

VERBOS INCENDIUM



DISPLACEMENT
DISPOSSESSION

EDITORIAL

It is with great pleasure and immense pride that we bring to our readers the second issue of the Department e-Journal. This issue focuses on the theme of Displacement and Dispossession. It has been designed keeping in mind the current state of world politics and the escalating tensions on the domestic as well as the international front. The world today is facing a refugee crisis, like never before. Millions have been uprooted and forced to resettle in alien and sometimes alienating environments. As such, it is imperative to revisit history and recall the various instances of mass exodus, exile, dispossession, migration, and alienation. Not simply to evoke past horrors and current catastrophes as cautionary tales, but for self-introspection. Are we, as a nation and as inhabitants of the same planet, equipped - materially and otherwise- to deal with the consequences of our actions?

Some might be tempted to question the efficacy of a literary intervention in the face of events so cataclysmic and overwhelming. However, one only need recall the title *VerboIncendium* - words have fire- to understand that literature can, does, and has been effecting change since the beginning of time. Poets and writers might not have the power to draft legislatures but they have the potential to shape public consciousness (and even consensus). Books can provoke, evoke and rouse one to action. In fact, it is in times of such global crisis that the incendiary power of words can be harvested to give a voice to those who have been silenced.

This issue weaves together pieces of creative writing by our students with critical analysis of literary texts in and around the idea of Displacement and Dispossession- be it physical, psychological, cultural or linguistic. An attempt has been made to sensitize young minds and to explore avenues of further discussion and dialogue. An array of writers, landscapes and eras have been covered ranging from the nineteenth century European pogroms to post-colonial concerns as well as recent events in world history.

Displacement and Dispossession is a common human condition across the globe today. It is triggered by a range of factors but they all engender the shared universal condition of misery and loss. This issue is dedicated to those hundreds of thousands of nameless and faceless people who have borne such tribulations.

AvantikaPokhriyal.

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LEFTOVERS

We have been slaves

To the extreme ends of complexities

We were plundered, damaged and destroyed

We were forced to pack our universe

Into sacks and boxes

And were parceled to unheard and unseen places

Bit by bit

We were crushed from inside

And were dying a slow death

Still confused as to why

We were being taken away

From our own homeland

In this life of insecurities

Pain was the only presence

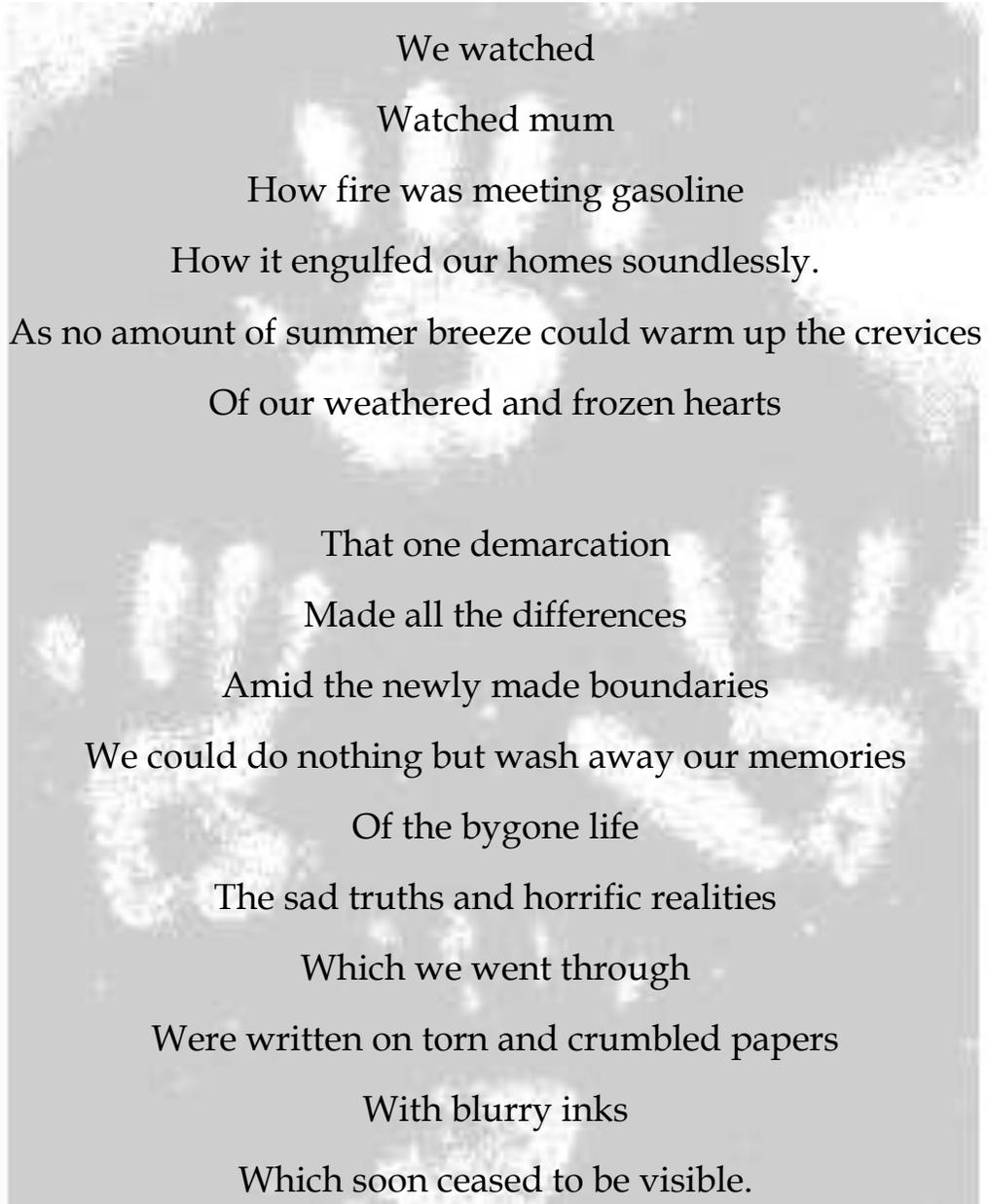
We were sure of.

That midnight breeze of

A dry August

Changed everything, we thought we knew, about humanity.

Words weren't enough for us. We wept.
Wept for this big mess we were in
Wept at seeing our world falling apart
Wept in silence



We watched
Watched mum
How fire was meeting gasoline
How it engulfed our homes soundlessly.
As no amount of summer breeze could warm up the crevices
Of our weathered and frozen hearts

That one demarcation
Made all the differences
Amid the newly made boundaries
We could do nothing but wash away our memories
Of the bygone life
The sad truths and horrific realities
Which we went through
Were written on torn and crumbled papers
With blurry inks
Which soon ceased to be visible.

Even till now
We simply exist
Living small lives
Under cracked roofs
Behind broken doors
Perhaps this is what is left of us
We are no more than Leftovers
And we smell the same
Of dried memories, heart ache and nostalgia
Of the past lives.

For us home is in moments
That live and die inside us
We cling to hope
We believe that somewhere
In the sky
A gentle reality lies
We live for the day
Where there are-
No differences
No memories to haunt

No tomorrow to be worried about

BY: ERWEINA KAUR
(SECOND YEAR)

MAUS

Maus (1980), by Art Spiegelman (b.1948), became the first Graphic Novel on the Holocaust to win a Pulitzer Prize. The book is a creative retelling of the experiences of Vladek Spiegelman, Art Spiegelman's father, in Nazi occupied Poland and later, in Auschwitz. Spiegelman uses Zoomorphism (a literary technique where animal attributes are given to non-animal objects or even humans). That is why, in *Maus*, the different races and nationalities are portrayed as different kinds of animals. Jews, for example, are portrayed as mice (the oppressed), while the Germans or the Nazis are depicted and drawn as cats (the oppressors). In representing the Jews as mice, Spiegelman seems to be playing with the anti-Semitic stereotype of Jews as vermin or pests, as less than human.

When talking about displacement, one is referring to a key term in post-colonial theory which applies to all migrant situations. It refers to physical displacement, as well as, to a sense of being socially or culturally "out of place". We can see this happening to Vladek Spiegelman. He loses all that he has in order to survive only to be thrown into Auschwitz, towards the end. Later, when he moves to the US he has to begin afresh from scratch. Being repeatedly uprooted from his place of origin begets a feeling of persistent disconnect and paranoia in him. Vladek lives in the US but still struggles with everyday life. It is clear that he suffers from post-traumatic stress.

The psychological repercussions of the Jewish exodus are infinite and nuanced. In the post Holocaust era, as the novel elaborates, it is about surviving the survivor. Vladek endured hell by being the man he was - "miserly, anxious and obstinate". These traits may have helped him in surviving the concentration camp, but greatly annoy his family now. This has to be seen as a defence mechanism on Vladek's part to guard

against all possible threats from his environment. Therefore, he never fully experiences the feeling of being a part of a community or social group.

Similarly, when talking about dispossession, the traits that Vladek displays have arisen out of his circumstances. Initially, he is portrayed as a man who is good-looking, ambitious and someone who wants to better his lot in life. Because of the war, his comfortable way of life, his possessions, were all taken away from him. Little by little, it became harder to procure goods and other resources. Vladek lived in Sosnowiec, in his father-in-law's house, with his wife: Anju, his first son: Richieu and a host of relatives. To make up for rations, they had to buy and barter in the black market. His father-in-law's factory too was taken over by the Germans and the family was forced to survive on their savings. Vladek pokes around for jobs in the black market. He sells surplus cloth for a while. Needing a work permit, he gets one from a local tin shop, where he hides when the German soldiers come by. At the tin shop, he learns a few carpentry skills that later ensure his survival in the concentration camp. Almost a year passes, and things grow worse for the Jews in Sosnowiec. Groups of Jews are regularly rounded and beaten. Vladek and his family too are forced to move into a ghetto, where the twelve of them have to make do in a two and a half room accommodation.

The Nazis persecution of Jews extended to all areas of life. All Jewish property and wealth was taken away, and they were left with few options for making a living. Vladek says: "Don't you know? All Jewish businesses have been taken over by 'Aryan managers'..." Vladek loses his factory and has to make do with whatever he can earn in the black market. The persecution was to such an extent that it created impossible situations where people had to throw their morals aside, just to survive. "At that time it wasn't any more families. It was everybody to take care for himself! "

Ironically, Vladek is safer as a Polish war prisoner of war than as a Jew in Germany. In matters of war, international conventions prevail: war prisoners are entitled to certain basic rights and dignity which the Jews are denied. A Jew within the Reich is subject to German laws, not international ones. Vladek aptly notes, "International laws protected us a little as Polish war prisoners. But a Jew of the Reich, anyone could kill in the streets!"

Art Spiegelman begins his narrative in 1958 with a description of his relationship with his father. Young Art is having a gala time, skating with his friends until he breaks his skate during a fall. His friends laugh at him and then abandon him. Art comes to his father, shedding tears: "I...I fell, and my friends skated away w-without me". His father's rejoinder is a reminiscent of his past experience on the trains to Auschwitz: "Friends? Your friends? If you lock them together in a room with no food for a week, then you could see what it is, friends! " This underscores some of the principal themes of the narrative. Art begins with a childhood memory that marks his relationship with his father and through this memory it becomes clear to the readers that Vladek still carries with him his past experiences in the concentration camp. It is only because of memory that it was possible to recover and narrate the universal drama generated by Nazi repression and genocide and to share each moment of suffering. Memory is also seen to be engaged in a dialogue with the individuals. It serves as a tool to resist their state of dispossession. So long as memory serves them, they have a tool with which they can counter the attempts to silence them.

While the story focuses primarily on the Vladek's experiences Spiegelman also talks of the community's fate at large: "It was many, many such stories - synagogues burned, Jews beaten with no reason, whole towns pushing out all Jews - each story worse than the other". In this quote, Vladek hears about the treatment of Jews under the Germans. No longer regarded as full citizens, they are the victims of state-sanctioned violence. They are robbed off of not just property and business but even cultural and religious autonomy.

Women in the novel play secondary characters; they are treated as insignificant throughout the narrative. Art Spiegelman shows how his father marginalizes women in the beginning, while towards the end he himself excludes women too. Women are put down and not included in the main details of the story. Clearly, the experience of displacement and dispossession differs for different genders but *Maus* is essentially a masculine retelling of the Holocaust.

In the beginning, Vladek eliminates women by jumping to and fro, dating them like they're nothing. He does not care about their feelings. Once he meets Anja, he begins avoiding his previous girlfriend and starts to "break her off" and goes directly to Anja. When he loses Anja, he pretty quickly finds another woman and marries her. Women are easily replaceable. The most powerful act of subordinating the women is the burning of Anja's diary by Vladek. He silences her one chance in the novel to speak as an individual.

Art too fails to show women's side of the story and their experiences in the camps. Their personal experience of oppression does not make the men any more sensitive to the patriarchal oppression of women in the society. Women are never a part of the story unless there is an involvement of men. We, as readers are left to our own imagination as to what their story would have been like. Although the book is about Vladek and his time in the Holocaust, Anja had an important role in his life as well. She deserves to be in the story as much as the other person to make this story complete, and give a better idea of Vladek's family during the Holocaust.

Maus dramatizes the ways in which the traumatic experiences of one generation are passed down to the next. Art Spiegelman is only one of the hundreds of thousands of children of Holocaust survivors searching for ways to deal with the complex emotional situation placed before them. The children of Holocaust survivors bear the greatest burden of insuring that

the world never forgets the trauma their parents suffered and the tragedy that claimed the lives of millions of Jews. Coming to terms with their feelings toward their parents, realizing the importance of learning and understanding their histories and helping pass on these stories to the coming generations are the hurdles that this second generation of survivors must overcome. Art Spiegelman, as one of these children, displays his maturation through these steps in his highly original and individual way with MAUS: A Survivor's Tale.



By referring to 'a survivor', the novel places an emphasis on the numerous survivors of Nazi dispossession and displacement. *Maus*, being a comic, are we to say that it too has associations with any kind of a superhero? In some way or the other, the survivors had a superhero within themselves to be able to make way in life through the genocide that had happened.



BY: ASHIMA PURI
(THIRD YEAR)

LOST! DISPLACED! DISPOSSESSED!

DARAA, HAMA;
Here, I am nourished every day,
In the lap of ancient history;
Destruction is my name.

I was begotten
Amidst chaos and carnage,
And today
They've ploughed the land,
Sown seeds of me, enriched with rage.

What started off as a peaceful protest
Has now turned into a war.
Soaking in blood, every innocent home,
I invoke the mighty Thor.

Extremists, free armies,
Armed groups and some neighboring nations,
A hegemony they wanted to form,
And those that strive to stop them
Meet me in the strong.

I thrive on your weakness
And grow in your desire for power.
Catastrophe, no refuge,
And weeds to eat
Is what I offer to people underpowered.

Some displaced, some fled,
Some too stubborn to leave, remained.
Lebanon took them in
More than it could retain.

I turned, in turns, to land, sea and water
All mediums to cross the border,
Roving in between the old and the new.
Old; nothing to be salvaged
New; displaced and unwanted.

But the kids!
What fate do they have?
I
Snatched from them what they deserve.
Kids belong in classrooms and playgrounds,
Which, now, there are none.

History, already noting me,
Future following up,
A decade or two there is still
Before I halt and cease
And they begin with the cover up.

No government or
Extremists encourage me.
Those who left, for better or for worse,
Are now lost in the world,
With no identity.

With no one keen on
Having to feed refugees, sans a hero,
My progressive path
Has simply left them
On ground zero.

BY: SASHA NIJHARA
(THIRD YEAR)

DISPLACEMENT AND DISPOSSESSION IN THE NORTH-EAST: ANALYSIS OF NGANGOM'S POETRY

The North-East of India meets the mainland through the narrow Siliguri Corridor, which is as slender as 17 kms at one point. This topographical inaccessibility is further augmented by political and linguistic tensions. These tensions are also reflected in the literary output of the region. The North-East is far from a homogeneous entity. Irrespective of the generic nomenclature the region has received, it is actually an amalgamation of various states each of which boasts of a rich historical and nuanced cultural and ethnic heritage. These states are: Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Assam, Sikkim, Tripura and Nagaland. This paper, however, will focus on Manipur and analyze the theme of displacement and dispossession in Robin S. Ngangom's (b. 1959) poems in terms of linguistic, physical and psychological alienation experienced by the writer.

GEOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL AND ETHNIC CONFLICT

As mentioned above, the North-East states are connected to the mainland via a very narrow passage. Ninety-nine percent of the North-East's boundaries are international and only one percent is domestic making its inhabitants feel alienated from the national mainland and giving rise to a confusion about one's authentic national as well as personal identity. This dispossession of one's secure identity is an important theme in Ngangom's poems. The region shares its borders with Bhutan, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and China, which are extremely porous. Thus, cross-border infiltration of militants and smuggling of arms are widespread in the region. The fact that historical connections among traditional tribes in the North-East are largely of Tibeto-Burman/Mongoloid people and these are closer to Southeast Asia than to

South Asia, makes them ethnically, linguistically and culturally distinct from the other states of India. These ethnic and cultural differences were ignored during the process of demarcation of state boundaries in 1949. The discontentment of the natives arising from this, led to tensions during the 1950s which continue till date. The demand of the people of Manipur for the recognition of their individual identity and autonomy, along with anger direct against the State's failure to do so recurs in poetry of the region.

INSURGENCY AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONFLICT

One of the biggest challenges in the North-East is extortion carried out by various insurgent (the term itself is heavily charged and contested) groups. It has become a meticulously organized activity in the region and is one of the major sources of funds for the militants. The first sign of Naga resistance was seen in the formation of the Naga Club in 1918, which told the Simon Commission in 1929 "to leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in ancient times", followed by the formation of the Naga National Council (NNC) in 1946. Ever since, there have been protests and insurgencies from the natives, as well as retaliations by the government. This has led to gross violations of the human rights in the state. As state-sanctioned and counter institutional narratives clash, the definition of the 'insurgent' varies, but it is the masses who suffer the most. They are continually abused and violated.

Mis-governance is seen to be the common bane of the North-East. It is manifested in the economic backwardness of the region and poor standards of public services as well as the sexual exploitation of women. CNN reported that the Assam Police between 2006 and 2011 received over 7000 complaints of rape and also 11,553 complaints of kidnappings involving women, including those committed by the Army. As is quite clear by the aforementioned reports, the living conditions and the treatment received by the North-East natives is inhuman and demands

attention and change which the government has now started to work upon. This is the driving force behind the alienation of the people and the internal displacement experienced by them.

GOVERNMENTAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES

The past and ongoing measures undertaken by the government to solve the crisis only aggravate the scenario in the region. The AFSPA (Armed Forces Special Power Act) for instance, shows the inability and reluctance of the government to solve the conflict with pacifist means. The AFSPA, which was passed on 18 August 1958, as a short-term measure to allow deployment of the army to counter an armed separatist movement in the Naga Hills, has been in place for the last five decades. Predictably, instead of resolving the problem, it has contributed to the escalation of the conflict by bringing it on a military level. The militarization of the region has weakened even the supporters of a political solution. Until recently, social activist Sharmila Irom had been fighting against this draconian rule of the government which places the freedom of the people in serious jeopardy. Teresa Rehman reported in her article for *Tehelka* that the politico-administrative arrangements made by the Centre have been lacking. For instance, the introduction of the Sixth Schedule Autonomous Councils (currently there are ten such Councils in the region and many more demanding such status) ended up creating multiple power centers instead of bringing a genuine process of democratization or autonomy in the region.

The "Look towards East" foreign economic policy of India has led to further problems. The region's diverse natural resources such as its enormous hydro-electricity potential can be used to overcome its economic backwardness, but the introduction of market imperatives in the traditional society of the region will have an irreversible impact on the people's culture and life. This settlement might further aggravate the already prevalent feeling of alienation and could also lead to the displacement of the natives.

ANALYSIS OF ROBIN S. NGANGOM'S POETRY

Now, that the major conflicts in the region have been discussed, we move on to analyzing their impact on the literature produced in the said region and the portrayal of the lives of the people by fellow natives like Ngangom. There are many North-Eastern writers such as Desmond Leslie Kharmawphlang and Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih who are known for portraying insistent realities such as ethnic violence, corruption, extortion, terrorism, and oppression in the region.

Ngangom himself describes his writing as "mostly autobiographical, written with the hope of enthusing readers with my communal or carnal life - the life of a politically discriminated against, historically overlooked individual from the nook of a third world country". Ngangom's poetry talks about the state of humanity in the contemporary era. He is insistent on depicting the harsh realities and social, as well as, moral miseries suffered by his fellow natives by chronicling them through his poetry. His works include published books on poetry namely, *Words and Silence* (1988), *Time's Crossroads* (1994) and *The Desire of Roots* (2006). He also has a published essay called "Poetry in A Time of Terror" which appeared in *The Other Side of Terror: An Anthology of Writings on Terrorism* published by Oxford University Press in New Delhi.

The first poem that we are going to analyze is the most ambitious and political of all the poems written by Ngangom, about his homeland, "The Strange Affair of Robin S. Ngangom". The poem is seen as a deeply political piece, which talks about the land and its natives as caught between the violence erupting from the conflict between the State and the insurgents. It draws attention to the powerlessness, displacement, and dispossession experienced by the natives. The "narratives of pain and suffering", according to Sisir Kumar Das, are always a collective narration of a community's suffering. As the poem progresses, it talks about the decay of morality, culture, and humanity as well as the destruction of

personal relationships for material gains and the overall tragic lives of the people of Manipur. By using his own name in the title of the poem Ngangom drives home the point of his unique affiliation with his homeland. The circumstances being talked about are not the fragments of the imagination. The poet has lived through and faced these circumstances. The self-consciousness in the title indicates the ambiguous nature of the poetic act. The poem is termed as a Strange Affair because of the paradox in the message that it delivers. The opening lines of the poem read

Not once can I say

I am the captain

Behind this wheel of fire (1-3)

suggest that the poet is not in control of the destruction that is going on around him. His plight and helplessness at the deteriorating circumstances are further elaborated throughout the poem. He then goes on to talk about "misplacing a bronze bell" this can be seen as a symbol of him losing his cultural identity amidst the violent chaos that has engulfed his native land. The scope of the poem shifts away from the personal to include the plight and suffering of his land at large. The struggle to counteract the adverse effects of the dispossession of identity is clearly portrayed. It gradually traces the entire bloody history of Manipur; step by step looking at all those reprobate factors that have reduced his land to the present state of degeneration

Our past, we believe, is pristine

Even as we reaped heads and took slaves

When we rewrite make believe history

With malicious intent

Memory burns on a short fuse. (49-53)

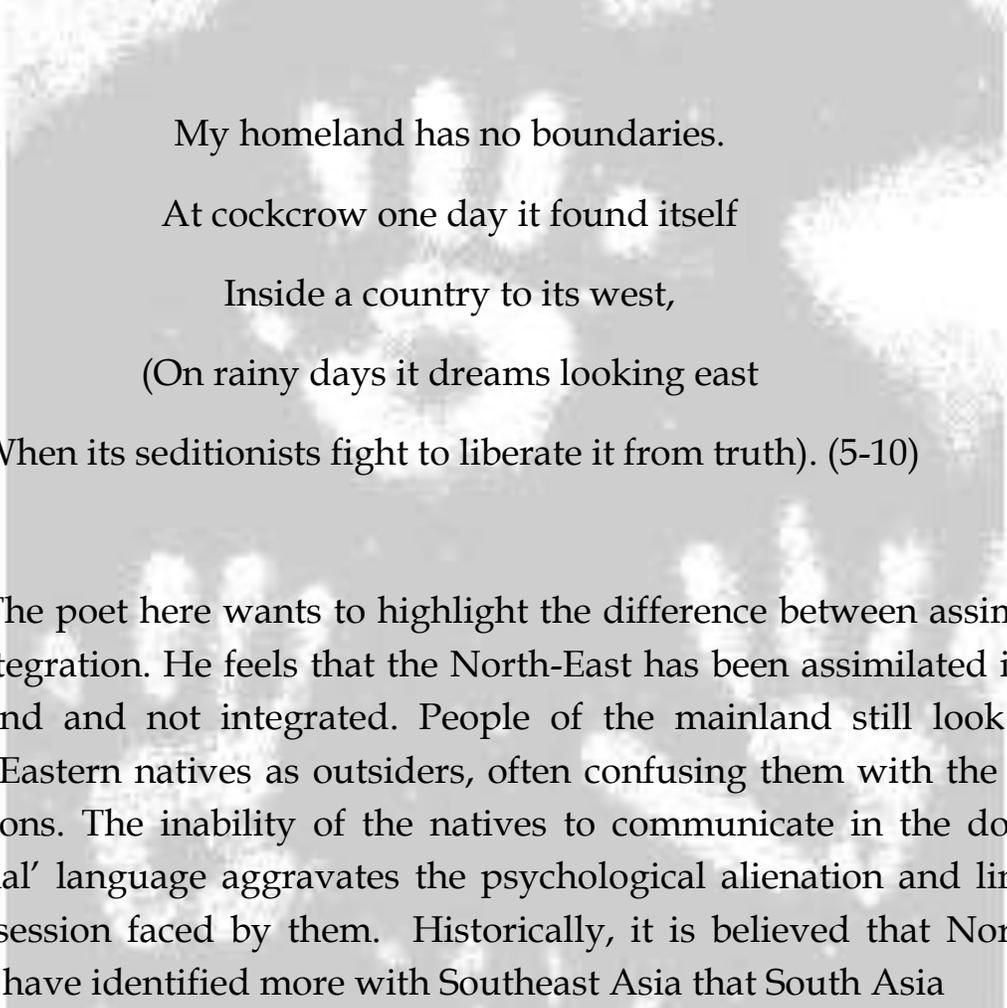
Through the aforementioned lines the poet goes on to point out that no matter how many times the past is re-written, it is so intertwined with the present tragedy that, that the truth will always prevail. The phantoms of displacement and dispossession will always shine through. Be it cultural, linguistic, psychological or physical dispossession.

Similarly, in another text "My Invented Land" he describes the gory picture of bloodshed and violence prevalent in Manipur. He describes how it has become a common aspect of their lives. The main theme of this poem seems to be that loss of their cultural identity. The poem is believed to be inspired by Nehru's speech "Tryst with Destiny"

My home is a gun
Pressed against both temples
A knock on a night that has not ended
A torch lit long after the theft
A sonnet about body counts
Undoubtedly raped
Definitely abandoned
In a tryst with destiny (25-32)

A gun pressed to both the temples suggests that the person has been rendered immobile, symbolizing that there is only one perspective that they are allowed to see, one that the people in power want to show them. The poet elaborates by saying that even though people are trying to serve justice now, the damage has been done. The memories of this torture and conflict will always remain with them and haunt the future generations. The threat and fear of cross-border enmity is also hinted at in the poem.

In the following lines, the poet registers his protest and makes clear his resentment against the onslaught of the so-called "outside forces" (the Indian forces, who are attempting to uproot their indigenous culture and identity. It seems that the poet's homeland resists the politics of assimilation adopted by the mainland.



My homeland has no boundaries.
At cockcrow one day it found itself
Inside a country to its west,
(On rainy days it dreams looking east

When its secessionists fight to liberate it from truth). (5-10)

The poet here wants to highlight the difference between assimilation and integration. He feels that the North-East has been assimilated into the mainland and not integrated. People of the mainland still look at the North-Eastern natives as outsiders, often confusing them with the natives of nations. The inability of the natives to communicate in the dominant 'national' language aggravates the psychological alienation and linguistic dispossession faced by them. Historically, it is believed that North-East would have identified more with Southeast Asia than South Asia

The discontent of the youth is clearly portrayed in his poems. They are helpless and powerless. Their masculinity and freedom are challenged. They are no longer the protectors of their women. They have been displaced from that position. As portrayed in the next few lines from "The Strange Affair" the abuse of women has become a normative aspect of this society emphasized by the use of the phrase "the usual"; their existence is shrouded under the threat of rape, assault, molestation and so on. It is important to note, that the lover hasn't managed to protect his pristine innocence either. He is also a part of a similar crowd, a crowd marked out

by degenerating and fast decaying moral values. After describing the tragic reality of Manipur, the poet now assumes an ironic tone to unmask the truth behind words like 'patriotism' and 'uprightness', which according to him have been degraded and distorted to stand for things which they have no connection with. This ironic use of words gives us a glimpse of the satire used in most of Ngangom's poems. Uprightness here refers to in-cashing on everything that you can lay your hands on, pointing to the materialistic and selfish nature which has developed in the society. The poet ends the poem with a kind of plea for peace. He wants wholeness and peace to revisit his native land again.

Another poem "Native Land" is a testimony to the hard times endured by the native Manipuri crowd. It is a tribute to the men and women for the survival instincts, appreciating their unwavering endurance in the face of ethnic or political conflict. Nobody apart from the native poet acknowledges the mental and physical dispossession and displacement faced by the crowd. The poem is a pensive recollection of the kind of scenarios that poet's native land has faced and the way it has affected his psyche.

I burnt my truth with them,
And buried uneasy manhood with them.
I did mutter, on some far-off day:
"There are limits", but when the days
Absolved the butchers, I continue to live
As if nothing happened. (23-28)

These lines emphasize that either the experiences of these people are so disturbing that they are trying hard to repress the memories or that the authorities have turned a blind eye to these circumstances and refuse to acknowledge their wrong doings.

We see how the conflict of the North-East states of India affects the state of mind of its natives, clearly reflected in the literature centered around it. It wouldn't be imprudent to note that the cultural, linguistic, as well as physical displacement and dispossession has had a significant impact on the psyche of the North-East Indians and even though they are as much Indians as any of us, born and living on the Indian soil, there is an abyss separating them from us. This very idea, of treating them as the 'other', has caused them much suffering in the past and continues to haunt their lives, even today.

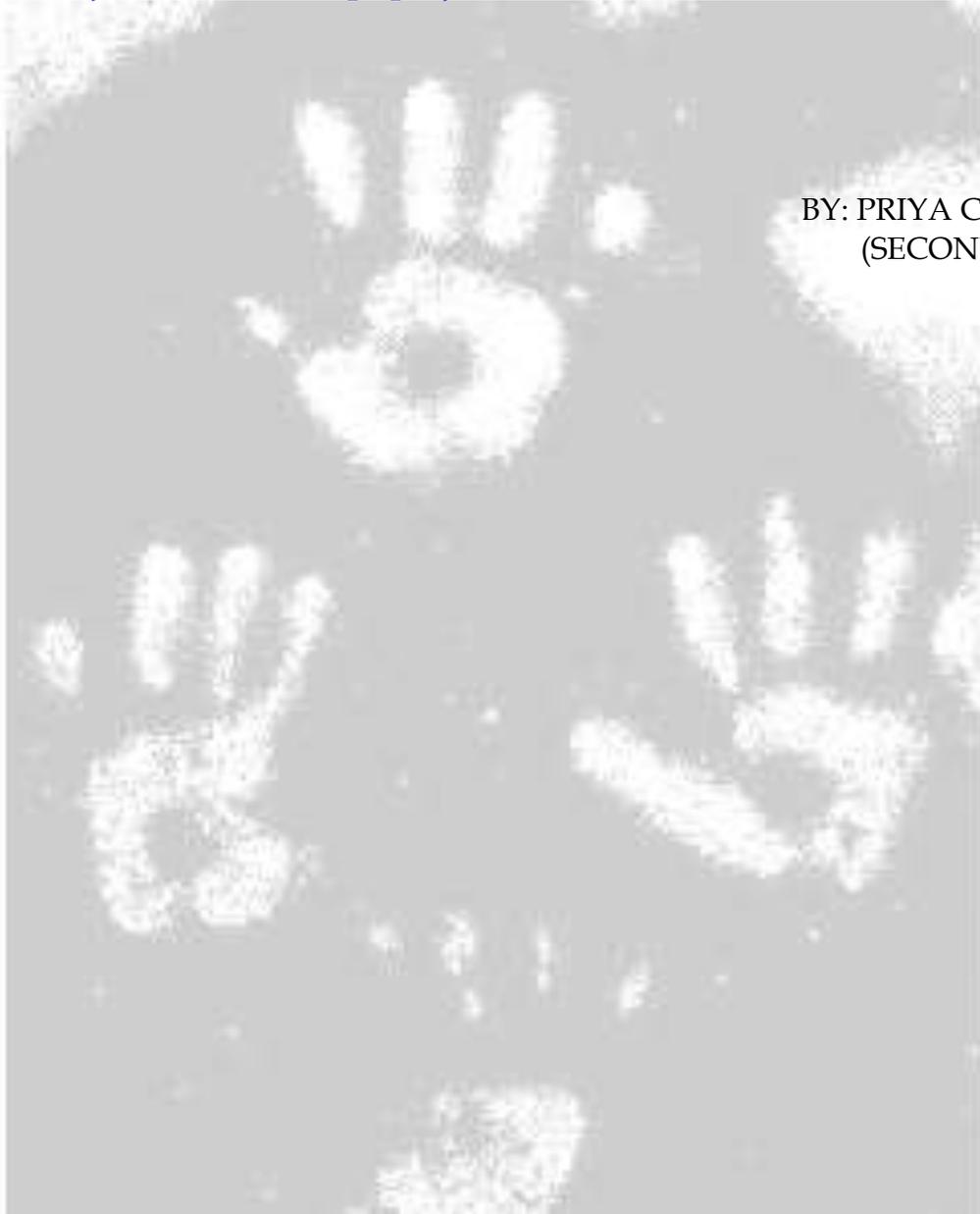


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BY: PRIYA CHADHA
(SECOND YEAR)

AN ANGUISHED CRY

Withered I stand,
No difference between the sky and land.

Only death, No life
Neither my father, nor his wife are now alive.

Unlucky, I was saved
But my soul was raped.

Blood all around me,
Sounds of bullets and bombings are all I hear

I cry, I scream, I fear
All ineffectual, all in vain
Why do they hold us with disdain?

A child of six,
I have nothing to fix
My world has fallen apart
And numbness takes over my heart.

Written on my destiny's page,
No home but an orphanage.
Neither coward, nor brave
Each one killed, no one was saved.

BY: JAPNEET KAUR
(THIRD YEAR)

AMNESIA AND RESILIENCE: COPING WITH DISPLACEMENT IN TONI MORRISON'S *BELOVED*

Art, particularly literature, has attempted to immortalize the miseries of institutionalized slavery in the American South, but relatively little remains known of the horrors of The Middle Passage. This can be attributed to the failure of "rememory", a term that Toni Morrison uses for recollection in her Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *Beloved* (1987). The dedication at the start - "Sixty Million and more"- collectively evokes those innumerable Africans who were ruthlessly displaced from their native land and sold like chattel in the international slave market only to die at sea while being shipped to the Americas. Later in the novel, those sixty million slaves are conflated into the individual person of the resurrected Beloved. The ghost represents not only Sethe's murdered daughter, but also the millions Morrison mourns at the beginning of her novel. Morrison remarks:

I think that Afro-Americans in rushing away from slavery, which was important to do- it meant rushing out of bondage into freedom- also rushed away from slaves because it was painful to dwell there, and they may have abandoned some responsibility in so doing.

Morrison asks to bear in mind the brutality embedded in the Afro-American heritage; the fact that they emerge from a displaced and dispossessed people. Displacement is addressed as a large, community-inclusive woe in the novel, with smaller niches of struggle at the personal level. The protagonist of the novel, Sethe, is a member of the oppressed black community, and like others she is also condemned to the same fortune. However, she has experienced relatively humane treatment serving Sweet Home; which is to say that she was not raped, nor put to stud to breed more slaves. Mrs. Garner, the white woman, is sympathetic towards her and even weeps for her misfortune. The arrival of the four horsemen however, heralds doom for Sethe. She and her family of four children and her husband Halle had been living in a world far removed

from the reality of their lot. In the tumult of being raped by Schoolteacher's nephews, having her milk stolen, and escaping Sweet Home, Sethe has been displaced just as her ancestors had once been. Paul D is estranged from Sweet Home, too. It seems that while at Sweet Home he considers himself to be inferior to the rooster, Mister. There's a persistent lack of contentment in him and he seems to be a misanthrope. He has found asylum in his tin can heart after being uprooted multiple times.

It is ironical that in the face of slavery, the African American was very conscious of his identity. Paul D and all of his brothers shared the same name. This consciousness sprang mostly from the rigid racial discrimination. However, in the case of *Beloved*, the African American viewpoint allows a glimpse into the disgust on Sethe's part on being "dirtied" by the whites.

Slaves were regarded as merely breeding studs for profit. Mothers, therefore, were often separated from their infants or were not allowed to nurse them. Baby Suggs had eight children, of whom she was allowed to raise only one, Halle. She tells Sethe that she did not even bother to look at her youngest child, because endearment was futile. Contact with children was curbed, and so stories of the Middle Passage, along with their mother tongues and native traditions- were all lost. The slaves were thus condemned to ignorance of their own past. They remained conscious of only what remained, what they experienced. Sethe, however, was allowed to raise all four of her children. Paul D deemed such love "risky". Dispossession of maternal affection was forced upon her, and this brought her only misery. Paul D's words, "for a slave woman to love anything that much was dangerous, especially if it was her children she had settled on to love" came to life when Sethe murders her infant daughter to ensure that she was not subjected to a life of slavery. The ordeal of having her milk stolen broke her more than the whipping she received. She is later reconciled with the ghost of Beloved, and seems finally to have acquired freedom from her badgering conscience and guilt when Beloved assumes the traits of the demon she is. Sethe is drained and is on a fatal path of devotion for Beloved.

Cultural and communal consciousness was lost in the black community. Morrison draws attention towards the community's strength. The character of Baby Suggs is assigned this role. She is a preacher of harmony and self-adoration within the community. She seems to have a certain kind of hope from the white folk. Baby Suggs is a character beyond the mutual hatred arising from the power equation between the two races. However, "the Misery" (as Stamp Paid refers to it) Sethe receives at the hands of Schoolteacher's nephews breaks her, so much so that, she resigned herself to her bed.

It seems as though Morrison is trying to keep the spirit of the community unified, fearful that the collective hardships under slavery may also be forgotten, just as their native African roots were. She coaxes readers to "dwell on the horror" of slavery. Beloved's resurrection from the dead is representative of the past, not only Sethe's, but that of the entire community. Sethe is a ferociously devoted mother who has traversed great lengths for the sake of her children. The murder of Beloved, coupled with the fact that her ghost chased her two sons away has punctured holes in the sanctity with which he regards her children. Beloved ghost in the human form, therefore, stands for Sethe's wrecked and futile past. For the community, she represents the dead millions, the decades of slavery that are behind them, and also the unrest within the community. Beloved died because the community had ostracized Sethe and did not warn her of Schoolteacher's arrival. The exorcism of the ghost, therefore, rekindles the bond within the black community that Baby Suggs had aspired to.

The novel ends on a note of resilience of the black community. They were all of various descents, however, geographical boundaries and difference in language was irrelevant now. They were all unified under the yoke of slavery. Such resilience defeated absolute rootlessness, perhaps because the scourge of slavery was so overbearing that it did not allow sentiments of estrangement to breed. Toni Morrison makes use of native African motifs in the novel, suggesting her attempt to stay closer to her origins, centuries after her ancestors had been uprooted. Susan Bowers in her essay, "*Beloved* and the New Apocalypse" opines that the "circling

narrative" of *Beloved* from present to the past suggests the West African perspective of apocalypse, reinforcing importance for the same. When Beloved and Paul D make love, the haunting element with which she seduces him has often been compared to that of shape shifting witches from West African folklore. The West African belief system of Yoruba cosmology is also evoked by Morrison in the characterization of Amy Denver. Morrison's use of African symbols springs from her family's interest in the myths and legends of West Africa. The very fact that she incorporates them in her work signifies her rootedness with her ancestral traditions, hence justifying her drive to endorse "rememory".

Memory functions in two ways in the novel. Firstly, it is the memory of extricating millions of native Africans from their homeland and that of the atrocity they bear. The white slavers attempt to wipe out this memory by separating mother and child, not allowing this account of history to be passed. This causes a dull sense of community-wide amnesia. The black community has also attempted to cope with their grim past of servitude by choosing to forget it. Morrison exhorts the readers to embrace, not condemn to oblivion these memories while confronting the ills of displacement.

BY: CHITWAN KAUR
(SECOND YEAR)

AN HOUR OF TERROR

“Isaac it’s our fourth session today. I know you have nightmares from your childhood. But you should tell me about what you see, only then will I be able to help you. Only then we can start with the therapy suitable to your psychological condition” said Dr. Cullen. Isaac was shifting uncomfortably in his seat wide-eyed.

“Speak up, Isaac” whispered the doctor softly. Yet Isaac was lost somewhere... Somewhere he didn’t want to visit again. The dark places which gave him nightmares. He knew if he didn’t speak now, he will never be able to get out of it. His warden, Mr. Smith, had told him it was his last chance to meet the therapist who could help him come out of his debilitating depression.

Finally, as he made an attempted to push the words past his trembling lips, terror was clearly etched across his pale face. “I was nine” he whispered through his slightly parted lips. He again went silent trying to struggle with the words, fighting with them to come out of his mouth. And finally, an hour of TERROR began.

“My ninth birthday was arriving and I wanted to have a birthday party, like my friend Aslam, had five months back. Like any other child, I wanted to celebrate my birthday, but I couldn’t ask my parents because of the sheer terror. Owing to the circumstances we were stuck in, we couldn’t even go out of the house with the certainty that we would come back alive. As you know doctor, ever since I was born terror has been our constant companion. We were not allowed to go out of our house. Our food stock was getting depleted. We had to eat keeping in mind to save some for the days to come. Ironically, we never even knew whether we’d wake up

tomorrow or be bombed to death arbitrarily, just like my friend, Roohan and his family.

Eventually, my birthday came. Ammi made some kheer for me from the leftover milk and rice. I had a gut feeling that it was my last birthday with Ammi, Abbu and my little sister Rehmat who was four. Suddenly Abbu's mobile rang. It was my daddi and dada jaan who wanted to give me blessings. My dadijaan told me she was praying for my long life and I didn't know whether God would accept her prayer or not. At that moment, I longed for her wish to come true. But then, suddenly a tumult of shouting was heard, someone was banging on our door, trying to break it. Abba tried to hide me and Rehmat in the bathroom. The door slammed. I was holding Rehmat close, trying to get her to stop crying. At that time I knew, what it was that I was feeling. It was terror; terror that I would get killed that day, a terror that my family would be killed too. I felt as if my heart was suddenly in my mouth, beating so fast, I could hear it clearly."

Isaac went silent for few minutes as if trying to control his emotions. His eyes were filled with unshed tears. Dr. Cullen didn't want him to lose his train of thought and hence waited for him patiently. Gathering his lost words, he started again, "I was trying to peek outside. I saw three people wearing black masks and carrying huge guns. That's when I knew it was time, our time to die. I was holding Rehmat close to my chest when I heard two gunshot sounds. I knew my parents were dead. My Ammi-Abbu were killed by those people." Dr. Cullen could almost feel the young man's heartache for his parents in those words but, there was something else too- bitterness, anger, and anguish. Issac continued, "Rehmat was weeping heavily, her sobs were no longer hidden from the ears of those who had just now killed our Ammi- Abbu. I was scared for myself, but more so for my sister. They found us hidden in the bathroom and tried to snatch Rehmat from my hands. I begged them to spare my little Rehmat. They started laughing at me and slapped me hard across my face, followed by a kick in my ribs. I fell down on the bathroom floor and they started moving

out of the house. The pain was unbearable but I had to get up to save my sister. They had my Rehmat, they had my dearest Rehmat. I saw my Ammi-Abbu lying on the hard concrete of the floor. Their bodies and clothes covered with blood. I was terrified but filled with seething rage as well. I tried to fight one of them, kicking and punching him. He laughed and slapped me hard once again. One of them pointed his gun towards me but the other one stopped him and said 'Don't kill him. It will be too easy. Let's kill his sister and enjoy seeing him suffer more.' The other one laughed even harder, like the devil that he was. And in an instant, before I could react, they killed her. They killed my Rehmat, they killed my baby sister. And then left laughing, leaving me with my Ammi-Abbu and my Rehmat's bodies. I couldn't do anything to save my family, to save my sister." The last words were barely audible; his voice shaking with vengeance, heartache and above all, gut-wrenching hopelessness at being left alone.

What he narrated in that hour to his doctor explained everything about his suffering, his nightmares, and his desire to kill himself. It wasn't Isaac killing himself, but his love for his family and their absence that had left him so desolate that it was pushing him towards an endless abyss. That hour has never left him, the hour when he saw his family for the last time, wondering why the killers did not bestow him with the gift death. It was the TERROR of that one hour that was consuming him every day, every minute.

BY: VAISHALI ARORA
(THIRD YEAR)

A DEVIL IN DISGUISE

Oh, how I miss those days,
Surrounded by love and grace.
How it's so different here
In a world full of anger and despair.

And now in this alien place
Away from our humble, safe space, we wait.
Didn't we deserve any choice?
Why did we have to migrate?

This land where people are shallow,
Self-centered and narrow,
Each day is passed in lost memories and fear,
Remembering our loved ones, those who were dear.

How war brings about separation;
Calling to hatred and desperation.
Victory is but a disguise,
Leading people to deceit and lies.

War is but a devil in disguise,
Creating a mirage for our eyes.
All the bloodshed and lost lives,
Only for an ephemeral prize?

Memory becomes your only mate.
Torture and depression becomes your fate.
Torn away from family we stay,
"You're not welcome here" they say.

You miss and love them, everyday,
Hoping to reunite someday.
And all the while I still pray-
This war will end, one day.

And now, that she's long gone
I'm left with darkness and a mourning song,
Without the one fair as fawn,
I'm nothing but a shadow, a pawn.

BY: JASMINE KAUR
(SECOND YEAR)



THINGS FALL APART

Things Fall Apart (1958) by the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe (1930-2013) is often regarded as a seminal text of postcolonial literature in English. Achebe is renowned as the father of modern African literature. Other than being a novelist, he was an essayist and a poet as well. He, along with many other founders of the Nigerian Literary Movement, has drawn upon the traditional oral culture of the native Africans in his novels. He has sought a complete understanding of the African culture and given the displaced and dispossessed colonized people a voice.

Things Fall Apart is set in the village of Umuofia. The depiction of the Igbo people in this text is similar to that of Achebe's own birthplace - Ogidi, where Igbo-speakers lived together in groups of independent villages ruled by their elders. The customs described and shown in the novel mirror the actual Onitsha people, who lived near Ogidi.

The novel depicts the life of Okonkwo - an Igbo leader and a local wrestling champion. It is split into three parts- the first, describes his family and his personal history, as well as the customs and society of the Igbo people; the second and third sections depict the entry of the British colonial forces and Christian missionaries in Umuofia and their influence on the Igbo community.

The climactic moment in the narrative comes when Okonkwo's gun explodes and he accidentally kills a clan member. As killing a clansman is a crime of the highest order, Okonkwo has to take his family into exile for seven long years in order to atone for the crime. His departure parallels the arrival of six missionaries to Mbanta. Through an interpreter named Mr. Kiaga, Mr. Brown - the leader of the missionaries - starts forcing an alien religion and language on the natives of the village, colonizing them, and making them culturally dispossessed.

In an essay reprinted in his book *Morning Yet on Creation Day* in 1996 Achebe explains his choice of language (English). He felt that the written standard of Igbo contained many dialects which created a pompously written form. His choice to write in English has caused controversy.

Both African, as well as non-African critics, agree that Achebe models *Things Fall Apart* on many Euro-centric literary conventions, but they have conflicting opinions on whether this novel depicts a Western model, or rather, subverts and confronts it. Achebe defends his decision during an interview by arguing that

English is something you spend your lifetime acquiring, so it would be foolish not to use it. Also, in the logic of colonization and decolonization, it is actually a very powerful weapon in the fight to regain what was yours. English was the language of colonization itself. It is not simply something you use because you have it anyway.

His use of English has to be seen alongside his use of indigenous terms through the novel. It is a deliberate move on his part to empower oneself and assert cultural and linguistic distinctiveness. His use of English is a move to counter the dispossession of culture and identity effected by the colonial regime.

The reason I chose this novel is because I recently studied Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and it made me more curious about the history and the culture of the colonized Africans and about the changes forced on them that dislocated and alienated the native people. *Things Fall Apart* has gradually acquired a cult status. Of all of Achebe's works, it is the one most often read and appreciated. It has also generated the highest critical response, examination, and literary criticism. *Things Fall Apart* is now considered essential to the understanding of African identity, its nationalism, and also its decolonisation. It highlights Achebe's ability to bring together the competing cultural systems and their languages to construct a unified whole.

Through the ups and downs of Okonkwo's life in Umuofia, Achebe tells a story of dispossession where the natives had to adopt and speak another language, adopt the identity of an imposed culture - that of their oppressor. Their own cultural and traditional identity is, however, repeatedly and consistently, devalued and displaced. Giving into another culture meant giving up one's own; it alienates one from one's own culture and its views, attitudes, and values as well.

The novel also explores the internal friction of adopting another identity, language, and ways of revolting against the idea of having one's culture domineered: "Umuofia was like a startled animal with ears erect, sniffing the silent, ominous air and not knowing which way to run" (ch:23 page:139). These lines clearly depict the trauma that the colonized people felt at being dispossessed of their culture, identity, and individuality.

The system of political domination and economic exploitation created under colonialism thrives on a set of antithetical values and attributes. The 'civilising' European centre displaces the native to the marginalized position of a colony. Under this system, the native is viewed by the colonizer as irrational, depraved, and childlike; while the European is rational and mature. Abdul Jan Mohamed in "The politics of Literature in the Colonial Africa" similarly describes the duality at the heart of this colonial mentality and its discourses as being 'dominated by a Manichean allegory of white and black, good and evil, salvation and damnation, civilization and savagery, superiority and inferiority, intelligence and emotion, self and the other, subject and object'. The autonomy and dignity of the native are lost. This cultural, ideological and material dispossession and displacement can only be countered when the native decides to break his/her silence.

Although far from perfect, Okonkwo's death is directly related to the fact that he no longer feels the sense of organic unity with Umuofia that he did in the beginning of the novel, he is displaced from its centre. In fact, Achebe borrows the title of the novel from William Butler Yeats's (1865-1939) poem "The Second Coming", which also serves as the epigraph to the text:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre.
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.

In recalling these lines, he hints at the chaos that arose when the functioning system of the colonized is displaced, abruptly and brutally.

“The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion... He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart (ch:20 page 130). Here “the center cannot hold” is a reference to the collapse of the organic and cohesive African tribal system and its dispossessed people threatened by the British imperialists and bureaucrats.

Thus, one can grasp the tragic irony of the last paragraphs of the novel where Obierika, pays tribute to his friend:

‘That man was one of the greatest men in Umofia. You drove him to kill himself, and now he will be buried like a dog.’ He could not say anymore. His voice trembled and choked his words. (p. 149)

Achebe prevents readers from seeing the matters in clear-cut terms of good (black) versus bad (white). The novel makes it impossible to not sympathize with the native, while at the same time, it does not try to screen their sometimes narrow and prejudicial attitudes. Religion and tradition work as threads that hold a clan together, but if that religion is vulnerable and cheated, then, it becomes very hard to decide who is at fault for the destruction. He certainly displays his reproof of the colonialists for their disrespect towards the Igbo customs but also shows criticism of some clan members and their responses to the colonial people:

He remembered his wife’s twin children, whom he had thrown away. What crime had they committed? The Earth had decreed that they were an offence on the land and must be destroyed. And if the clan did not exact punishment for an offence against the great goddess, her wrath was loosed on all the land and not just on the offender.

Things Fall Apart is a novel which looks back at this pre- colonial culture with tinted nostalgia and to the very significant changes brought about by British colonialism, yet it is also a text which looks forward to the future, inscribed with both the idealism and the anxieties of the decade in which it was written. It justly depicts the idea of displacement as the protagonist Okonkwo had to shift to a new place for seven long years of his life where the people, their customs, their thinking, everything was different and he wanted to make a strong position in his village which was now next to

impossible and it also depicts dispossession as the “white” people forced new customs, new ideologies, new religion and beliefs which obliterated their own identity. Yet, Achebe by giving voice to the native, challenges the Euro-centric portrayal of Africa as the land of subhuman naked bodies. He invests the Igbo culture with a complexity and depth which is missing in Conrad’s (1857-1924) *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and thus, manages to infuse even in his narrative of displacement and dispossession a tragic grandeur.

BY: JASLEEN KAUR
(SECOND YEAR)



THE REAL KASHMIR - A MIRAGE

And it burnt yet again;

In whose fire? No one knows.

Two sides, fighting against

The seeds of rage they had both sown.

Yes, it sighs heavily.

A breather is what it needs.

It mourns its barren soil

Where they all sow those bloody seeds.

The quake it creates,

The sound of guns and grenades;

A peaceful Kashmir existed in a forgotten age,

A peaceful Kashmir is now a mirage.

What destroys it most

Is internal turmoil and terrorism.

It doesn't even have the authority to ask

Who formed and perpetuates this mechanism.

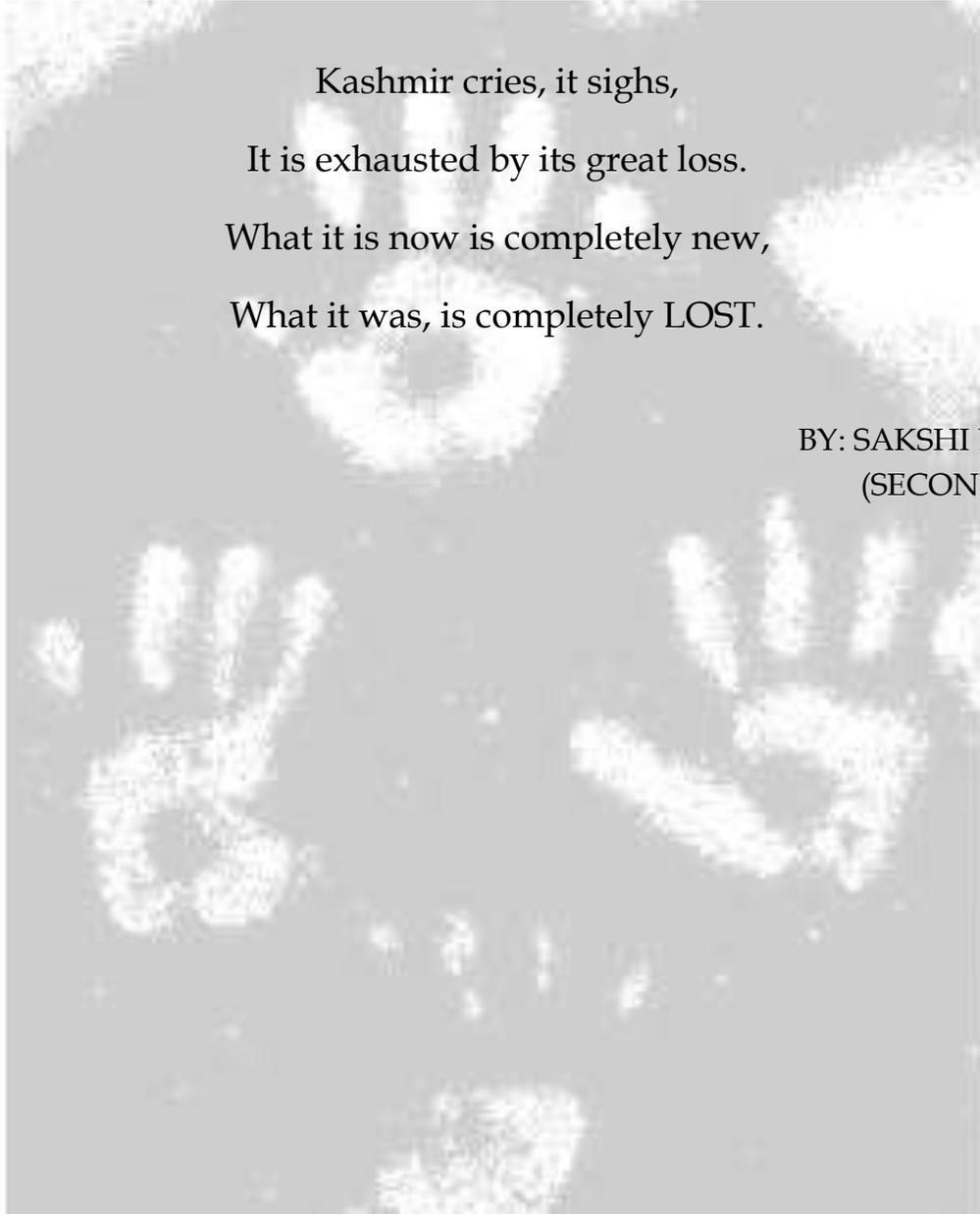
Now, Kashmir stands silenced
against what hurts it most and what it hates.

Yet, no one really questions whether

It is fate, or is it deliberate?

Kashmir cries, it sighs,
It is exhausted by its great loss.
What it is now is completely new,
What it was, is completely LOST.

BY: SAKSHI BANSAL
(SECOND YEAR)



A PAGE FROM MY DIARY...

Dear diary,

I was supposed to write a piece of fiction that told the truth. But the truth is so grave, the history, so overwhelming, that I don't believe I can do justice to it in any other way.

I stand removed from the events of that fateful year, a decade by birth and three decades by ignorance. I have grown up in a Sikh household, watched the age old news documentary on the carnage innumerable times, but never before did I feel the gravity of the story; the history—my own history in ways more than one.

I am thrice removed from the reality I'm writing about. I am mourning, but I don't quite have a grasp over what I'm mourning for. All I possess is a heart that shrinks in agony over what I know has truly happened.

"But when a mighty tree falls, it is only natural that the earth around it does shake a little", someone said. It was easy for him to call it a 'little shaking' of the earth, but the suffering was much greater than the statement would have us believe; a widespread massacre, a slaughtering, of a community right smack in the capital of the thirty seven year old democracy of India. It happened under the noses of the army as well as the major political leaders of the time. No, I won't name them. Not because they should be covered up for like our judicial system has been doing, but because they deserve to perish; their names, their words, every thread that validates their existence as human beings, should be crumbled; it should vanish in a puff of smoke or erased by waves of crashing water.

Diary, I am not exaggerating. You can't possibly understand the turmoil I feel within right now. You would understand if you could see the expression on my father's face, the grief and venom in his voice, when he narrated his experience to me. He was reluctant at first, delaying it for days, and then finally beginning with a warning, "You will have tears in your eyes when I tell you of the things I have witnessed."

I had thought that I had already read too many accounts of this profound pain and suffering, and that they had made me go numb, enough for me not to cry when my father started. But as it goes, I was wrong. I cried, indeed.

“The bus depot that you cross nonchalantly every day, the red light where you see nothing out of the ordinary every day that you pass by it... I stood right there, with a whole bunch of other people, helplessly, and watched an enraged mob put a tire around an old man who had stepped forth to talk to them peacefully. They burnt him alive. To see his flesh melt off and not to be able to do anything about it...I can hear his screams even today, when I think of that day.” Papa told me how he and the others living in our locality had escaped the plight that the majority across Delhi were subjected to; by not trusting the men that had been given weapons to protect them. Had they given in to the demands of the police and believed their lies about protecting them, none of them would have survived, he said. I saw a flicker of anguish as he recalled the burning of the house just down the street and his fear of an impending doom.

He said that not all of Them were against Us. While the properties and everything that we had built in our entire lives, our legacy, the roof over our heads, was burnt to the ground, it was the neighbors who hid our families in their own homes, some even fought valiantly to protect us. But there were still many that were barren of all support and had nowhere and no one to turn to, for shelter. “Innumerable people gathered every ounce of food they had and left their homes—their humble abodes, the walls that were supposed to keep them safe— only to be carried away in trucks to camps where you could see the wounded not being tended to, the hungry not being fed, and the rest, left to die. It was the most painful thing I had ever seen; children with blood flowing down their faces, women, throwing themselves over their husbands to burn alive in their stead, men, limp, mere shadows of living souls. The gloom that hung over the city seemed to have drowned everything living, while the authorities sat conveniently,whiling away time before finally deciding to intervene.”

It has been thirty two years... Thirty two years, and justice has not been served. They say you ought to forget what's past and learn to live a life free from the shackles that the past confines you in. I am not judging another community for what happened with my family, my community.

But it pains me to think of the women of Delhi's Widow Colony, who lost their homes, husbands, children; all it takes for them to relive the terror from thirty two years past is the dropping of their eyelids, and it all comes back to them; the screams, the blood, the death, and void; it comes back to them as if it were only yesterday. They've lived it over and over again, told their stories to uncountable journalists and writers, and died a thousand deaths each time, in hopes of attaining that which they may never receive. I think of the child who saw a stake being pushed into his father's heart. I think of the women who were stripped naked in front of their sons, who have still made it this far, despite losing every shred of hope. I think of the sons who tried to fight alongside their fathers, the daughters who tried to protect their families, the mothers and fathers who couldn't survive the carnage and left their children in an abysmal chasm. I think of my father's terrorized face, my mother's agony over the family she lost... And it calls to me at a very deep level; the fact that justice has been denied-utterly, inhumanly, insensitively, completely and thoroughly denied.

And that's, sadly enough, not all. We, as a nation, have learnt nothing. We have lost lives in Gujarat, in Kashmir, in the North-East and yet we seem to have no regard for human life whatsoever.

It has been thirty two years, dear diary, and nothing has been done. But then, we are on earth. We are a barbaric, cruel race. Is there a cure for this?

BY -NAINDEEP KAUR
(THIRD YEAR)

THE DEAD SOUL

Who gave them the right to burn our houses down to ash?
Who gave them the authority to kill countless innocents?
Who gave them the right to rape our women?
Who gave them the power to overpower us?
Who gave them the courage to throw us
Out of our own country?
Who is answerable for the loss of life, of humanity, all around?

Nothing can bring our mothers and brothers back.
Blood, fear, death has become a common sight now.
This turmoil of emotions within us will never end.
The ones in power sympathize with us,
But they can never understand the pain
And the misery we are going through.
Looking at our children- fear stricken-life was never so hard!
How can one leave home to find a home?
The home which symbolized safety, happiness, family,
Has now become the site of death and destruction.
Abandoning home is like abandoning oneself.
Though we are alive, but the life in us died long ago.
The dead soul within us will never revive again!

BY: LAKSHITA KAPOOR
(THIRD YEAR)

A FORLORN TALE

House of: Love and Affection
Jammu and Kashmir.

The house rests isolated now, abandoned by the family, the neighbors, the home delivery servicemen and the newspaper hawkers. The home that once harbored a cheerful family has come down to nothing but a cold four-walled house, so solitary it stands that even the leaves of the Cedar tree behind it, refuse to fall on the barren land beneath.

The door on the front porch yearns for a gentle push; who else would know how long these 26 years have been? Gone are the echoes of playful laughter, the aroma of home cooked fare and the excited chatter of birds in the early morning.

Yet, the most intriguing transformation is that of the T.V- from bollywood to horrifying speeches of radical groups to being switched off. It wonders why it wasn't taken to the family's new dwelling! But does it know that the family was not transported, but forcibly pushed out? Or rather frightened away? Does it know that their new dwelling can hardly sustain them? Does it know that the special cutlery and fancy dresses too were left behind in haste? Does it know that along with their material possessions, their joy stayed back too? Compelling them to leave with fear, anguish and pain? From where now would that minority get its identity back? Which land do they call theirs? Which culture should they follow now? Which lineage do they claim as their own? What do they call themselves now? Kashmiris? Refugees? On a particularly frigid January morning all those decades back, some people not only lost their homes and property but also their identity.

BY: PRASHANSA LUTHRA
(FIRST YEAR)

THE ATTACK

The journey of the bleakest times,
Clamoring inexorably to war;
Captured by the sheaths of terrorism,
The world is battling so far;

The relentless onslaught on
Our valorous martyrs
Knocking at our doors;

The screeching throats,
The shivering spines, full of woes
Inflames to avenge but
Get indifferent uphold from our own;

Oh! Pity
The gloomiest day full of red spots
The heart-wrenching screeches,
Snatches the innocent grin of the children,

The veil of the paradise is yet again tinged with blood
The heavy graves are dug,
Their guns lay untouched when their breath left,
An upsurge now prevails within the lands and the borders beyond,
Humanity needs to be redeemed; the moment arrives and asks us to
respond...

BY: YOGITA MALHOTRA
(SECOND YEAR)

GHALIB KI HAVELI

(City walk by Meghna Singh)



GHALIB'S BUST

After reading his charming couplets and browsing through innumerable articles I found myself under the thrall of MirzaAsadullah Beg Khan (1797-1869), or MirzaGhalib, as he is popularly known. The man, one of the greatest poets of his time, seemed to speak to me even from a distance of over a century about love, longing, and life. How could I possibly describe him in terms which would not be an understatement? The only words that could be great enough for him would be his own-

*Haiaurbhiduniyameinsukhanwarbahut ache
Kehtehainkeghalibkahaiaandaaz-e-bayaanaur.*

Enchanted by his ghazals and shayari, I decided to pay Ghalib a visit. Come noon, I swiped my card to exit at the metro station, brimming with nervousness and excitement. The thought of treading on the streets where he must have strolled in the evenings and of visiting his abode where he stayed during his last days gave a spring to my steps as I made my way into the lanes of Ballimaran. I went up to one of the rickshawalas and asked him the way to Ghalibki Haveli, and he stared back at me blankly, as if his life-long knowledge of the galis and nukkads of ChandniChowk had come toppling down with that one question. That's when the excitement experienced a bump, and I stared back at him, amazed. Checking the address, I asked him where GaliQasim Jan was, and he, relieved, gave me the directions. Walking through the tapering lanes, I wondered, how a place of such importance could not be known to the local residents. Navigating my way through Ballimaran, I drank in the charm that these lanes had to offer, and a verse describing Ghalib's address walked with me thus:

*Ballimarankemahallekiwopechidadaleelonki see galiyan
Saamnetaalkenukkadpebateronkeposheede
Gud-gudaatihuiwaan pi peekonmeinwodaadwowah-wah
Chand darwaaze par latke huyeboshida se kuchtaatkeparde
Ekbakrikemamiyaanekiawaaz
Aurdhoondhlaayihuyishaamke be-noorandhere
Aisedeewaron se moohjodkarchaltehainyahan
Chudi-waalanunkekatrikebadi bee jaise
Apniboojhtihuiwaan khon se darwaazetatole
Isee be-noorandheri see galiqaasim se
Ektartebchiragonkeeshuruhotihai
Ekquran-e-sukhankasafakhultahai
Asadallah Khan Ghalibkapatamiltahai.*

I could almost imagine how Ghalib's Delhi would have been. Only, along with goats and pigeons, there now rest bicycles and scooters, honking their way through the dense crowd. I could imagine how on several of these nooks, Ghalib must have recited his quick-witted shers to friends, acquaintances, and strangers alike, holding a cup of wine in one

hand, and a pen in the other. The otherwise monotonously hustling streets appeared flooded with Ghalib's magnificence to me. After dodging humans and cattle alike, I finally reached the Haveli, which looked way more humble than I had expected. Crammed between commercial and residential structures, the entrance was dimly lit by an incandescent bulb. I felt a pang of disbelief and sadness at the abject neglect in which the poet now lay.



INSIDE THE MUSEUM

The residence, which was once a huge two-storied haveli, has now been commercialized and reduced to a three-room museum. Ghalib resided here from 1860-1869 on rent and produced some of his most profound pieces within these walls. Since then, the place has experienced several ups and downs and was even a warehouse for some time before finally being restored as a museum. Upon entering, one is greeted by his bust and manuscripts of his verses on either side, as a welcome treat. The museum has several of Ghalib's couplets hung on its walls, radiating the brilliance

that the man possessed and keeping his magic alive, even amidst such contrasting surroundings.

Strolling through the museum, I come across a life-size replica of Ghalib holding a hookah in one hand, and a glass of wine in the other:

*'Ghalib' chhutisharaab par abbhikabhi-kabhi
peetahuunroz-e-abra o shab-e-mahtaabmein*

*Karzkipeete the maylekinsamajhte the kihaan
rang laaegihamaarifaaka-mastiek din*

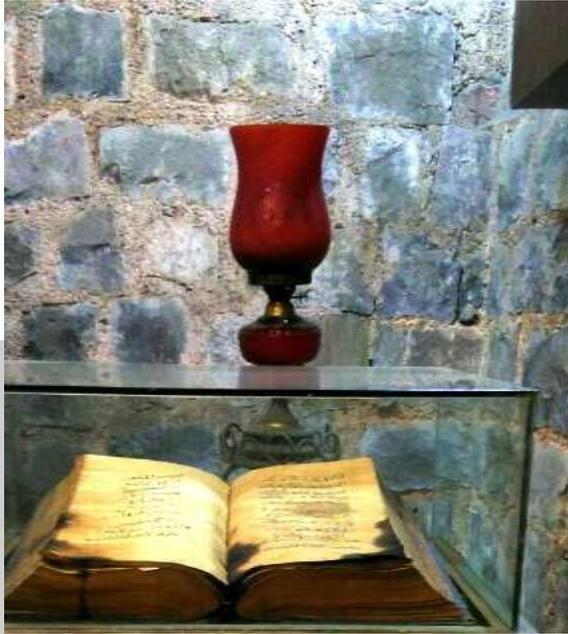
Among other things, inside the museum were some of his belongings as well as information about his favorite foods and pastimes, which gives the visitor a peek into his life. This is where Ghalib lived, experiencing the myriad of emotions that life is, turning them into fodder for his poetry. This is where he must've mourned the death of his seven children, including his adopted son, Arif, on whose demise he wrote:

*O, Eternal Sky,
Arif was still young,
How would it have harmed you
Had he lived a little more.*

Standing there, amidst the relics of Ghalib's life and art, I felt overwhelmed with his splendour, the man that he was:

*Hazaaronkhwahisheinaisikiharkhwahishpedumnikle,
Bahotnikle mere armaanlekinphirrbhikamnikle*

MirzaGhalib'sshayari is an amalgamation of innumerable facets of life. He may be a lover yearning for his beloved in some couplets, while in others he can be seen ridiculing love; he surrenders himself to the almighty sometimes, at other times claims heaven and hell to be mere constructs. His poetry both gives him the strength to bear the heaviest of grief, while also making his heart susceptible to even the most minor of pains. All of these facets come together in the making of the poet and the man.



GHALIB'S MANUSCRIPTS

But during my visit to the abode of this great poet, known and heard across borders, what struck me most was the callousness of the locals. Not just the rickshaw puller, but several other people whom I asked for directions stared back, clueless and indifferent. Were they not aware of the literary treasure that these lanes of Ballimaran had once housed? The way Ghalib has been dispossessed by his own neighbors in GaliQasim Jan is tragic. The people hustling through these lanes, following their monotonous lives are unaware of the treasures that await them in the garb of this poet-philosopher:

*HuimuddatkiGhalib mar gaya par yaadaataahai
Wohharekbaatpekehnakiyunhota to kyahota.*

(Photos: HarleenKaurTandon)

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