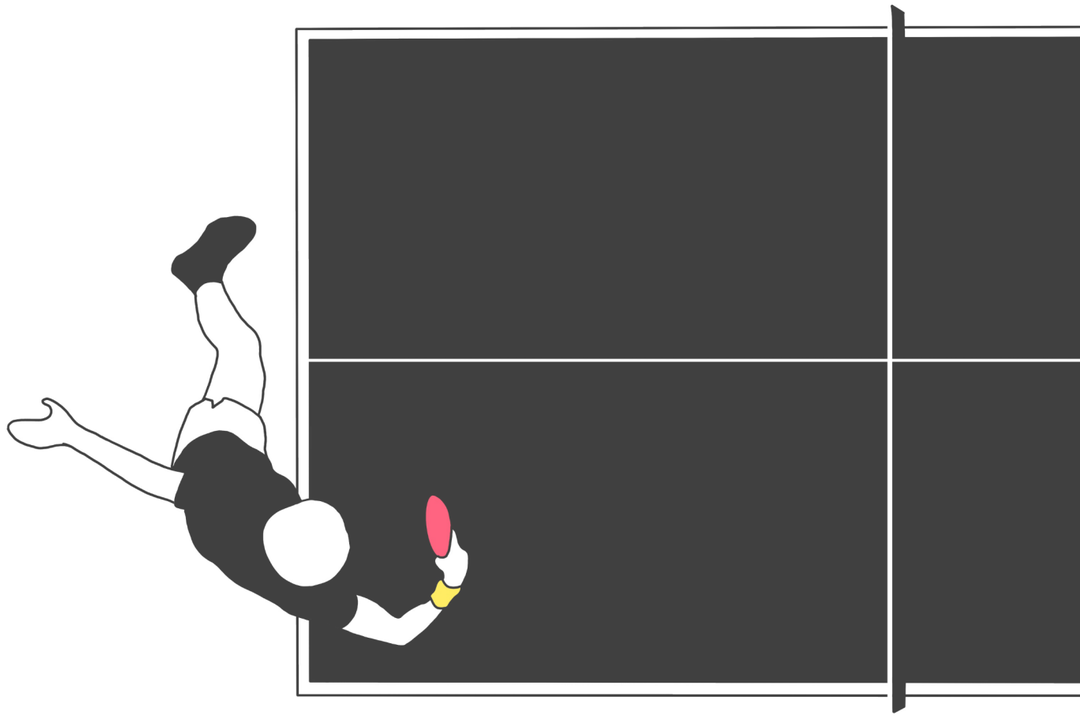
What were the challenges you faced when you were given the responsibility of table tennis?

I got the challenge that anybody who takes up work as a manager has to face. And Pranab da gave me full support. So there were no particular challenges. Nothing. Because She knew that I was sincere. So she didn't put me in challenges. She kept me free of troubles…

How did you like teaching the children? What was your relationship with them?

You see, there Yoga is involved in that. Because I taught more than 500 children table tennis. Every year 30 children join table tennis. 30 new children join table tennis in the A4 group. 30 into the number of those years in which I have worked. When you count it goes to more than 500. So I have taught 500 souls. Because they are the souls who came to the ashram. So I used to have personal, psychic relations with all the children. I loved children and children loved me. I used to tell people that the love I received from children was much superior to my bank balance if I were well off. Love children to such an extent that if a child doesn't come to play table tennis that evening, I used to go to their boarding or house to find out what is the matter. The parents and boarding in-charge used to tell me that no group captain comes home to find out why a child has not come. But I used to personally go. And I have memories of personal contact with children. So many contacts…





▶ Illustration by Titirat M

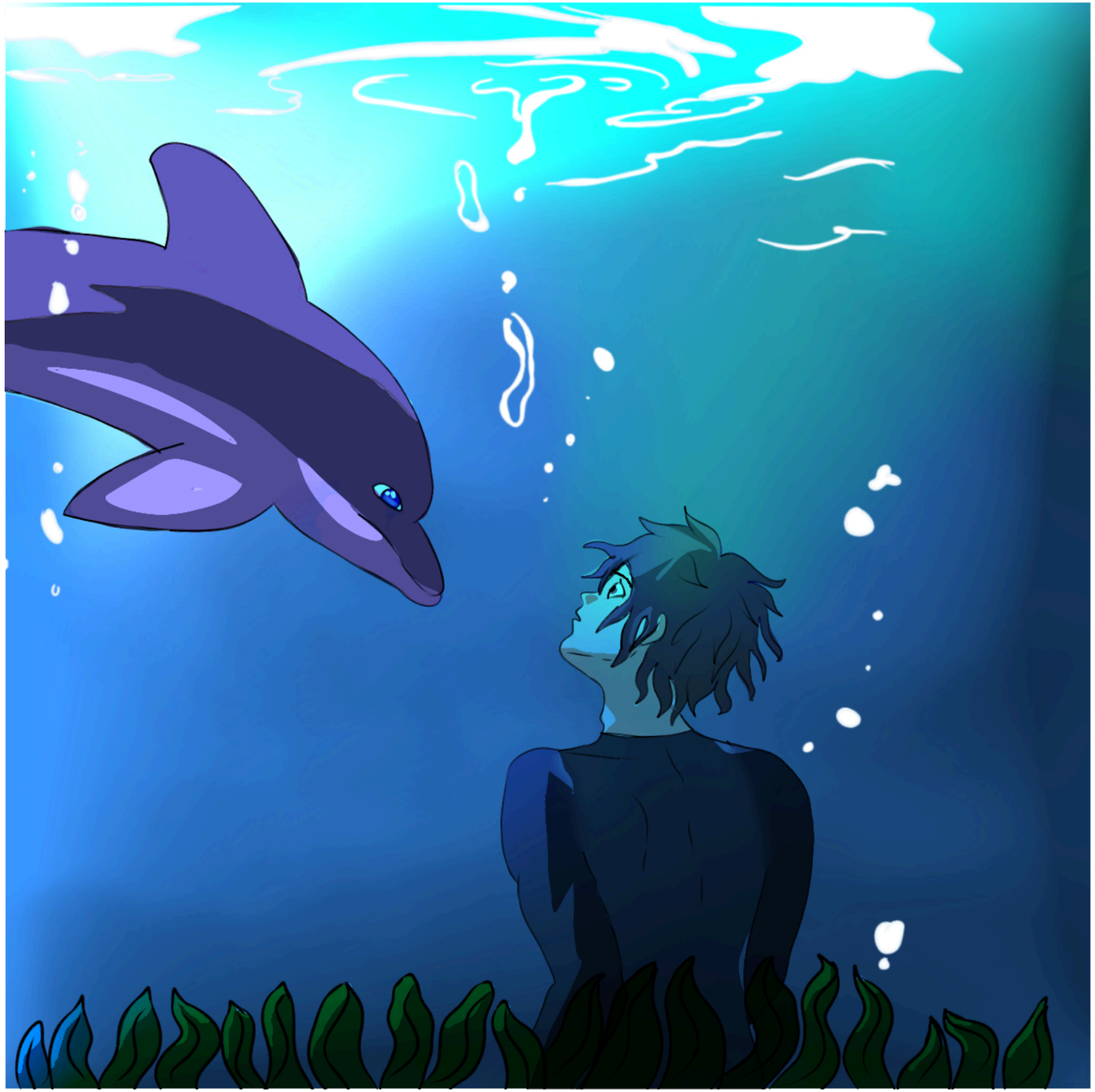
Diving Deep

Krishiv T | E4

The origins of the school's aquarium section In this interview, we explore the fascinating story behind the creation of our school's marine aquarium. Shilpin, who spearheaded this project, takes us through a journey that began in the 1970s with hands-on experiments, underwater exploration, and a passion for marine life. From testing a student-built submarine to catching the first fish, this is the story of how a simple curiosity grew into a beloved feature of our school.

Q: What brought you to Pondicherry, and how did you come to settle here?

My journey to Pondicherry began when I was just seven years old. I came to visit my grandparents, who had been living here for quite some time, having settled in the Ashram during the 1930s and 1940s. From the moment I arrived, I felt a deep sense of belonging. There was something about the peace and spiritual atmosphere of the place that resonated with me. Instead of returning home, I decided to stay and make this my home. I joined the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education in December 1962, during the beginning of the new academic session, which marked the start of a new chapter in my life here.

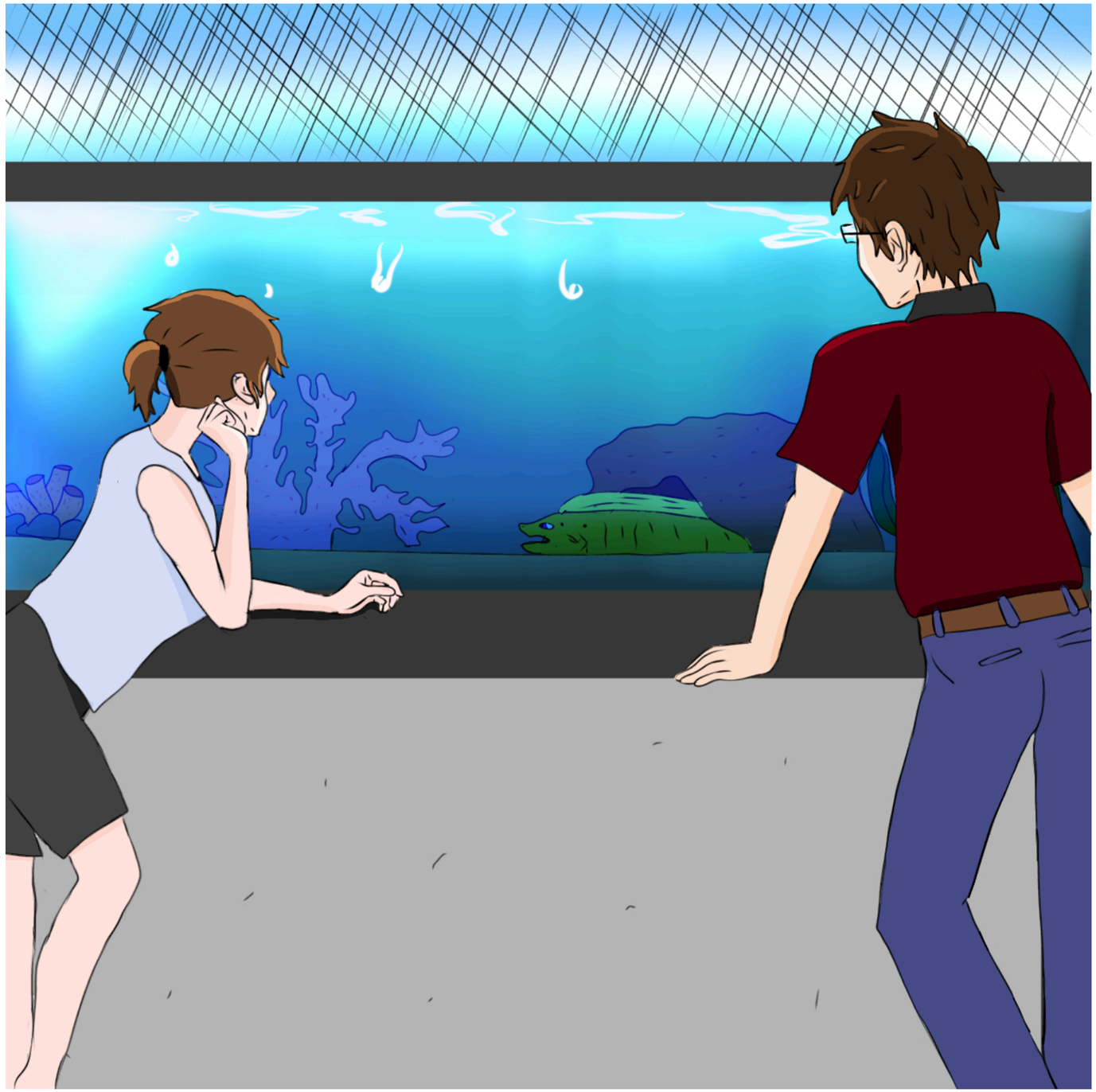


▲ Illustration by Aurelie S

Q: How did you go about starting the aquarium?

The marine aquarium section started and grew in a very organic way. In the early 1970s, there were very unique experiments going on in the then Free Progress system. A few dedicated teachers and an enthusiastic group of students pursued their interests as practical projects, which led to hands-on learning. This group had made scale models of the Apollo program's rockets and capsules for a start. Then another batch wanted to go in the opposite direction, so a working submarine was built.

Now this submarine had to be tested in the water, and since the group was too young and inexperienced to go underwater, some older (bad) people were called in to do the in-water testing. This group, already into underwater diving (which wasn't considered 'ashram-legal'), swam in the sea every morning, no matter the conditions. We loved body surfing, and many of us later took part in swimming pool competitions, setting or breaking records, or at least placing in the top six. Earlier, a French journalist named Monsieur Hubert Noelhan, living in New Caledonia, came to the Ashram and gave diving masks to some of our group, as he was into shell collecting. This simple introduction to diving slowly grew into a passion for underwater exploration. By the time the submarine was ready, we were too, and we



helped test it. In its final, successful dive, it went 4 meters underwater and resurfaced on its own. (The submarine is now preserved in a glass cabinet in the aquarium section.) During the submarine testing, we saw fish, crabs, and other marine life, which sparked the idea to start a marine aquarium. The official start of the sea aquarium project came after the submarine, when Kake (also known as Promesse), one of the teachers, acquired a large aquarium from Dr. Sanyal, who used to keep freshwater fish. The aquarium was made with an iron frame and glass sealed with tar. We brought it to a room upstairs, then carted buckets and vessels full of seawater from the beach in front of the French Consulate. After filling the tank, we went to the old broken pier opposite the Gandhi statue and collected living mussels, starfish, and other creatures.

Everyone was amazed by the sight of marine life in the aquarium, but the next day, everything had died, and the water had become murky and foul-smelling. After cleaning it up, we realized we had no idea how to properly maintain a marine aquarium.

There wasn't much information available at the time, but word spread, and the Ashram reached out to its Paris center for help. They connected us with an aquarium store that sold us a special seawater pump and filters, which were essential for maintaining marine life in a closed system.

Getting the equipment to Pondicherry was another challenge, but we were fortunate when Gérard, who was driving a van loaded with supplies for Auroville, found space for the aquarium package. With this equipment in hand, we followed the store's advice: run the filters for three weeks before adding any fish, and never stop the filter. Once the tank was ready, we caught our first fish by observing those that hid on the pier and carefully bagging them.

The fish survived, and we began feeding it live clams, which local fishermen used as bait. To this day, clams remain our preferred food for the aquarium's inhabitants. Over time, we learned more about catching and caring for different species, including the scorpionfish, which we carefully collected in a

glass jar. This marked the beginning of our marine aquarium journey, which has grown steadily ever since.

Q: What were some of the biggest challenges you faced with the aquarium section?

The challenges with the aquariums would have been getting the seawater pumps and figuring out how to maintain a marine aquarium. Equipment was hard to get since nothing was made in India at that time, and funds were scarce to buy anything. Slowly, books started coming in, and they brought new ideas and methods. Later, magazines were gifted to us, which helped enormously with the latest information and techniques that we could understand and replicate. I personally learned to live by the Chinese saying, "The essence of knowledge is, once having it, to apply it."

Q: How did you get into marine biology?

I never originally aimed for marine biology—it came automatically as part of the job. I did get influenced by some seniors, and spending so much time in the sea naturally sparked my interest. But I'm not a qualified or certified marine biologist; most of what I know is self-taught.

Working with the aquariums provides a broad foundation in many subjects—biology (fish and invertebrates), the chemistry of seawater, the physics of how pumps and gadgets work practically, and ecology through studying the behavior of aquarium inhabitants. The same applies when going diving. You also inevitably learn bits of human physiology and psychology when working underwater.

And finally, the sea is a great playground. You can dive, surf, sail, and purely enjoy the ocean planet—the only one we know of in the universe.

02

STORIES

The Paranormal vs
Fevered Imagination
Promo
Te Taxi
The Cloak

The Paranormal vs Fevered Imagination

Maitreyee P | E6

TQueen of Spades by Alexander Pushkin is a Russian short story with supernatural elements. Or is it merely fevered imagination? The story revolves around a German engineer, Hermann who becomes increasingly obsessed with obtaining the secret to winning the high-stake card game, Faro, from the old Countess and in the process experiences paranormal activities. This essay explores whether they were indeed paranormal activities or merely his fevered imagination.

In the story, there are three instances which indicate some form of paranormal activities. The first is when Hermann goes to the Countess' funeral in order to implore her pardon, because he feels responsible for her death; there "the dead woman darted a mocking look at him and winked with one eye"; shocked he falls to the ground. The second instance takes place in Herman's house, after the funeral when he sees the Countess' ghost in his room and she reveals the three winning cards - three, seven, ace. The paranormal activity occurs at the end of the story when Herman loses the card game and "the queen of spades smiled ironically and winked her eye at him."

Though these events seem to be other-worldly and enhance the overall mood of the story, these supernatural activities are no more than Herman's fevered imagination. In the first instance at the funeral, the deceased countess "darted a mocking look at him and winked, making him fall to the ground." This is unlikely to have actually occurred and is more likely imagined by Hermann because he was under tremendous duress, since the previous night, when he threatened the old Countess aggressively by going to her room in the middle of the night, and eventually causing her death. Hermann is a German engineer, which says quite a bit about his character in that he is extremely efficient and calculative. Besides engineers in general are methodical and systematic, they are also highly analytical and logical and can be depicted as obsessive and intensely focused on their work. This can also put a huge amount of stress on the person. The accidental death of the countess takes a toll on Hermann, who is not a killer, and his well thought out "logical" plan goes awry. This derailment of his plan alters his mental state and puts him under tremendous pressure, similar to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The latter is known to create hallucinations for people who are under tremendous stress; as a result of this, Hermann hallucinates the dead Countess winking at him.

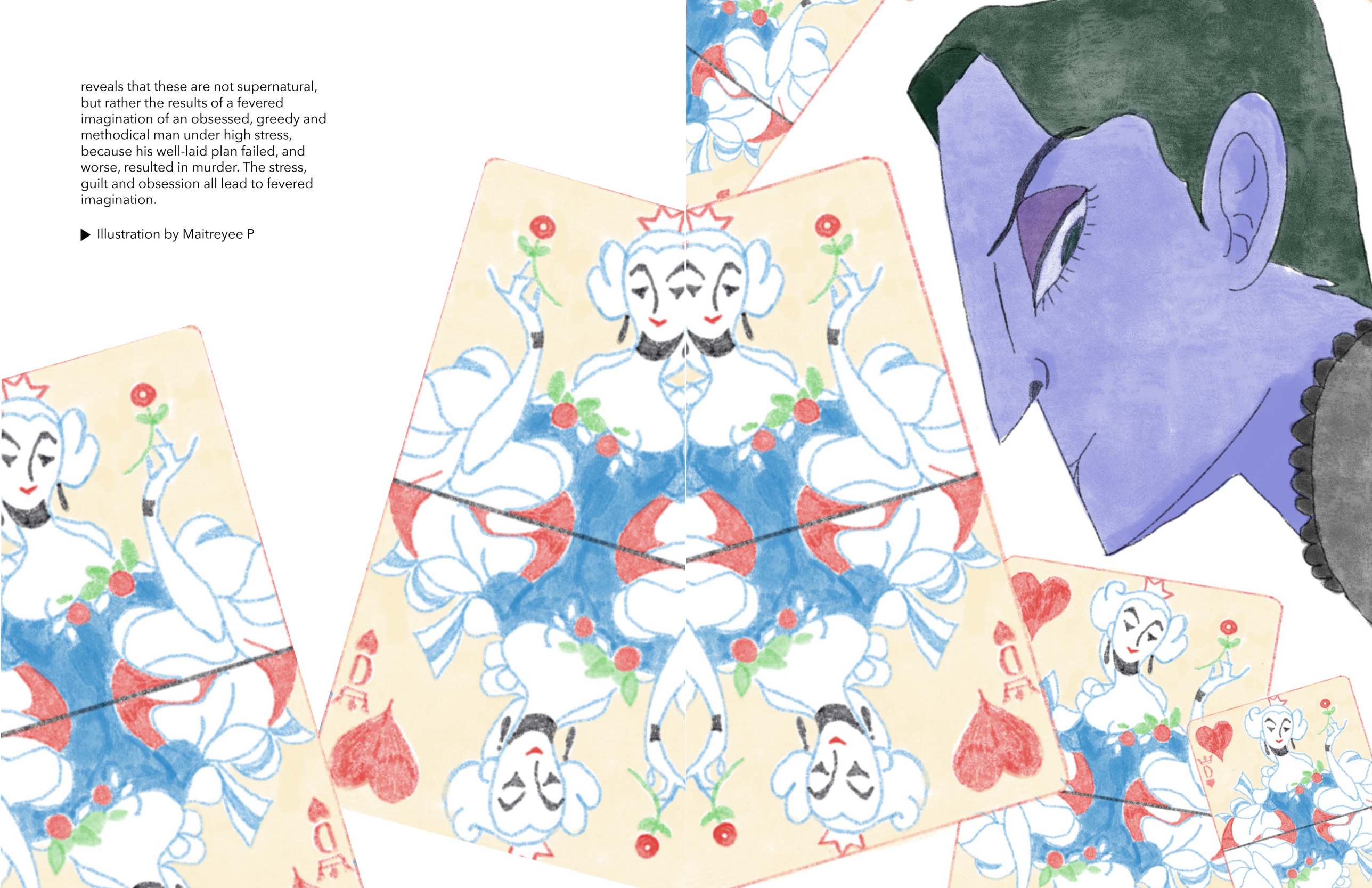
After the obsequies, "during the whole of that day, Hermann was strangely excited," and he resorted to "drinking a great deal of wine," which was "contrary to his usual custom," and by doing so he hoped to deaden "his inward agitation." "But the wine only served to excite his imagination," and when he returned home, he fell into a deep sleep. He awoke at quarter to three and right after he saw someone looking at him from the street and subsequently "a woman dressed in white entered the room," and she revealed to Hermann the secret cards. Some may believe that the ghost did truly appear, but it is important to note the period in which Hermann awakes. The time between 3:00 am and 4:00 am, in folklore is considered as the witching hour --- a time of night that is associated with supernatural events. Alexander Pushkin could have only chosen this period of time to make us believe in the supernatural, however the ghost can be proved as a hallucination or vision and not a paranormal experience because of all the stress drinking that led up to this event. Hermann was heavily under the influence of alcohol, and under pressure he had drunk more than usual. And, it is scientifically proven that people who aren't used to drinking alcohol are known to create auditory and visual hallucinations. Furthermore, it is described that Hermann "rose up and entered the next room" he then "returned to his room, lit his candle, and wrote down all the details of his vision." But normally, when someone comes in contact with a paranormal experience or a ghost, they probably would have a strong reaction – screaming, fainting, or crying. But Hermann remained calm and poised and went about his way, recording the incident. This once again proves that it is not quite possible for it to be paranormal. Another factor, which could serve as proof is the lack of sleep Hermann got since the death, or rather the killing of the Countess. Furthermore, Hermann still wanted the secret winning cards. This too impacted his mental stability, which could've led to the hallucinations of the ghost, rather than the ghost making an appearance.

In the last instance of the paranormal, at the end of the story, Herman is increasingly obsessed. "One thought alone occupied his whole mind - to make a profitable use of the secret which he had purchased so dearly." Everything he thought about, everything he saw and everything he spoke of led to only three, seven, ace. Towards the end of the story when Hermann plays Faro in the morning, he wins a great deal of money. However, his obsession and greed take over and he goes to play once again in the evening. During this high-stake game, he plays the cards that were revealed to him. And he loses everything. And "at that moment it seems to him that the queen of spades smiled ironically and winked her eye at him." Did the countess lie to him or did he play the wrong cards? We don't know. But one thing is sure that all the months leading up to this led him to complete madness. And that is what made him think that the card winked at him.

Pushkin uses the paranormal scenes to enhance the mood of the story and also raise confusion in the reader's mind. Did the ghost actually come and reveal the secret? Did the dead old lady or the queen from the deck of cards really wink at him? While these elements are exciting in the story, a close reading

reveals that these are not supernatural, but rather the results of a fevered imagination of an obsessed, greedy and methodical man under high stress, because his well-laid plan failed, and worse, resulted in murder. The stress, guilt and obsession all lead to fevered imagination.

▶ Illustration by Maitreyee P



Promo

Surya-Savitri D | E5

The moon shone palely in the night sky, and Elsa realized it had started to snow. The cold made her tremble more than she already was and suddenly, as she clung to the tree her eyes brimmed over with tears. The millions of thoughts and questions that came and went were like uncontrollable waves in a sea of violent currents and whirlpools. Every time they appeared, she felt like she had been plunged under the surface, into the choking silence of the ocean. She was alone, fearful, unable to understand what was happening, and each time a new thought engulfed her she was pushed farther down. She toppled nauseous, settled herself on the hard stone path beneath the tree and hugged her knees, seeking the warmth of her coat. Her watery eyes finally overflowed and she sobbed into her sleeve. Each tear that left her beautiful brown eyes turned to ice as soon as it felt the absence of the warmly flushed skin it had escaped from.

Then everything became still. She felt nothing, all emotion gone, and heard only a dim ringing that seemed to resonate from within her very being. Slowly the shapes around her blurred, like a pane a frosted glass had been passed over her eyes. The shapes kept merging together, getting blurrier and blurrier until she could only distinguish a blank gray slate. The next moment, she was falling. As her limp body descended into an unknown void, it got darker, darker and darker still. In the end it was all black. She had lost her sense of feeling to such an extent that she barely realized when she had stopped falling. Only a slow throbbing pain rising in her chest made her realize that she had reached the bottom of the chasm. Her eyes were pried open by the little voice in her mind:

Where am I? Where am I? But eyes open or not, she saw the same thing. Darkness.
This is an extract from a short story whose release date is 1st January 2025

Elsa, a fourteen year old girl who has suffered the untimely death of her twin sister and has cut herself off from the world, must fight her way through the shadows of depression that have been thrust upon her. As Elsa struggles to cope with the loss, and tries to make her peace with her sister's passing, a young girl full of innocence appears in Elsa's life, and endeavors to help her rediscover joy. Will Elsa succeed in becoming herself again? Or will she sink even deeper and lose herself completely? I don't know… but I fear if we don't do something soon, she might …. You know…. Give up."

The Taxi

Ananya R | E5

It was a cold Thursday night and Robert had just come out of his office. He took out his phone and checked the time - it was 9:06. He put his phone back in his pocket and started walking briskly towards the nearby grocery store, all the while removing a small piece of paper on which his wife had written what he had to buy. As Robert entered the store, he noticed that there were only two people in the shop apart from the cashier. He quickly took a basket and started looking for all the things he had to buy. By the time he had reached the cashier, his stomach had rumbled thrice. His last meal had been at 4 and now he was hungry. “That will be 20 dollars, sir,” said the cashier pleasantly. Robert took out the money and handed it to him.He picked up his grocery bag and marched out quickly. He had to quickly find a cab. He put his hand out when he saw the distant headlights of a coming car, but the car did not stop. Robert changed hands and put the other hand up. The grocery bag was heavy. The next car that came did not stop either. This annoyed Robert. Here he was, hungry and cold, with no way to get home. He checked the time again - 9:27. His wife would be waiting for him. He put his phone back in his pocket and stuck out his hand desperately. The third taxi was the charm and finally stopped. Robert quickly said the memorized address to the driver and got into the car. The taxi took off immediately.

Once Robert had comfortably settled down in the car, he saw that a glass screen separated him from the driver. He found it unusual but decided to say nothing about it. At least not until he realized that the driver had taken the wrong turn. Robert tapped on the glass and said that they had missed the turn, but the driver paid him no attention. Instead, he only increased the speed of the car, forcing Robert to fall back into his seat. The taxi finally stopped at a police station. Robert quickly got out with his grocery bag and before he could shout or even pay the driver, the taxi had already taken off.Robert walked into the police station, totally bewildered at what was happening. He told the policeman, at the register, his name and address. He didn’t know why he was doing it. Something compelled him to.

The policeman escorted him to his crying children. Robert was even more bewildered. His children ran to him and hugged him. But the policeman in the corner took out his gun and shot him(where?).Robert falls out of his office chair. He quickly gets up, dazed. He rubs his eyes and looks at the clock - 9:06. He then realizes that he had a strange dream, but that does not bother him as such. He puts his coat on and makes his way out of the office. He takes his wife’s grocery list out and makes his way to the nearby grocery shop. He buys everything and waits for the taxi. The taxi stops and Robert gets in. He does not notice that the taxi has a glass screen separating him from the driver.



▲ Illustration by Adya R

The Cloak

Rayih | K3

Another murder was reported. This was the third time in the week. A town that was once the heart of virtuous anecdotes had now been taken over by evil. Suddenly there were too many deaths taking place, it was like an epidemic that broke free, an epidemic of bad luck.

The culprit was a fine one. He was excellent at his job. He would take the life out of people as swiftly as an arrow. Nobody had ever witnessed any of the murders taking place. Most of the crime scenes were at home or they were either in secluded areas of the town. Yet nobody had figured out his identity. The cops were on it for months but all of their time had simply gone in vain. His victims had no connection whatsoever, and when you looked at their lifeless faces, they were at peace. It was as if, their time had arrived. The crime scenes never revealed any pieces of evidence of the killer. The faceless man left no trace behind except for this one thing that was common in every one of his crime scenes: a long black cloak.

The news of a serial killer on loose was put on emphasis again. People indeed believed that the town was cursed. Amongst these people lived families, children, and old people. But none of this made a difference to the killer. Nobody knew the thought process behind his choice of victims. Sometimes it didn't even make sense. By now, the people of this town began to get used to the fear under which they were living.

Two weeks later, the police announced that according to their investigation they might have a lead and the killer might strike again on Wednesday. This information was in every newspaper and people had to prepare themselves for something they had no idea about-- a completely unknown phenomenon. They had no other choice, they had to think of all the possible ways to beat the killer in his atrocious acts this time. A little boy, aged thirteen came up with a brilliant idea to protect himself. He thought that he had found the way to escape the devil. He walked confidently around town with his head held up high and a beaming face while the rest of the inhabitants were waiting for the act to happen again.

It was ten past twelve o'clock on a rainy Wednesday afternoon. The railway station was crowded with passengers rushing in and out of the trains. The platform looked nothing less than a busy flea market. Amidst all of that hustle and bustle, on an empty bench was seated a peculiar-looking man in a long black cloak.

He was nothing like the rest of the passengers who were solely busy with their own travels. He was tall and had a relaxed posture with not a single expression on his face. He was sitting on



▲ Illustration by Adya R

the bench for what seemed like 1hours and the passing time made no difference to him. He seemed as though his mind was a dark empty space.

A few more hours passed and it had stopped raining. The sky was clearer and people were no longer carrying any umbrellas. New trains reached the platform and some of the faces of the old passengers were also slowly beginning to fade.

Each passing minute of the day, the platform looked different from the inside. The lighting inside the station kept changing its shade with the sunset taking place. There was nothing constant to be seen, except for the man on the bench. There was not a single movement to be seen in his body, he was seated still just like a perfect statue.

Nobody could tell why he was there. It was difficult to decipher his intentions as he sat immobile and at rest with his lonely presence. Still not a movement. What was he doing there? Unbothered by the constant noise and movement all around him, he sat there in silence with a certainty on his face, waiting for an event to unfold. But it had been so long and nobody had approached him. What looked even more fascinating was the patience he carried throughout his posture, as if he had done this before.

A little while later, the station seemed quieter as if a scene from a play had come to an end. But in no time, there were waves of passengers filling up the platform all over again. So many people, mostly strangers, were all at the same place, at the same time. All of them walking in different directions, towards different trains. It seemed as though the play had resumed again.

A little boy in a yellow shirt was also seen walking around the station. He had no business being there. But this was his plan to escape the killer from potentially killing him. He was right at the centre of the platform and his brilliant plan was to use the swarming crowd around him as a protective cloak. He felt as though he had thrown a challenge to the killer, which he was certain of winning. Now the child had nothing to worry about. All he had to do was wait for the day to end and he would survive.

The station had merging sounds of children's waves of laughter and crying. The sound of adult passengers chattering away was the only noise filling up any remaining silences. All of it seemed like a regular phenomenon to occur at a railway station. It indeed was an ordinary day with ordinary passengers going through everyday life. Everything seemed so perfectly normal. Then there was a fraction of silence before a collective scream that broke out in growing ripples. People started running around in distress. A gunshot was heard.

The platform had turned into an escape room. Everybody was running for their life. At the same time, running away from something in particular. Not a 2 single person on that platform cared enough to find out about the imposter. The sight was too painful to watch, nobody had stopped to help the child who was lying on the floor, with his yellow shirt that slowly turned red.

A sound was approaching from afar, sirens that were heard from a distance, gradually became louder. The station was clear now, except for the child's body that laid there motionless.

At last, the man in the long black cloak stood up, picked up his scythe, and walked towards the corpse. The cops rushed in at the scene, as the tall man and the child walked away into the shadows holding hands.

A black cloak was found lying on the empty bench.

Ophelia Grey

03

POETRY

Sweet Tyranny
The Storm
Red
Wind Chimes
Between The Covers

Sweet Tyranny

Aryaman A | E5

When Love corrodes the hearts of men,
Nothing stands in her way,
She haunts the man in his dreams,
At his life, she eats away.

With her cape of hope and joy,
She steals man's innocence,
Never does she fail in her ploy,
To kill all effervescence.

Men give her forms pristine and fair,
Embellishing her, yet,
Love from her godforsaken lair
Mocks at man, her puppet.

A friend is now an enemy,
Shot by love's poison dart
All happiness ceases to be
Sorrow engulfs the heart.

The aim of life that once was clear,
Fades into a misty haze,
The mind, body and soul so dear,
Set this cherished dream ablaze.

They turn toward his feeble hope,
Fading, besotted, he stands
And if he should succeed or not,
Love the impossible demands.

She asks of him all things he loves,
She robs from him herself,
She turns him 'to a smitten fool,
Once a god, he becomes an elf.

Over things he once held command,
She casts a translucent veil,
And tears them all away from him
While he smiles, ever dumb and pale.

Man may rejoice if he be caught
Forever in her charming snare,
Then nought but death can wring him out
Of this labyrinth dark and fair.

But if he sees the iron claws
Clutching his very nail and hair,
He loses all his earthly wealth,
With only some wisdom to spare.

Men seek Love with their mortal hands,
That seeps away like water in sunburnt sands.
The ignorant man says he is lovelorn,
The wise men know that Love is a thorn.

And yet Love is the very ladder
That the men of yore seized
To ascend those distant heavens
That, mortal men think, have ceased.

Only when this tyrant is subdued,
And turned toward omnipotent God,
That her true puissance is unleashed
To adorn this sordid earth.



▶ Illustration by Anahita S



Illustration by Adya R

RED

Dyuman M | E3

Red is the sun flaring day and night,
Red the firewood which you ignite,
Red, blood of warriors, who battle with might,
Red, tender love, a mother's kiss to sleep tight.

Red are the sunsets and every sunrise,
Painting their fiery glow across the skies,
Red is a chilli, overflowing with spice,
Red hot the lava, melting ancient ice.

Love can be red, so too revenge and rage,
Our hate that grows red as it festers with age,
Spills red blood of the young in wars nations wage,
Red anguish of a red bird, locked forever in a cage.

Red is the heart when it is broken in two:
Combating falsehood, yearning for what is true.
Red is needing friends when having few,
Red is the devil trying to instigate you-

He mocks you in secret and pierces your being,
And from the divine, he keeps you unseeing.
He means to imprison when you think he is freeing,
With red flame for red pride, red glow of your glee-
ing.

Mother, red is the new dawn when him you defeat.
Red flower am I now, at Thy red-lined feet.

Wind Chimes

Karthik S | E3

The landscape is filled with greenery,

Yet it doesn't heal my misery.

I hope to find my Golden Fleece,

Which shall grant me eternal peace.

I stumble upon an abandoned hut

With all its windows tightly shut.

But my gaze fixes upon a wind chime

And gone was the definition of time.

The tinkle of the chime at twilight,

When the day is turning into night,

The twinkling of the now bright star

Takes me to a land that is quite so far.

The song it creates makes me peaceful

And puts my worries in a bagful.

It makes me want to meet the composer

Of the most relaxing music ever.

▲ Illustration by Maitreyee P

Between the Covers

Maya L G | E1

So, how do I begin
To describe everything
About a little book?
Well, come on in, take a look!

Every book starts with a cover
Each one different from another
Be it boring or colourful,
All of them are wonderful!

Let us all dive inside
With the contents as your guide,
You will never get confused
When it is being used!

But let us not stop now,
Just take a quick vow
To continue reading,
Even though it's just the beginning!

And so we start
With our brave hearts
To endure the twists and turns
While we even learn!

The characters leap out
And join us on this route
To teach us everything,
With lots of joy to bring!

So many different types,
Yet all of them I like
From horror to history,
Romance to mystery!

But that is not just it,
There IS another bit!
The part of the mind,
Which we mustn't leave behind!

Everything stays with you,
Helps you through and through
Be it your sadness,
Or even your madness!

The rustle of the pages
Takes you through the stages
The smell of the book
Makes you want to take a look!

And finally, the feeling
Which might send you reeling
Through times happy and sad
But after them, you'll feel glad-

For this beautiful thing
Which is like a wing
Helping you take flight
Towards that wonderful light!



▲ Illustration by Anahita S

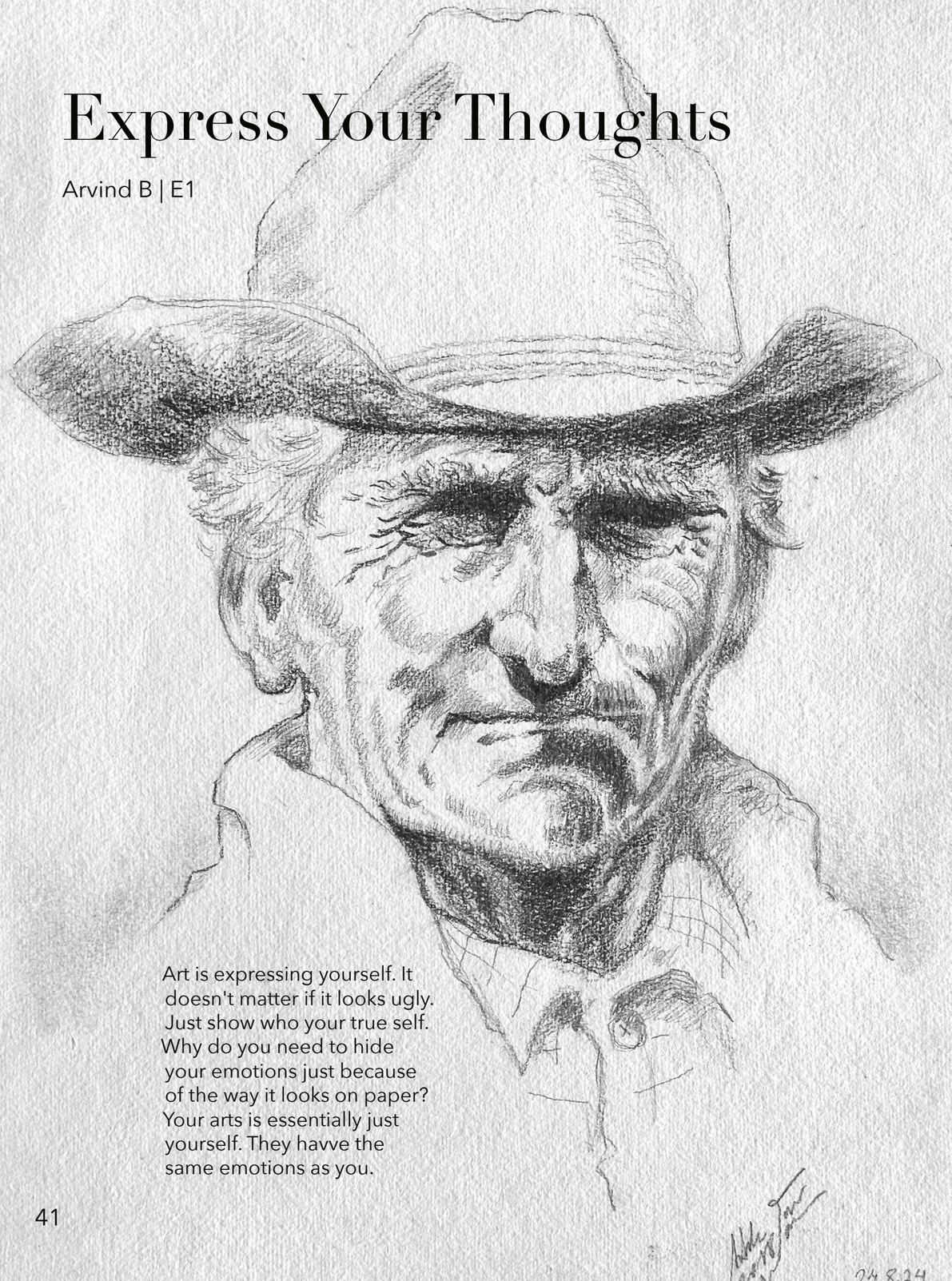
04

ARTWORKS

Express your toughts
The Beauty of Nature
Passing Time

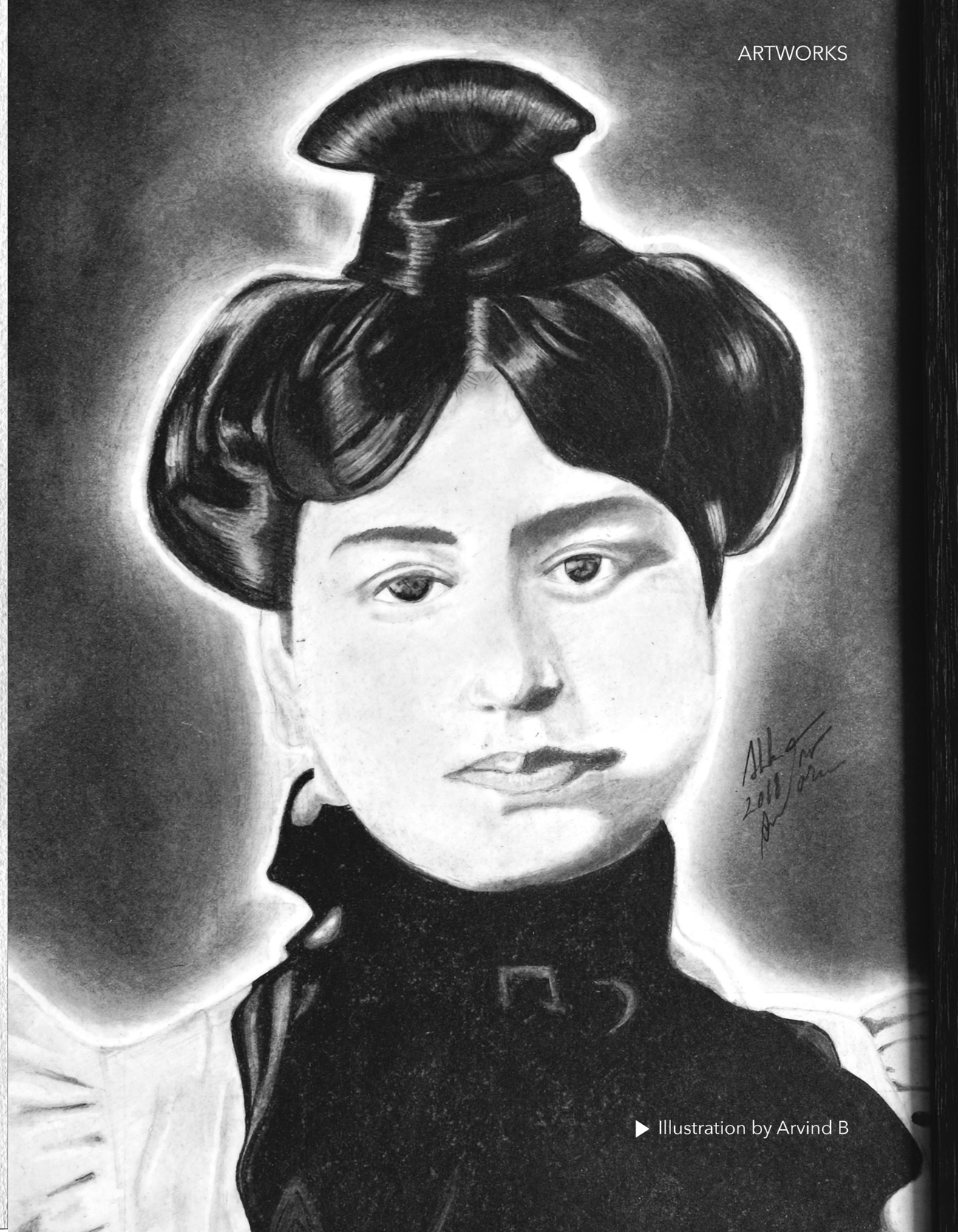
Express Your Thoughts

Arvind B | E1



Art is expressing yourself. It doesn't matter if it looks ugly. Just show who your true self. Why do you need to hide your emotions just because of the way it looks on paper? Your arts is essentially just yourself. They havve the same emotions as you.

24.8.24



▶ Illustration by Arvind B

The Beauty Of Nature

Vaidehi U M | E5

Imagine having grown up with nature, yet never having really observed it. I am guilty of overlooking the beauty that surrounded me ever since I was little. Years later, I chose to look; to observe the common. These disregarded elements of nature revealed to me that it is quite simple to find beauty in the ordinary. It just requires some patience. Here I present to you some of my work that has been done amidst the enchanting flowers and trees of "Maturudyanam".

▶ Illustration by Vaidehi U M


Vardelli
12/3/24

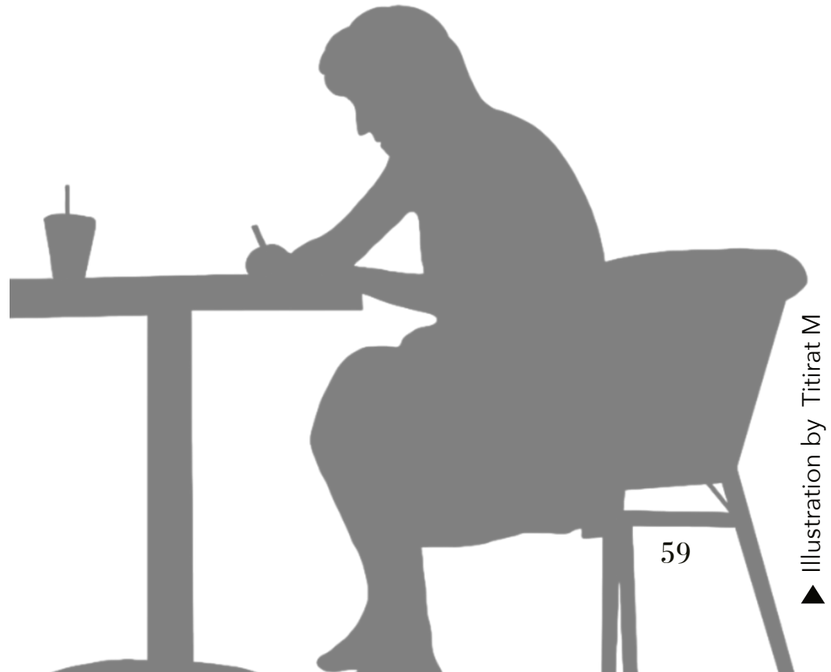


▲ Illustration by Swagat S

Passing Time

Swagat S | E5

These artworks reflect my passion for anime. I enjoy exploring different styles and love drawing my favourite characters, while experimenting with colors and expressions to bring them to life. Each piece represents a moment of creative flow, where I tried to capture the energy and emotions that make anime so compelling. I hope my work can inspire others to explore their own creativity through art and hopefully start watching Anime.



▲ Illustration by Titirat M



▲ Illustration by Swagat S



▲ Illustration by Swagat S



▲ Illustration by Swagat S

▲ Illustration by Swagat S



05

PROJECTS

Five elemens

Organization team

| EAVP 4

Our team consisted of Dhivith, Ananya, Ajit Da, Nidhi, Vishwanath, and myself (Krishiv). Our primary goal throughout the workshop was to organize the daily schedule, coordinating with teachers who needed students at specific times.

We were limited to about one and a half hours of practice time because group typically finished around 7 p.m. Considering that participants would usually refresh themselves, have dinner, and unwind, we allocated about 45 minutes for this cool-down period, including travel time to the theatre. From 7:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., we held rehearsals. Since some students lived far away and cycled home, they wouldn't reach until around 10 p.m., exhausted and without much motivation left for homework unless they had particularly strict teachers—hence the practice time limit. We began each day with a 7 a.m. meeting in the school galleries to organize that day's and the following day's schedules. However, this often led to us scheduling another meeting for the day after. Vishwanath and I, being boarding students, found it difficult to attend these early meetings, leaving us with only 15 minutes for breakfast—but we managed. There were times when the day's challenges were so demanding that we couldn't finalize the schedule for the next day, forcing us to meet in the theatre in the evening to plan for it. Once project week arrived, our role became less necessary since everyone was in the theatre at their designated times. Teachers could simply walk around, select the students they needed, and continue with their work.

As the situation evolved, we adapted by taking on additional responsibilities, even if they weren't strictly required. Over the course of this three-week adventure, we learned how to negotiate effectively. If that failed, we would push our opinions into the schedule. And if the requirements still weren't met, we took the initiative to do what we felt was right—whether it was the correct decision or not.





Set Design

| EAVP 4

I chose set design as my priority because I love working with my hands and have always been fascinated by theater sets. In my view, they set the mood for the entire performance. I thought working on the sets would be easy since I enjoy crafting, but I was wrong. We had less than a month to work on them, all while balancing school, and there were times when I felt like giving up.

It wasn't just about creating a structure that enhanced the performance—it was also about gathering materials, which was the hardest part for me. We hunted for materials from different departments to build the props and set. For the "Earth" element, we had to make ropes from scratch using old bedsheets. We approached 4-5 people to collect 13 bedsheets, which we then cut up and braided. To increase the length, we needed to stitch them together. This led us to visit different departments, asking how to sew and trying to borrow a machine. We talked to several heads and faced rejections, which was a new and challenging experience for me.

Dyeing the ropes was another hurdle. We consulted Habul da to learn how to dye, got the materials from Praful Bhai's department, and needed a place to work. Reba di, from the handmade paper department, kindly let us use the terrace. We experimented with various quantities of dye to achieve the right color. By the time we finished, it hit me that we had just 15 days left to create all the sets for the remaining elements.

Fortunately, we managed to finish the ropes early. There were some errors, but they weren't significant. This allowed the dancers to practice with the ropes, which helped speed things up. Working on the Earth element set was the highlight of the entire month. I learned so much during that time, and working with my friends outside of school hours in the theater felt like pure harmony.

We also collaborated with the lighting team, experimenting with different setups. One of our additional experiments for the Earth element involved using eco-friendly wrapping paper as a backdrop, which turned out to be stunning. This opened my eyes to a new way of using materials and sparked a lot of discovery throughout the set-making process.

Through this experience, I bonded with the set team more and more each day. It was so different from how I saw them in school—they became almost different people when we worked together. This was a kind of self-discovery for me. I realized that my friends had always been there, but I'd never seen them in this light before. That was the most beautiful part of the entire experience—getting to know my friends better through teamwork.


DAIKIN AIR CONDITIONER
INVERTER
DAIKIN
INVERTER
AIR CONDITIONER

Earth Set Design

| EAVP 4

I chose set design as my primary department because I've always been drawn to working with my hands, and whenever I watch a performance, my focus naturally gravitates towards the sets. For me, theater sets are what create the mood and atmosphere, making them an essential part of any performance.

Initially, I thought working on sets wouldn't be too difficult since I enjoy crafting, but I quickly realized how wrong I was. Time was a constant challenge—we had less than a month to complete the sets, all while managing school responsibilities. At one point, I even considered giving up because the task wasn't just about building a structure to enhance the performance; it also involved gathering the right materials, which turned out to be the hardest part.

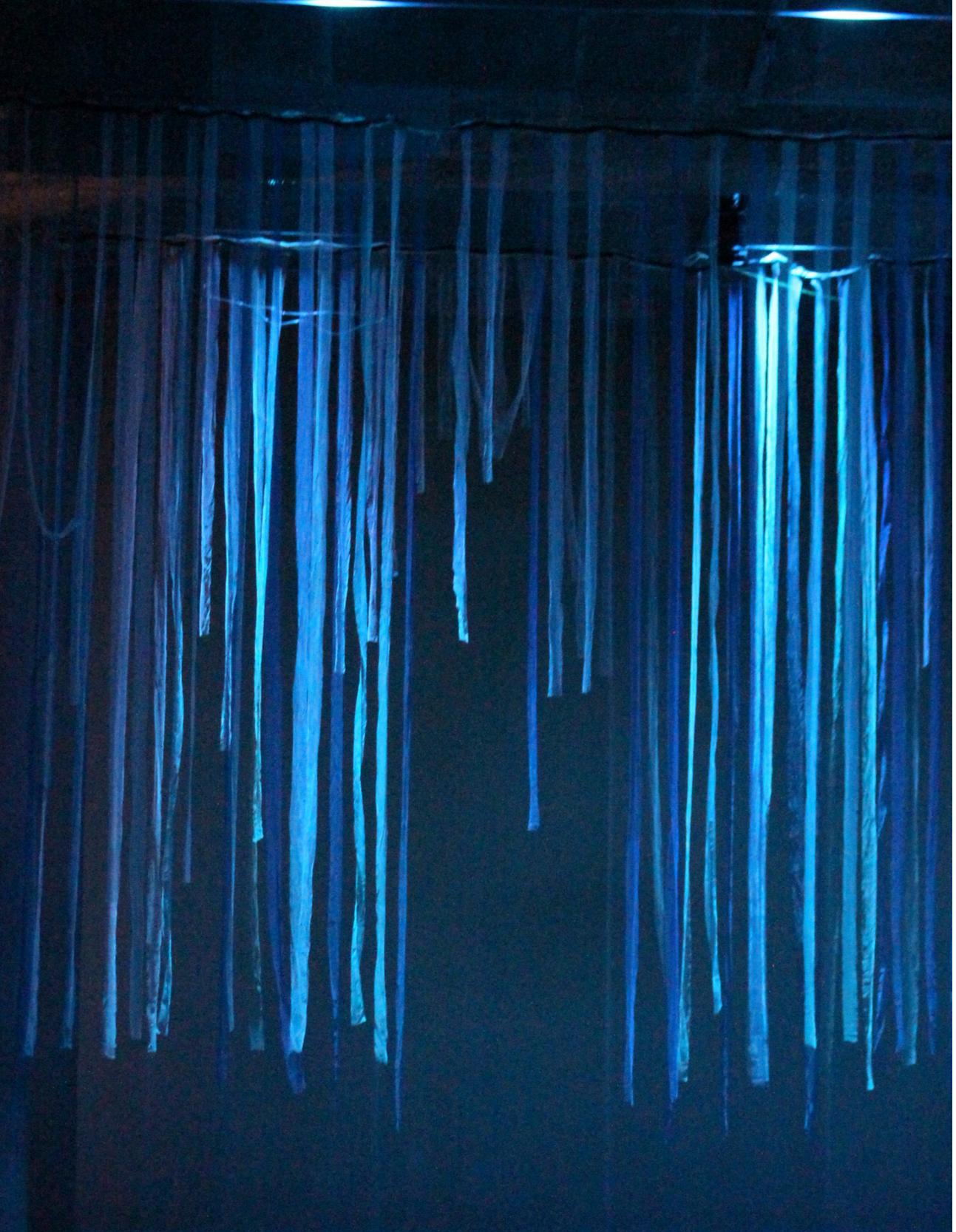
We spent a lot of time hunting for materials from different departments to create props and sets. For the Earth element, we had to make ropes from scratch using old bedsheets. We approached around four or five people just to collect 13 old bedsheets, which we then cut into strips and braided together. To extend the length of the ropes, we had to sew the braids together, but we didn't have a sewing machine. So, we visited different departments, asking for help and even learning how to sew, though we faced several rejections along the way.

Talking to so many people for assistance was a new and challenging experience for me. It was something I had never done before, and navigating those situations pushed me out of my comfort zone.

To achieve the right color for the ropes, we needed to dye them. We sought advice from Habul da on the dyeing process and collected the materials from Praful Bhai's department. However, we also needed a suitable place for dyeing. After talking to several people, Reba di from the handmade paper department kindly offered us space on the terrace. We experimented with different quantities of dye until we finally got it right. By the time we finished dyeing, it hit me that we only had 15 days left to create the rest of the sets for the other elements. Thankfully, we completed the ropes earlier than expected, which allowed the dancers to practice with them. Although there were some minor errors, they weren't significant enough to slow us down. Working on the Earth set was the highlight of the entire month for me. I learned so much during that process, and spending time with my friends outside of school hours in the theater felt harmonious. It was one of the best experiences I've had so far. While we were creating the props, we also saw the lighting team experimenting with the Earth element. We came up with a second set for Earth, this time using eco-friendly wrapping paper for the background. It was beautiful, and it opened my eyes to new ways of working with materials. The whole process was filled with discovery.

Through working with the set design team, I bonded with my teammates in ways I hadn't expected. It was so different from how I knew them in school. When we worked together, I saw a different side of them—people I had known for a long time suddenly became more familiar to me in a new and deeper way. I'd call it a journey of self-discovery. They were always there, but I had never seen them as I did while we were working together. That, for me, was the most beautiful part of the whole experience—getting to know more about my friends through teamwork.





Lighting

| EAVP 4

Lighting was completely new to me, so I thought, why not give it a shot? Vinay da gave us a brief introduction to lighting—covering direction, focus, color, density, and more—but initially, it didn't catch my interest. Still, I trusted the process, and I'm glad I did because I wasn't disappointed.

As the days went on, Vinay da demonstrated how he controls the light projection from the cabin onto the cyclorama. That's when I truly became fascinated. I started visiting the theater almost every night to discuss lighting with him and the rest of the team. I appreciated how open Vinay da was to suggestions and ideas, which really helped us harmonize as a team. As a result, I began talking more and growing closer to my classmates.

I took control of the manual lights for a while, and I quickly realized that they weren't as easy to handle as I had imagined! It took me quite some time to smoothly move them around, but focusing the light remained a challenge. I finally managed to get the focus right—just one day before the program!

I'm deeply grateful to Vinay da for his patience and understanding. These few weeks have been some of the best of my life. I truly enjoyed this entire journey. For me, it wasn't just about the program; it was a journey of self-discovery.

My character has changed so much! I feel more confident, more connected to my classmates and teachers—it feels like a family now. Honestly, I've never felt this free to just be myself in front of everyone before. There are no words that can fully capture this experience; it's something that has to be felt.

While I'm thrilled the program went well, there's also a small part of me that feels sad because I'll no longer wake up thinking, "Yes! Theater!" I'll miss the practices, the teamwork, and even Priyanka di's calls for "silence!"

I'm already looking forward to one more program before November 1st!

Costumes

| EAVP 4

Costumes are a vital part of the visual impact in a stage performance. They not only enhance but also personify the themes we aim to convey. Let us, the costume team, take you through the process of creating and styling costumes for all the participants in our Five Elements production.

Our Creative Process

We began by brainstorming each element—Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Ether—and discussing how the costumes could represent them through color, texture, shape, and size. Our goal was to embody the strength of Earth, the fluidity of Water, the lightness of Air, and the power and brightness of Fire in our designs.

Earth: We wanted to reflect the grounding force of Earth, so we cut up and wove earth-toned t-shirts. This texture and muted color palette captured the strength and rawness of the element.

Water: For Water, we envisioned flow and elegance. We repurposed blue wrap-around skirts from a previous performance in December 2018 and used them as tops, creating a fluid and graceful movement that represented the essence of water.



Fire: The intensity and warmth of Fire were expressed using draped orange and red dupattas, each paired with a gold dupatta to signify its radiant brightness. The layering of these fiery colors created a striking visual effect.

Air: Air required minimalism but with a sense of movement. We draped white dupattas to create a light, flowing effect, evoking the gentle movement of wind. The simplicity in design captured the airy and weightless nature of this element.

Ether: Ether, being the most abstract element, was represented through a black base. Black wrap-around skirts were used as tops, with white t-shirts for the balloon performers, allowing the element to maintain a sense of mystery and balance.

Our Wardrobe Experience

Working with the wardrobe team for Project Week was a unique and fantastic experience. We loved exploring various fabrics and textures, and while some of us had done similar work before, for many it was a first-time experience. The team dynamics taught us to be more open-minded and to listen to each other's ideas. Since we were pressed for time, we had to come up with efficient designs that still looked visually appealing.

It was quite challenging at times—especially when we had to leave out some great ideas due to time constraints—but seeing the finished product made us all proud. The process of ideation was sometimes long and tiring, but experimenting with different fabrics and techniques was also a lot of fun. We appreciated that Priyanka di gave us time to explore our ideas before finalizing the costumes, as it allowed us to gain clarity on what worked best. Many new ideas emerged during these experimental phases.



One day, we sought help from Uttama di, who taught us an important lesson: what might look shabby or underwhelming up close often enhances the stage performance and creates a magical effect under the spotlight. This realization that theater requires exaggeration opened our eyes to the nuances of costume design for the stage.

Key Takeaways

This experience taught us invaluable lessons—not just about fashion design, but also about teamwork, creativity, and translating ideas into concrete, visual representations. For anyone interested in fashion design, or even those who simply enjoy working with fabrics, this experience is highly recommended. It enhances your ability to conceptualize, execute, and refine your ideas in a way that brings your vision to life.

These are the combined takeaways of our team from this wonderful journey with the wardrobe department.

A Fiery Performance

Sahana | EAVP 4



Our recent school performance centred around the theme of the five elements, and we were representing

Fire" through live music. Mrityunjay da who conducted the performance, had a clear vision of bringing the element of fire to life. The music was not rhythmic and melodic in the traditional sense; instead, it was a carefully choreographed sequence of major chords. Each musician had their part to play, but we were all guided by the hand gestures of our conductor Mrityunjay da.The most difficult challenge we faced throughout the performance was the fact that we could barely see our conductor. We were quite dependent on him since the chords had to be struck according to his timing and hand movement. The whole point was to have Mrityunjay da hidden behind the massive central fire structure with sound reactive lights to make the fire seem as real as possible, and us sitting around it (as if making a sacrifice to the fire) whilst playing our instruments, live. Another challenge that was faced by Shazneen and Shriya was mastering the Linnstrument, an electronic, touch-sensitive board, unlike any instrument they had played before. It was demanding but added an intriguing layer to our performance We also incorporated a Sitar play by Gauransh, blending in its classical tones with the electronic sounds, which surprisingly worked beautifully once we hit the stage. We also had an electric guitar emulsified in this piece. The electric guitar was not played in the way you imagine it, it was a very different and exciting experience for Sahana as she probably wouldn't have known about it if it weren't for this performance. You have to lay the guitar on your lap and slide a rounded and long piece of metal across it to hit the right notes. (Un)fortunately, we didn't have the professional tool for it, so we had to do some “jugaad”. At first, Sahana used Mrityunjay da's iPhone as the slider, but later we found a broken door handle that worked perfectly (after some practice) and that was what was finally used. It was difficult to hit all the strings at once and hit the right notes but it worked out! The MIDI keyboard was played by Anaaya. It added a magical and grounded atmosphere throughout the entire piece. Arvind provided us with the small but the most important details of the performance. He spent a lot of time mastering ringing the bell fast (in all our ears) and getting





the timings right of when he should play what. Last but not least, Diva blessed us with her angelic voice that recited the shlokas of the Vedas.

We had multiple rehearsals, some perfect and some not so much. But what we all felt on the final day was a sense of unity and pride. It felt as though all the work we did, finally came down to these crucial five minutes of a strange kind of perfection. We all were so completely indulged in it. We had multiple things to do before and after the music performance but while we were doing our bit together, it was like nothing else mattered. We would like to generously thank our teacher, conductor, composer (and friend) Mrityunjay da without whom this would not have been possible. We would also like to thank the sound team who helped us set up and set down everything within the span of a few minutes. Thank you to everyone who was a part in any way of the Fire performance. The feelings will linger on for a long time.

Recitation

| EAVP 4

This is a reflection on my journey in putting together the '5 Elements' performance.

Priyanka di, Vinay da, and Mrityunjay da organized a workshop that introduced us to various aspects of performing arts, sharing their own experiences as students. When the idea of putting on a performance was first proposed, I wasn't particularly drawn to it. The prospect of performing in any form had always scared me—it was far outside my comfort zone. Now that I reflect on it, I realize that my indifference stemmed from past unpleasant experiences with similar programs.

Fortunately, during the course of these two months, all my preconceived notions were shattered. The performance became an immersive experience, and as I look back on it now, I can honestly say I thoroughly enjoyed myself and was fully invested in everything I took part in.

In June, a sheet was put up on our class board, and we were asked to choose roles in different aspects of performing arts. I signed up for both organization and stage management, which was unusual for me. I had never willingly taken charge of anything before, but I decided to take on the challenge.I remember sitting restlessly in the school galleries, questioning whether I had made the right choice—but it was too late to back out. During our first meeting, I was in silent awe of Ajit da, who planned everything so systematically. However, after a few meetings, I began to get the hang of things and felt like this was something I was meant to do. Despite my lack of prior experience, I believe I contributed to the team as the weeks went by.

As part of the organization team, our job was to coordinate the daily requirements for movement, lighting, audio, sets, costumes, music, and poetry for the venue. We had to ensure that the students and their needs were taken care of, all while working around other ongoing programs. We often had to negotiate and find ways to accommodate everyone's needs. After considering every possibility, we would finally put up the schedule for the day. The entire team was ready to work long hours, often with just 15-30 minute breaks for changing and dinner. Our meetings were held every other day at 7 a.m. to plan for that day and the next. Initially, Ajit da guided us through the process, but soon, Dhivith and Ananya took charge and did an excellent job. After a while, Krishiv, Vishwanath, and I took over, though the others continued to

double-check our work to ensure everything ran smoothly. Over time, we functioned like a well-oiled machine. Everyone was encouraged to express their opinions, and we respected each other's suggestions. With Ajit da as the backbone, we never experienced any internal conflicts, and we bonded well as a team.

Surprisingly, organization turned out to be more fun than I expected, and it provided a platform for personal growth and development. Organization is a creative process that requires initiative and resourcefulness. Initially, we planned to transition from organization to stage management, but we soon realized that stage management required individuals solely dedicated to it.

In addition to organization, I was introduced to poetry recitals in E.3, which I immediately fell in love with. Along with Unmesha and Shreemayi, I was chosen to perform poetry that would set the stage for portraying the five elements. Our poetry wove a narrative that connected the personal to the abstract. Our guides, Udit da and Kruti di, encouraged us to write our own lines of poetry and gladly included them in the final script. We spent over two weeks brainstorming ideas for each element, and once we had mind-mapped everything, we began manifesting those ideas into reality. At first, we had an abundance of ideas, as the possibilities for a theme like this are endless. With time constraints, we had to sift through them and prioritize the ones that were most feasible. We focused our energy on bringing those to life. On the final day, as I approached the foreground, I felt an immense joy—not the nerves I usually feel before a performance. I knew I was living fully in the present moment, and it felt like this was where I was meant to be.

There were times when I wondered if I had taken on too much, as I had also involved myself with set design. At times, it felt overwhelming, but there were also moments when this felt like my everything—as if it was my sole purpose. During those moments, I would step back, collect myself, and refocus on making the most of the experience. Over time, I realized that my abilities were growing, and my plate wasn't full just yet. As the month progressed, momentum built, and our collective dedication and passion came together as we neared the final day. By the end, we emerged transformed by the experience, each of us having undergone our own journey.



▶ Illustration by Titirat M





06

PHOTO ESSAY

A World Through Lego

A World Through Lego

Gautama Aditya | E6

My journey with Lego photography began with a childhood love of storytelling. When I was younger, I was fascinated by the numerous possibilities I had to create my own worlds. Lego sets, with their customizable characters and scenes felt like alternate, improved realities compare to the one I found myself in. I could build any kind of world I wanted and sit back and watch as a relentless battle ensued between Luke Skywalker and some Sandtroopers. Over time I realized that the Lego characters could actually be brought to life by means of photography. Photographing miniature sets allowed me to express my imagination in the real world. I was able to create nearly anything, including from scenes inspired by movies. One picture at a time I'm able to bring all the scenes I have imagined to life.

▲ Photos by Gauama Aditya

▲ Photos by Gauama Aditya



▲ Photos by Gauama Aditya



▲ Photos by Gauama Aditya

Photos by Gauama Aditya



Photos by Gauama Aditya

05

NON FICTION

Padma
Planet-Grown up
A Unifying Moment
Un evenement inuobliable
Chronicles of Souptime

Padma

Sachidananda P | K1

The Symbolism of Lotus in Hinduism

The lotus as known in Sanskrit as Kamala and Padma holds a central position in Hindu mythology, art and literature, symbolising eternity, creation and enlightenment. It is closely associated with deities like Brahma, Vishnu and Lakshmi and it has its representation in ancient texts like the Rig Veda and the Atharva Veda, where the lotus embodies profound spiritual and philosophical concepts.

In Hindu cosmology, the lotus emerges as a symbol of creation, purity and divine manifestation. It is said that a stalk of lotus has been sprouted from the navel of Vishnu, who reclined on his serpent couch, Ananta, amidst the celestial waters. This lotus bore Brahma, the creator, born from its petals which is considered a duplicate manifestation of the goddess Padma, also known as Sri or Lakshmi, herself which indicates the divine origin of life and the universe, as depicted in Vedic hymns and later Hindu scriptures.

In the Gopala-uttaratapini Upanishad, it is depicted that the lotus, emerging from the depths of water, symbolises purity and the cohesive force (sattva) from which the principles of conduct (dharma) and knowledge (jnana) arise. It is often regarded as representing the six transcendent powers (bhaga) associated with divinity (bhagavan).

Since ancient Vedic times, water has been regarded as a manifestation of the divine essence and that is why oceans and rivers are recurrent motifs in Hindu mythology. Pundarika or the lotus growth in primordial waters symbolises the life-sustaining force and spiritual purity. Its emergence from these sacred waters represents the purity of heart and mind, as well as the aspiration for spiritual enlightenment amidst the murky depths of worldly existence.

The goddess Lakshmi holds a revered position in Hindu mythology and has a very close association with the lotus which she is often depicted standing gracefully upon. She symbolises fertility, abundance, and the wealth of the earth's treasures. The earliest literary mention of Lakshmi can be found in the Shri Sukta hymn, a supplement to the Rigveda, where she is hailed by various epithets like "the one possessed of the lotus" (Padmini), "the lotus-coloured (Amar)," and "the lotus-born (Padmasambhava)."

The lotus holds a significant place in Hindu art often serving as a pedestal or kamalasana for divine figures. Initially associated with Brahma and Lakshmi but over time the lotus symbol expanded its significance in Hindu iconography, becoming associated with various divinities which turned out to become a symbol of support for all deities embodying the highest transcendental essence.

The lotus also holds significance due to Vishnu, who presented one thousand lotus buds daily in reverence to Shiva. One day he discovered a missing bud during his prayers, so Vishnu, whose eyes were often compared to lotus buds (padmaksha), replaced it with one of his own eyes.

Throughout the ages, the lotus has occupied a sacred role in Hinduism. Its presence in ancient texts emphasises its enduring significance in spiritual and philosophical discourse embedding profound spiritual truths and serving as a timeless emblem of the highest transcendental essence.



▲ Illustration by Tiirat M

Planet-Grown up!

By a S | E1

Grown-ups are like characters from another planet, where everyone wears clothes of “seriousness”. This language includes phrases like, “ Because I said so,” “You’ll understand when you’re older,” and a mysterious phrase which is “the good old days.” And let’s not forget their love for organizing things! A neat cupboard is a life achievement!

Despite all of this, they can fix anything, even a blank stare into an unhelpful guide. They can always find anything we have lost: Mom’s superpower is finding that misplaced geography notebook every single time! Although sometimes their jokes might be outdated, I love the fact that they are trying to make us smile.

The most amazing thing about grown-ups is their memory. They have this incredible ability to remember their childhood as if it were the most adventurous time ever. “Back in my days, we spent our time climbing trees, not scrolling through phones,” they say with a twinkle in their eyes. It’s very sweet to think that they were once as clueless and as mischievous as we are now.

Maybe, just maybe, when we grow up, we will also be part of the cupboard organizing club, memory-hoarding beings who thrive on coffee and funny conversations about the weather and finally, understand the weird language of: “Grown-Upish.” Maybe we’ll even develop our secret signals like the subtle eyebrow raise, just like Mom does it, or the discreet nod that Dad does while communicating with Mom without saying a word.

Until then, we’ll continue to be the happy 13-year-old children we are, navigating through the world of the Grown-Ups with curiosity and humour.

▲ Illustration by Swaja P



▲ Illustration by Titirat M

A Unfying Moment

Miranandan S C | E5

What does it feel like to witness the history being made right before you? The history of India winning the T20 Cricket World Cup after a massive drought of 17 years. For me, watching the World Cup with the whole school in the playground was an experience that words can not describe.

T20 cricket is a cricket format played within 20 limited overs. It is an international series that several countries play in this format every two years. And India reaching the finals unbeaten was indeed a big moment. Lately, I began watching cricket; in fact, it was the first international cricket series that I watched, which India was part of. And watching India climb over to the top of the table was a coincidence. It is indeed an essential cup for India. I spent time watching every match of India and seeing the progress and its journey toward the finals was thrilling. Right before the semi-finals, there was already some news being spread that India had all the chances of coming to the finals. I was relatively confident about it, and my cricket-enthusiastic friends decided to go to the officials concerned with the projection of films in the playground. We thought it would be great to project the match in the playground IF India came to the finals. We approached Naga, who, too, thought it was a good idea but only agreed to project the first innings as he believed that there wouldn't be many who would stay for such a long time. We, indeed, were disappointed. But we all did anticipate and imagine what sort of a brilliant experience it could deliver if all watched India there in the finals. India's journey towards the finals was compelling to watch. It effortlessly beat all the teams it had played with and reached the Super 8. We witness India's standout performance, beating its two great rivalries, Australia and England, by huge margins. Then comes India to the finals against South Africa, which burningly desires a cup.

It was when two unbeaten teams in the tournament faced each other. I could feel the enthusiasm among the students and the teachers, too.

The day of the finals

It was the day of the long-awaited finals, 29.6.2024. India coming to the finals was like a dream come true. There was some energy at the beginning of the day, but there were questions in our heads, too: Will the cup slip away again, as it did in the ODI 2023? It wouldn't be a piece of cake for India either; they have to face the unbeaten team in the series. It was time for them to pull off something miraculous. One of the incidents that lit up the day's atmosphere wvas when Rohit Sharma mentioned in the post-match interview that Virat Kohli, who performed poorly through the series, had something saved for the finals. The playground was filled

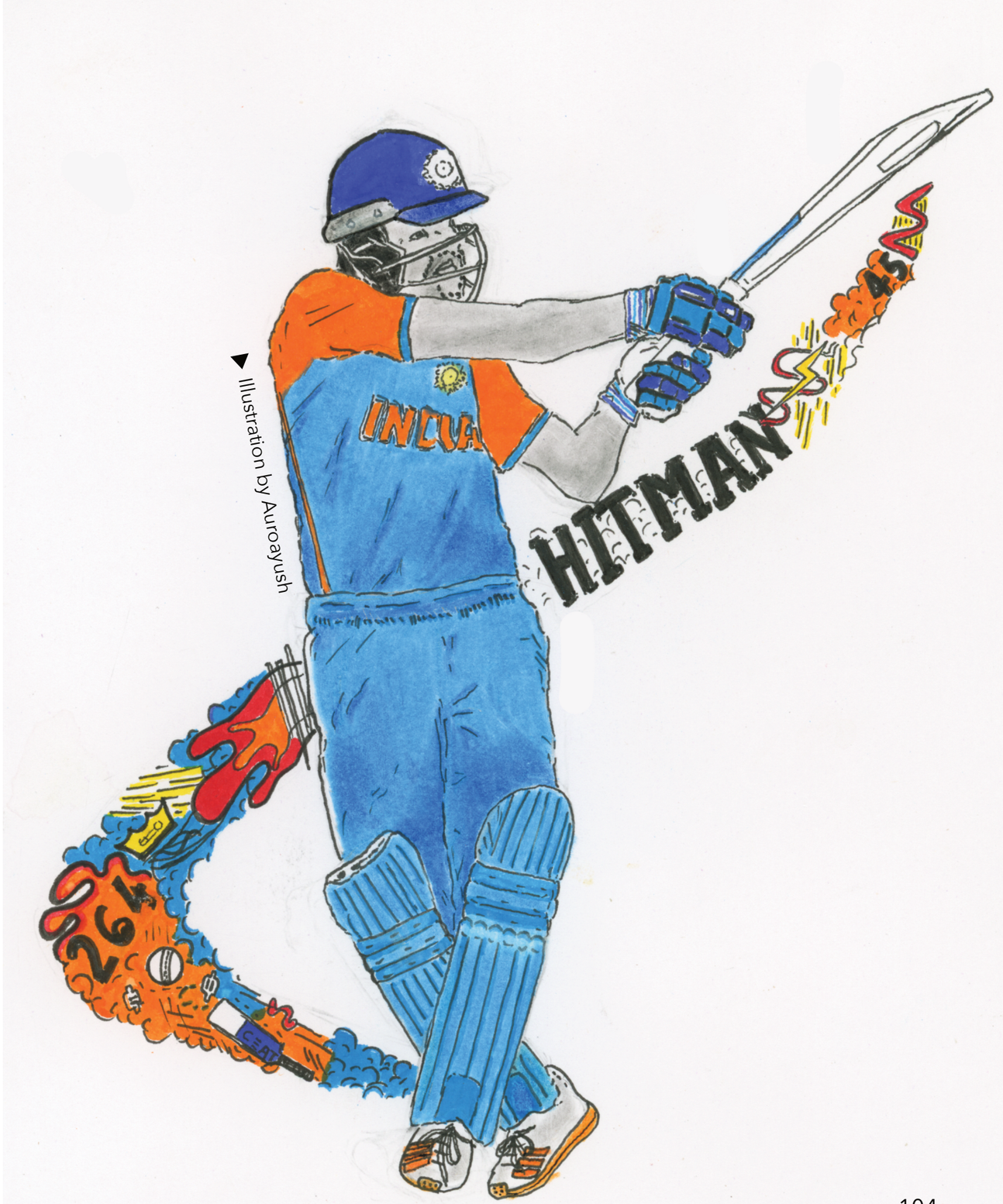


Illustration by Auroayush

with kids carrying Indian flags and some wearing their respective favourite player jerseys. All our fingers were crossed as there was a rain forecast in Pondicherry that night. India bats first, as predicted. Virat Kohli goes big, with a consistent number of boundaries, and makes 76 out of 59 balls. The all-rounder - Axar Patel plays a good knock. The first innings was filled with ups and downs as the batter kept getting out. There were exchanges of high fives on every boundary.

Now, the crowd is silent as they know they must go home to watch the second innings. Along with my friends, I ran up to the projector room to convince Sachi Bhai and Vikas Bhaiya, who were about to pack up. It was not hard to persuade him when we had the whole crowd in the space next to the drinking water area, waiting for the next innings. Their eyes were filled with hope. They didn't want to go home; they knew their experience would be half-baked. They began shouting from below with impatience; it was a crowd of all ages, from flower room kids to old ashramites, passionate to see their country defending. The crowd gave Bhaiya only one option but to show the second half. India puts up a total of 176. No teams chased down these many to win a World Cup.

Then, when Bumrah's ball clipped the bails, the crowd erupted in deafening cheer; at this moment, everybody was waiting to unleash their mania! The opener is knocked out by a perfect outswinger produced on the big day by Bumrah. Then comes the man dreaming of showing his power-hitting skills in the finals, Heinrich Klassen. He was a run-machine; every boundary he hit brought them closer to their target. Some of us shut our eyes and had our fingers crossed. Every boundary he hit brought a worse frown on our faces. It was a growing partnership between David Miller and Klassen. South Africa requires 26 of 24. Then comes Hardik Pandya, who cleans up mighty Klassen's wicket; for a split second, there was an almost eerie silence as everyone registered the wicket; everyone jumped out, fists pumping in the air, some were dancing, while others hugged each other, unable to contain their joy. It was indeed a much-needed wicket for India. The fans return to their grumpy faces as Miller takes on Indian bowlers. It was 16 off 6 balls. All our hopes were shattered. The skipper gives Hardik Pandya the ball—India's final saviour. Miller goes out of the ground with the ball,

And just then...Every eye was glued to the screen, dead silence; we held our breath, hoping for a miracle, our hearts pounding; then Surya Kumar Yadav launched himself towards the ball which was going out of the boundary, plucked it, tossed it up in the air, catches it next to the line. It was as if he caught the cup that slipped away from the Indians. That was about it. It was as if a dam had burst! With the rush of emotions and hysteria, many began to weep. The playground erupted. Cheers, high-fives, and claps filled the ground. Hardik Pandya finishes off in style. It's India! This, perhaps, was the most extended period in which I experienced constant

goosebumps. The victory sank into the ground, and I was filled with a sense of pride. Watching India lift the T20 World Cup was more than just witnessing a sporting achievement. It was something more. Every cheer, every gasp, every hug, every tear, every clap brought us closer. It was a moment of unity.



▲ *Illustration by Auroayush*



▲ Illustration by Auroayush



▲ Illustration by Titirat M

Un Evénement
Inoubliable

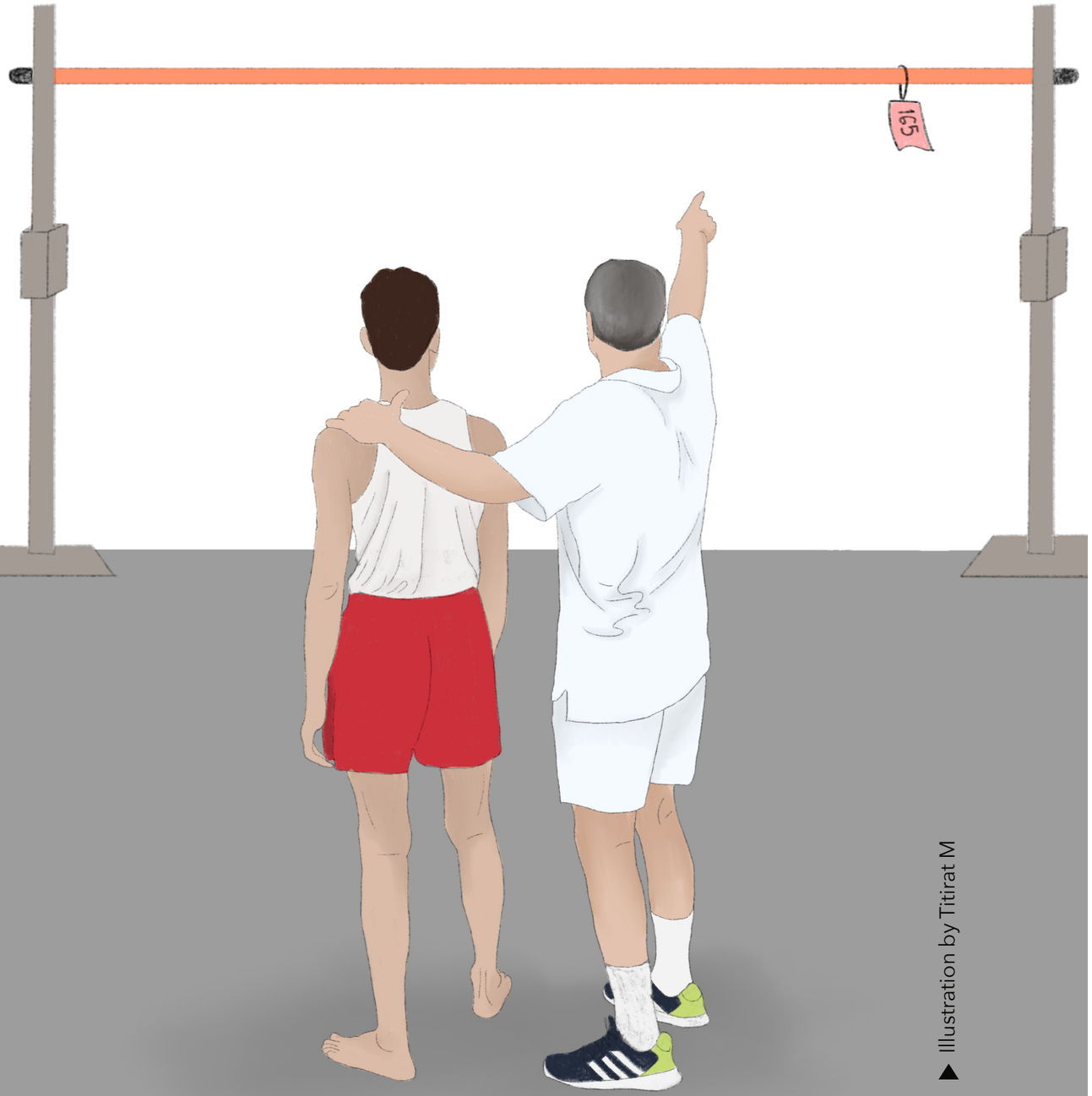
Miranandan S C | E5

C'était le 9 mai 2023, un jour inoubliable où une personne très chère à nous, Swagat, a cassé le record du saut en hauteur.



▲ Illustration by Titirat M

Dès le matin, on pouvait sentir des vibrations annonçant que quelque chose d'extraordinaire allait se passer. Avant de commencer la compétition tout était calme, un sentiment subtil. Autour du terrain, un fort chuchotement se répandait. "Il va établir un record aujourd'hui", murmurait-on dans l'air. Toute l'activité était suspendue, tout le monde était assis dans les galeries. Tous les yeux excités restaient fixés sans cligner. Swagat était l'image même d'une immense concentration. Il était concentré, fixe et confiant comme Arjuna quand il était en train de viser l'œil de l'oiseau.Il était bien échauffé, portant un regard imperturbable. Avant de commencer son saut, je lui ai dit, "Swagat, laisse ta marque dans l'histoire" en tapant sur son épaule. Il m'a offert un sourire humble. Le record a été créé par Mihir da qui était également présent comme un volontaire, il se tenait les mains croisées avec un regard pas très heureux, comme s'il était indifférent. La compétition a commencé, après une longue préparation mentale et physique, c'était le tour de Swagat. Tous les regards étaient fixés sur lui, avec des regards inébranlables.

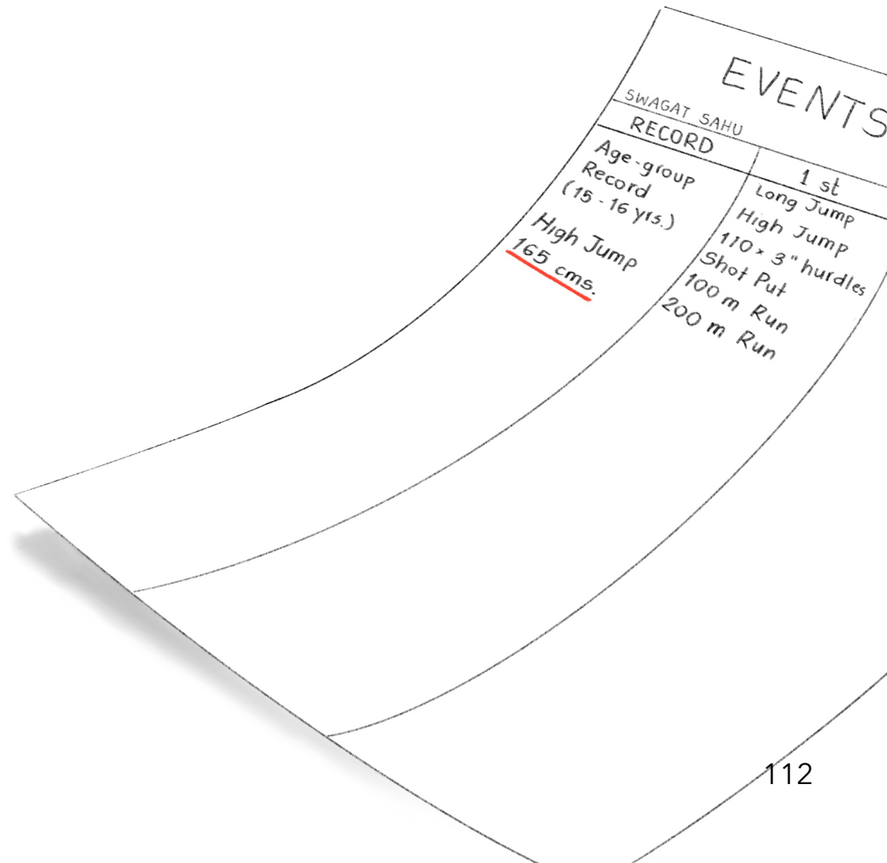


▲ Illustration by Titirat M

Le record a été créé par Mihir da qui était également présent comme un volontaire, il se tenait les mains croisées avec un regard pas très heureux, comme s'il était indifférent. La compétition a commencé, après une longue préparation mentale et physique, c'était le tour de Swagat. Tous les regards étaient fixés sur lui, avec des regards inébranlables. Le record était de 164 cm. Swagat attendait là, debout devant la corde à une hauteur de 165 cm. Nous sommes tous occupés à prier pour notre héros, dans un silence assourdissant.

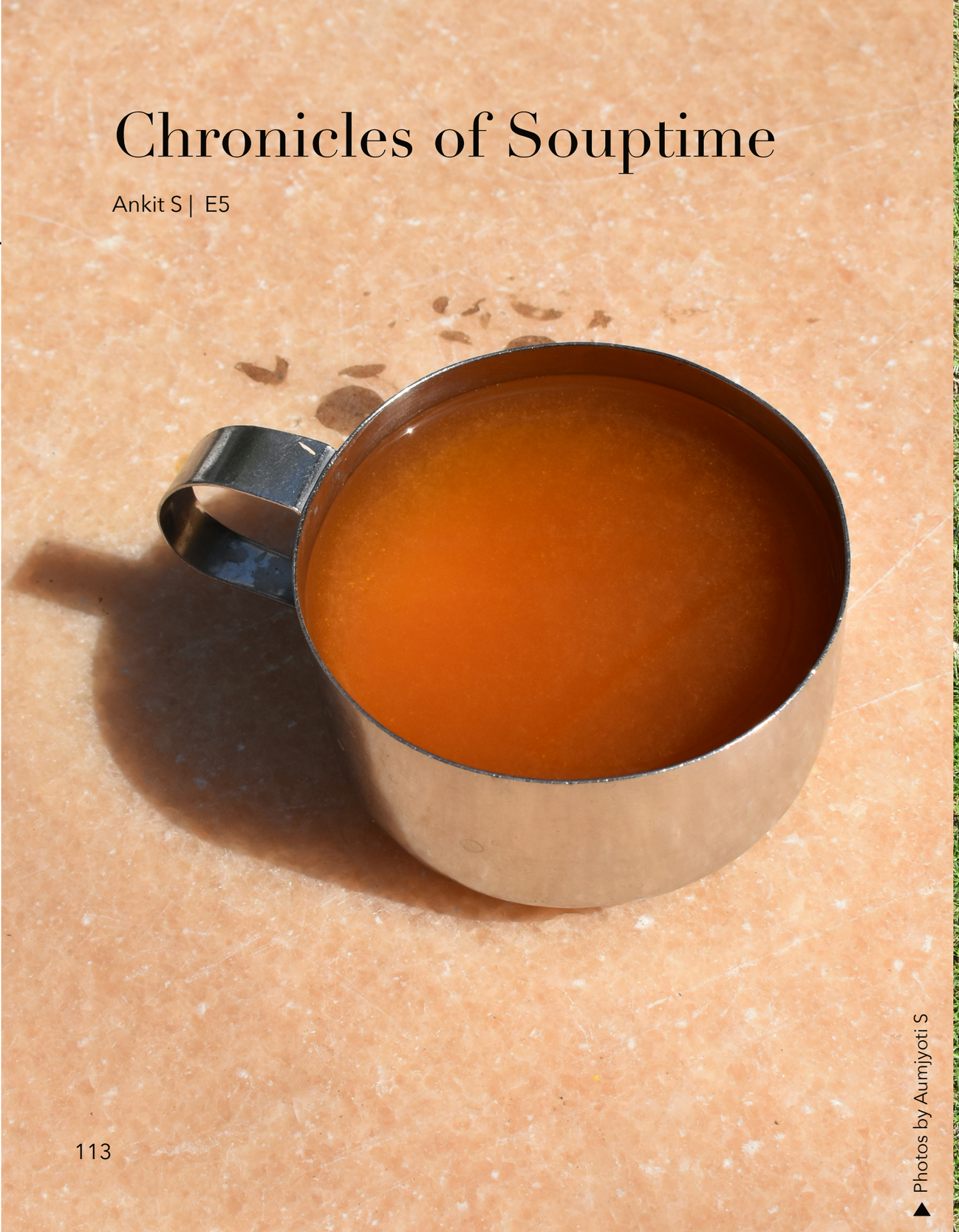
Et voilà ! Swagat a sauté en traversant la corde, c'était un saut magnifique ! C'était comme un aigle prenant son envol, planant gracieusement dans les airs. Tout le monde était bouche bée, se levant d'un coup. Les applaudissements ne se sont pas fait attendre. Je suis resté là, observant mes amis, les yeux brillants de larmes de joie, en train de se serrer les uns contre les autres. C'est un moment remarquable!

En effet, cela reste un événement inoubliable dans le cœur de chacun de nos amis.



Chronicles of Souptime

Ankit S | E5



▲ Photos by Aumjyoti S

They say that there is calm before a storm. Well, never has this phrase been more accurate than when it comes to our 15-minute break in the middle of our school's morning session; or, in our ashram lingo: Soup Time!

While working in the reference library during the second period, I always look out onto the lawn. If peace were a picture, it would be what I see every day, at 9:25. The tranquil breeze flows through every tree's foliage. Dragonflies dance in the air. Small, pale-yellow butterflies flap their tiny wings and fly around before gently landing on delicate flowers. The stage is recovering after a dance recital the previous night, earning well-deserved rest. If you are attentive, you can catch squirrels having their own fun time, running after one another. I take a deep breath to prepare myself for what is to come.

All of a sudden, my peaceful bubble is burst by the sight of one of the amma's

▲ Photos by Aumjyoti S

walking out with the bell. I close my eyes, knowing what comes next. The slow but resounding ding of the bell is heard in every corner of the building. I wish I could keep my eyes shut forever, but I reluctantly open them. The peaceful scenery has now become one of pure chaos! All hell has broken loose, as the once calm veranda is now bustling with activity, and full of the children's chatter and laughter. From every side, hoards of kids pour out of the stairways and onto the lawn. Everyone rushes first to the stage, each eyeing what Rajesh-Da has put out for us children to munch on. Some take their share, being considerate and leaving something for others. Then, some shy away, not happy with the selection that has been put today. They will all stay hungry until their preferred choice of fruit is put onto those round steel plates. They might have to wait days, or even weeks until they become a part of the crowd that empties those grey plates. And finally come the hungry children, who selfishly take more than they must. They all try to find clever ways of going unnoticed: some use their innocent friends as shields, while others secretly grab two pieces instead of one right under Bala bhai's nose. These students are normally surrounded by those not quick enough, begging the others for a piece of cheese.

If we look just beyond the frenzy near the stage, we see teachers and students holding their cups of soup. This is a good time for teachers to catch up with one another and take a breather before they have to go back and try and control us rowdy children. Although year by year the number of kids who enjoy soup shrinks, it is an important part of school life. If you haven't already figured it out

▲ Photos by Aumjyoti S



▲ Photos by Aumjyoti S

yet, this is where the name “Soup Time” comes from.

While all of school bustles with the chit-chat of young minds, the lawn turns into a mini playground for the youngest children. The children of Progrès and Accéléré, with their seemingly unlimited source of energy, run around the lawn, playing games with rules only they understand. To the rest of school, it seems like random running and jumping, but, through the glimmering youthful eyes of the kids, we see them analysing and predicting each of their friend's moves, looking for the best way to emerge victorious. I sit where I am, reminiscing about the times when we were the little ones running around. While the younglings enjoy life in their playful folly, the older students catch their breath on the galleries. Countless little groups gather and discuss whatever little titbits of their lives. We can find those complaining about the previous day’s football match, with blaming the referees being some students’ favourites. Those who did not play laugh at the expense of those who believe the game is more important than their own lives. Elsewhere, on the other side of the dull granite steps, we hear students sharing homework answers. It is astonishing how something as rational as mathematics leads to such diverse answers from our school's very own aspiring mathematicians. The galleries are also where all plans are made. After all, students are extremely busy people! Those who have
a programme practise that night decide when and where to meet up, while those who are free discuss how they intend to kill time; homework always seems to be their last option. And then you have



▶ Photos by Aumjyoti S

those who plan their night outs, all wanting to get away from the confinements of their homes and enjoy a fun night with friends out in Lake.

I look again to the corner, and between the swarm of thirsty children who seek to quench their thirst, I see the amma walking out again, holding that same bronze disk and wooden mallet. These fifteen minutes always feel like an hour. Seven strikes in quick succession signal the end of soup time. All students, most reluctantly, leave their conversations and head towards their classroom, ready for another two periods of gruelling work.Within no time, the scene reverts to the way it was. The only movement is that of the swaying trees and butterflies. The atmosphere dies down, the energetic fervour is replaced by one of calm and quiet. I pack up my books and take one last look at the lawn. I sigh, knowing that I will have to go through this process all over again the very next day. Until then, however, I smile and soak in all the silence. I walk out of Reference Library, go past the now silent galleries, and head towards my next class.

▲ Photos by Aumjyoti S







▲ Photos by Aumjyoti S

Photos by Aumjyoti S

SLAICE TEAM 2024



Top L to R: Miranandan S C, Ankit S, Surya-Saviri D, Aaryashree S

Bottom L to R: Aurelie S, Aumjyoti S, Auroayush

SLAICE – A Slice of SAICE is an Annual magazine brought to you by the students of SAICE. It hopes to provide a platform for students to showcase their personal projects and creativity through their writings, photographs, illustrations and more. Initiated in 2014, this project has continued the tradition of passing the responsibility from one student batch to the next, with a new group of students taking charge of designing and producing the SLAICE Magazine every year.