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DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY NEWSLETTER
SNDT WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY, CHURCHGATE

COGNISANCE



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CHANGE: TURN THE PAGE OV'R

EDITORS' NOTE

- MALVIKA DIXIT & SANIYA PATHARE

What does change mean to you? The gentle turning over of a new leaf or the tumultuous distortion of chaos? The eternal fear of uncertainty or the golden glory of novelty?

Current times are going to be grist for future fireside tales. Stories of tragedies, transformation, and triumph, abound. As we battle this ubiquitous constant of life called "Change", we realize that, like its quicksilver nature, Change, brings forth chameleonic connotations of resignation, fear, and adventure. Capturing this vitality of change and resonating the thoughts of various minds, Cognisance brings forth its fourth edition - "Change: Turn the page over".

Join us on this journey through a galaxy of perspectives encompassing constellations of articles, artworks, comic strips, poems and photos on the many layered aspects of change, adaptation and resistance. Our piece de resistance is a look at SNTD through the ages, which elucidates that change can be something less dramatic than a global pandemic, it can be the gentle evolution of life as time unfolds in space. Like Socrates said "The secret of change is to focus all your energy not on fighting the old, but on building the new". Our show stopper is an interview with Ms. Deepika Bhandari on the innovative Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT). Between these two are several other page turners.

We would like to thank all our worthy contributors and professors for helping us weave this brilliant tapestry on the essence of humanity- change. Our heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Anuradha Sovani and the Psychology Department Faculty for guiding us through this enriching process.

We welcome you aboard this exciting odyssey. Bon Voyage!

TEAM

Editors-in-chief

Malvika Dixit
Saniya Pathare

.....

Editors

Gauri Ambedkar
Ashmita Malik
Krishnaa Thakkar
Priyanka Tiwari

.....

Contributors

Prajakta Barve
Aishvari Joshi
Pranjal Mane
Nicole Mehta
Prerna Mehta
Mausam Nagda
Bhavisa Nakashe
Candida Noronha
Juhi Patel
Niyati Ranawat
Ishika Ratish
Ama Reshamvala
Hasti Shah
Simi Shibu
Madhureema Neglur

.....

Designers

Krishnaa Thakkar
Priyanka Tiwari

.....

Cover Art Credits

Ruqayya Cementwala

.....

Special Thanks

Dr. Anuradha Sovani (HOD)
Ms. Deepika Bhandari

HOD'S DESK

I write these words from the HoD's desk, with a mixture of contentment and poignancy. Contentment because the years I have spent at SNTW Women's University, Department of Psychology have been wonderful. The birth of Cognisance and its growth over the years has been a complete delight to watch. Poignancy because this will be the last piece I will write for it. So happiness and sadness would not be words I choose for these mixed feelings, simply because they are not nuanced enough! To use those terms would be like painting using solid patches of oil on canvas, instead of the softly merging pastels of flowing water colours on paper; like Kabuki or Kathakali with their stylized masks and bright costumes, rather than the mystical cadence of a Sufi whirl, or the gentle moves of a Lasya dancer.

Few who have not lived it will know the pleasure that one derives from seeing multiple generations of post graduates move out of the protective cocoon of their Masters program, spread their wings and find their strengths as they soar into professional life. The feeling is akin to the cycle of seasons, as fresh new students enter the Department with hopes and dreams in their eyes and hearts and leave after two years; and you begin to prepare yourself for their exit and the entry of a fresh new batch. No attachments, just joy at seeing erstwhile unrevealed skills manifest.....and Cognisance is a great example of one such creation.

I bring before you, dear readers, another, and my last, edition of Cognisance. The talented Editorial team and the students who have contributed to it have worked hard on 4.0. That too in this year 2021, a year that has brought untold and never before restraints that have tested us all. Enjoy!

- DR. ANURADHA SOVANI



A PAWSOME NEW THERAPY

BY
MALVIKA DIXIT
AND
GAURI AMBEDKAR

“Marley and Me’ made us bawl our eyes out. As did ‘Hachi- A Dog’s Story’ and ‘Free Willy’. We were all holed up in our rooms while processing the death of Harry Potter’s owl, Hedwig. What is it about this bond between man and animal that transcends culture, age, and every other divide?

This human-animal bond led to the creation of Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT), which as a field, has been gaining a lot of attention recently. Popularly known as pet therapy, it involves having an animal in the therapeutic setting to help the client work through their issues. It builds on the concept of human-animal bond which, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association, is ‘a mutually beneficial and dynamic relationship between people and animals that is influenced by behaviors essential to the health and wellbeing of both’. Since it is still in its nascent stage and shrouded in misconceptions, we sat down with Ms. Deepika Bhandari to know more about it.

Ms. Deepika Bhandari's journey started when she wrote a paper on how dogs can help with autism as part of her under-graduate studies. Researching on it led to her discovering the Animal Angels Foundation. As an animal lover, she could think of nothing better than being able to combine her love for animals and psychology. Animal Angels Foundation agreed to let her work after her Master's degree in case of an opening. And as fate would have it, she got a chance to work with them. Her work there led to her partnering with one of the founders and Animal Angels Foundations became Dear Oliver Therapy Services. They provide online and offline therapy, animal assisted therapy, and have also recently introduced a course on animal assisted therapy.

Freud is the first name that comes to mind when one thinks of psychology. And with respect to animal assisted therapy, he is once again the frontrunner. Freud is known to have used his cat (although this has not been documented properly and is debated) in his therapy session, because it helped people calm down. Boris Levenson was recorded to have specifically used animals in therapy, especially with children. He realised that animals helped the child connect with the therapist and become more involved in the therapy process. Although Levenson introduced it in the 1900s, it is only in the last 30 to 40 years that people have realised the benefits of animals in the therapeutic process and this therapy has gained traction. However, Ms.Bhandari points out that there are still many misconceptions surrounding it. Especially when it comes to the involvement of the animal, which is not as passive as one would have believed it to be. Although it generally involves dogs, any animal can be used in therapy. Including but not limited to cats (yeah, the little mean ones who hiss all the time), dolphins and other fish, and horses (equine-assisted therapy).

Therapy dogs were also used in the second World War. They would regularly visit the recovering soldiers to comfort them and lift their mood- as early as 1860, Florence Nightingale stated that “a small pet is often an excellent companion for the sick, for long chronic cases especially.”

Therapy Dogs International (TDI) is a volunteer organization in the United States of America founded way back in 1976 in New Jersey. It regulates, tests and registers therapy dogs and their handlers. As of 2012, over 24,000 teams of dogs and handlers were registered with the TDI.



It is also a possibility that stray dogs/indies can become therapy dogs given that they have passed the temperament test. But because of their milieu, it is difficult to understand what their mood or living situation is or how their mood will be in a therapy setting. However, if they have been adopted and are house pets, it is easier for them to be a therapy dog.

Animals in AAT

We know what you all are thinking. Cats? Really? Well, she points out that what is most important in AAT is the temperament of the animal. Yeah, apparently there are nice cats! The animals in AAT are extremely sociable. They love to interact with others and feed off people's energy. Which is what makes them great in group settings- people can be smothering them with love and belly rubs and they bask in it! Although they have conducted sessions with 400-500 people, the number of people actively interacting with the animal is limited to 8-10 since large crowds can overwhelm some animals. Another aspect is how much the animal can be trained. Ms.Bhandari says that training programs for cats are limited as compared to those available for dogs, which makes dogs a preferred choice. However, people who own cats and have a good connection with them bring them into the therapy setting. If your animal passes a temperament test, then they can be brought in to help with therapy and play an active role in therapy. The test basically looks at how sociable the pet is, how well they interact with people, and whether they are comfortable being around people, and other aspects of their personality and behaviour.

Training the animal

Although they are often confused and used interchangeably, the animals used in AAT differ from service animals and emotional support animals. Service animals receive particular training to deal with a specific problem for example an animal trained to recognise changes in the person's body at the onset of a panic attack, and are medically recommended for that person. Emotional support animals do not require training as strict as service animals but are there to provide emotional support and are generally the person's pet. Therapy animals fall somewhere in between. They are trained to work with mental health professionals. Their training is not as rigorous as a service animal or as lax as an emotional support animal.



The training can involve positive reinforcements. They need to know certain commands and have a strong bond with the therapist/handler.

A handler needs to be present in the therapy setting. It is possible that the handler is the therapist and not a separate person. It can also be that two therapists are present in the setting with one functioning as a handler. Both the therapist and the handler need to know how to manage the animal but the handler is primarily responsible. The safety of the animal is of import and so there needs to be someone who understands the animals and what they need.

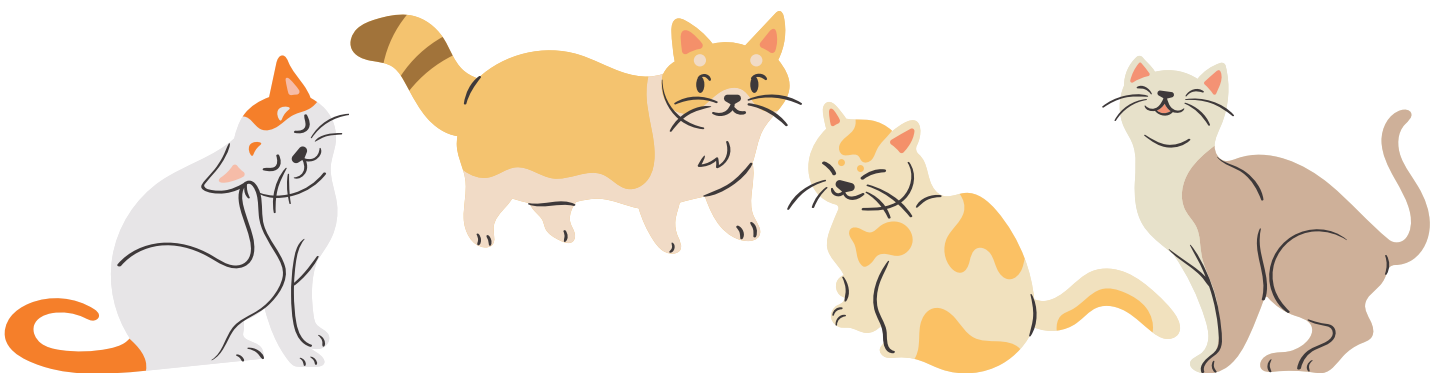
To ensure that the animal is not overworked, Ms.Bhandari talks about limiting the number of hours that they work.

Therapy in AAT

Animals can be used in combination with practically any style of therapy. It has been largely used with psychodynamic theory. It has also been incorporated with gestalt therapy, and with REBT because it is easier to challenge thoughts when an animal is present in the room- the presence of the animal makes the person feel safe and reduces resistance. A University of Pennsylvania Veterinary Hospital research has shown that within the first month of acquiring a companion animal, individuals showed a considerable increase in psychological well-being and a decrease in minor health issues (Halm, 2008).

Ms.Bhandari has now started working with animals and body work- for example stroking the animal and noticing changes in the client's physiological responses. There are also therapy farms which have certified therapy animals, and therapy zoos. Looks like there is heaven on earth!

It has been widely assumed that AAT works well with people on the autism spectrum. Ms.Bhandari explained that this is because the part of the brain involved in human connection is slightly underdeveloped in those with autism, however, the part involved in communicating with animals is overly developed.





Animals and people on the autism spectrum have one phenomenon in common - sensory based thinking. Their thoughts and experiences are filled with detailed sensory information. Especially dogs make their behavioural intentions more easily understandable because they communicate verbally as well non-verbally (Grandin et. al., 2010). Ms. Bhandari recounted a story of how a child who would maintain absolutely no eye contact, bent down and maintained eye contact with Lilo, a therapy golden retriever. Animal assisted therapy works well with all issues and with people of all age groups, from a toddler to an 80 year old adult.



Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) works wonders online as well! In an online setting, the animal is a part of the video call screen when the client and the counsellor are interacting with each other. The mere presence of an animal on the screen generates a motivating spirit in the client. Individuals who love animals get energized by their presence on the screen. It helps the client in opening up. It also helps the counsellor comfort the clients in overwhelming situations. An animal's antics can unknowingly generate humour in the therapy sessions. Although AAT is very much a touch-reliant therapy and this essential element of touch cannot be experienced in an online setting, even an anecdote about animals in the middle of the session can provide a refreshing break for the client (and the therapist!). Animal assisted activities like relaxing and having fun with animals can also help a great deal. It may happen that a client is discussing an issue on a very serious note and an animal in the therapy setting does something mischievous which can lighten the mood.



Not for everyone though

Once in a while, one might come across an individual who is just not motivated by animals or does not respond to animals. Some clients might have an allergy or phobia towards animals. Although, it is possible for a client to work through the phobia if they are motivated enough. AAT is also not suitable if the client has a history of being abused by or abusing animals. It can be that the animal misbehaves sometimes. However, this is extremely rare. And individuals are in fact more forgiving towards animals than they are towards themselves.



Training the therapist

For those of you who have been intrigued and are thinking of pursuing a career in animal assisted therapy, a Masters Degree in Clinical or Counselling Psychology is an essential prerequisite. A specialized training programme in Animal Assisted Therapy like the one provided by Dear Oliver Therapy Services, is a combination of theory and practical experience about the field. The objective of the training is informing about the appropriate usage of a variety of animals in therap

One needs to be mindful about certain important tenets. The safety of the animal is of utmost importance in AAT. Animals can assist in different ways for dealing with a variety of disorders and in combination with many therapeutic modalities. Individuals without a psychology background can partake in Animal Assisted Activities which involves using animals in different activities. For example, in a corporate setting, an animal can be used for team building or stress reduction.

An emerging field in India

Animal Assisted Therapy is an emerging field. There are various organizations in India that are exploring and experimenting in this area. AAT need not be confused with simply playing with animals. It is a scientific, goal directed and structured therapy. It is highly used for children with special needs. Schools, nursing homes, rehabilitation centres, old age homes are settings where AAT is most commonly used. Animals are used at airports nowadays to comfort people who are afraid of flying.

Remember, AAT doesn't ask for much. It has 3 basic requirements-

- A client who is comfortable with animals
- An animal which is comfortable with humans
- And most importantly, a therapist who is comfortable with both!

Further information on AAT:

Institutes that offer training in AAT in India – Dear Oliver Therapy Services, Mumbai
Book Recommendations – Animal Assisted Therapy in Counselling by Ms. Cynthia Chandler



Embracing Change

BY JUHI PATEL

Do you think about the chair lying in that corner?

Have you ever noticed those few pieces of furniture that are just there, the ones that you put no conscious thought of buying, the ones that you mindlessly use because you do not have the time or the will to buy another? Let's have a look at this aforementioned chair. Did you buy it just to match the color combination of your wall or was it just there in your house ever since you remember?

Now, while you direct your focus on the characteristics of that furniture and contemplate the question I just presented, out comes a research phantom, "People fear change because on a certain level they fear not being able to value or identify with the different surrounding" (Venus et al., 2021) Re -Looking at that chair, you might wave it off as mindless wandering. "The current one is just fine and I don't have money to spend on another chair" you say, reinstating your focus on the furniture around you. But pause.

Haven't you already spent most of your days adjusting to the way things are? Living with the pieces of furniture because you don't have the heart to throw it out? Because there's never enough time to contemplate the role a chair plays in your life?

Yet, you resist. "I do not have enough money and I'm used to the old one now"

But will you ever clear the clutter? Do you have a yard stick which says \$200,000 would be enough for me to think about comforts? You do not. Don't make up a figure right now just to forget it the next time you're online.





In the modest life that you live, maybe in the college dorm, the office or with a family of 5, spending money and time for your comfort holds paramount importance for your well being (Handayani et al., 2018)

The metaphor for the chair used here is of course applicable to those clothes you have stacked, those unfilled notebooks that just lie around and even the thoughts that you harbour and never knew existed, - what have you. However, let's milk the chair metaphor a bit more right now.

Your eyes widen at the prospect of a new purchase. Yet you hold back. "What if I find a better chair somewhere else? Shouldn't I look around more?"

The research phantom sighs, "The resistance to change is present in all decision making processes with varying degrees and even has a neurobiological basis. It is usually based on the fear that change in outcome could turn out to be worse (Forsell, L. M., & Åström, J. A. 2012).

Light dawns on you. You decide to break free from the cycle of ignorance, fear and mindfully engage in what you own. Maybe you decide the chair is valuable after all and appreciate it or maybe you decide to paint it or have it replaced sometime soon.

We often end up doing things that have no meaning and miss out on things that are actually required. Maybe if you do throw that chair out, it'll make space for a new, better one. Or, maybe 'do you even need that chair anymore?'

To arrest Change, is to arrest Decay.





THE VOICE OF AWARENESS

By Ishika Ratish

To bring about change, we require a perspective of the present, rather than the future or the past. The future is just an idea or projection, whereas the past is something that has already happened. Real change begins to take place in the present. And to be in the present is to be mindful.

Mindfulness is known to enhance health and well-being, relieve stress, reduce depression and anxiety, improve sleep, increase positivity, etc. It helps in understanding and regulating one's emotions, reactions, and behaviors in a better manner.

It helps an individual to choose to respond rather than to react. This control that an individual experiences is empowering in a way that it helps him/her navigate through the constant change around us.

We work in an autopilot mode which prevents us from reflecting on our feelings. Although mindfulness is simply explained as being in the present, it is much more than that. It is about being aware of the current emotions and thoughts but not engaging with them or rejecting them. It is about being non-judgmental.

According to Behan (2020), being aware of the present moment helps us to identify our thoughts and thinking patterns. Similarly, being non-judgmental allows us to slowly unravel the spiral of thoughts to understand the 'worries', 'cravings', 'fears', etc., thus, allowing us to let them go in the same slow manner. When we come from a non-judgmental space, we are more accepting of our feelings and emotions.

Dismissing our emotions or fighting them doesn't help us, since we ourselves are the source of these emotions. If we let our feelings be, they'll empower us. One of the positives of this is compassion – which helps us to be kinder to both ourselves and others. It helps us understand how our emotions affect our thoughts, which in turn, help us make decisions.

In today's scenario, one example of the many emotions that we are experiencing is grief. The grief model by Kübler-Ross has five stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. The last stage of acceptance which is an integral part of mindfulness, helps us understand and adapt to the ever-changing experiences of our life. This understanding that everything is impermanent plays a role in promoting positive adaptation to a highly unpredictable situation like the present times (Kessler, 2019). Mindfulness helps us regain a sense of meaning which is lost due to grief and purposelessness.

Practices such as Mindfulness based cognitive therapy (MBCT) helps an individual identify the patterns of their mind and recognize when their mood is altering. It helps in breaking the association that is formed between negative moods and negative thinking patterns. It helps one to see one's self as separate from one's thoughts and emotions realizing that one's self and emotions may exist simultaneously, but they don't have to be congruent. Skills acquired through mindfulness practice are effective in ameliorating the effects of a broad range of disorders like depression, anxiety, PTSD, eating disorders, substance abuse, etc. (Davis & Hayes, 2012).

Above all, mindfulness is something that can be practiced anywhere and at any time. It helps us realize that no experience can last forever. According to Meyers (2020) everything is momentary, since change is ever-present and inevitable. Furthermore, realizing that thoughts and emotions are just experiences and not facts, gives us a sense of control. Mindfulness does not replace action. Instead, it helps us connect with something bigger than us which helps us persist. It gives us agency.

However, everyone has their ways to adapt to change, mindfulness is just one of the many that one can try. See if it works for you!

ARTISTICALLY YOURS

BY MAUSAM NAGDA




Art is the meeting ground for the world inside and the world outside. Arts in the form of visual art, movement, music and even drama have been a catalyst of connection since ages. India has been a reservoir of community folk art forms, where the focus was on the exchange between people and establishing healing and safe spaces.

When we talk about healing, more often than not we emphasize the aspect of mind and tend to neglect the role of the body in the process. Arts help to bring a connection between the mind and body. This establishes integration, self-awareness and the byproduct of these is an observable shift in emotional wellbeing.

But why Arts? What lies beneath these modalities that leads to healing? In distress, often we are bound to mental sets where alternatives are difficult to access.

Arts have been proven to be as a healing space not only for neurotypicals but also for neurodivergent populations. The wonders brought by the modalities establish a space of comfort not only socially but also neurologically. It has led to better communication skills, better engagement skills.



Arts as a form of skill building helps them to give a sense of achievement which enhances their self-efficacy and self-esteem. Using arts in therapy (expressive and creative arts therapies) provide a space of play which is powerful in itself.

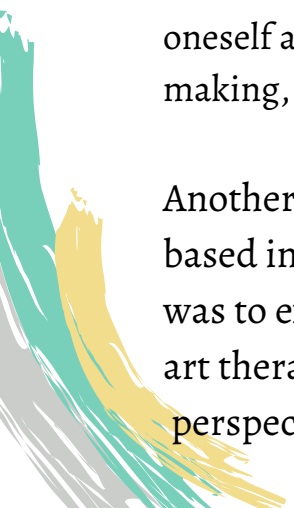
The ability to play opens up avenues for the clients to access healthy coping resources and comfort in their own body by being vulnerable. Secondly, spontaneity is a tool that is used in the process. Being spontaneous helps to access the creative energy and themes which were not brought in the conversations otherwise. Thirdly, arts provide a space for exploration and expression using aesthetic distance.

This means that the person is able to externalize his feelings and thoughts using modalities as a tool which enables to maintain a safer distance. Acting upon the themes from a distance protects the person from getting emotionally triggered and it offers a different perspective from outside. All art forms work as a container for expression that provides a holding to the person. The metaphors and symbols emerging in the container of arts can be further explored through arts. Thus, the process is not a linear one, rather it is more cyclical in nature.

The way these modalities and tools are used in therapy as interventions is subjective and differs from client to client, considering the intensity of the population and the concern presented. It starts like any other process of therapy i.e. establishing rapport and getting to know the client and the problem concerned, taking the assessment and so on. Then the goals are established and accordingly the interventions are set.

Let's light upon an example of how a process would look in brief. I have been working with a group of young adults with disabilities using Expressive Arts Therapy. The goal there was to work on social-emotional learning and skill building like expressing oneself appropriately or self-awareness. We used various interventions like song making, puppetry, role play, etc.

Another goal was to work on dexterity and fine motor skills where movement based interventions were used. In one of my individual client sessions, our goal was to explore boundaries, so we used the metaphor of a house and fences as an art therapy intervention. This provided a space for play offering a different perspective without getting emotionally triggered.



There are two main streams of training and work depending upon the specialization of a singular or multiple modalities. There is Expressive Arts Therapies and Creative Arts Therapies. The former uses music, dance, drama and movement in the therapy space and hence there is an element of intermodality, i.e. the use of multiple modalities and the way of interweaving them into the interventions. Creative Arts therapies on the other hand use a single modality where you get trained in either dance movement therapy, music therapy, drama therapy or art therapy.

The nature of the modalities also plays an important role in the process for change. The choice of art materials (fluid-paints or rigid-crayons), type of music or movement interventions and even drama therapy techniques need to provide an emotional attunement to the client to be able to immerse in the process and allow oneself to heal. Thus, it is not just about engaging with the arts but also using them in a way that they match with the energy of the person and make them feel safer.

Looking from the lens of traditional therapies, Expressive and Creative Art Therapies do borrow their intentional usage of interventions from person-centred, psychodynamic, psychoanalytic, gestalt and attachment theories. They provide help in forming a solid intent and a ground for the modalities to mould into interventions.

Lastly, it is very important for the client or even the therapist (to some extent) to know that there is no requirement of being trained in any art modality. The emphasis is not on how beautifully they paint or how perfectly they move or sing. It is about meeting with their creative energy and allowing themselves to heal. This process is a reflective and an immersive one not only for the client but also for the therapist. As a practitioner in training, you have to allow yourself to immerse, go deep with it, explore the modalities and experience them in the body to be able to work with them for the client. Hence, a strong peer support, supervision, personal and group therapy process become a part of the training too.

The field is still budding in India with qualitative courses run by trained faculties in the Indian context. The whole sole purpose is to bring our inherent art forms in the space of therapy by adapting it to our culture, as well as align it with our models and narratives of social justice and healing.

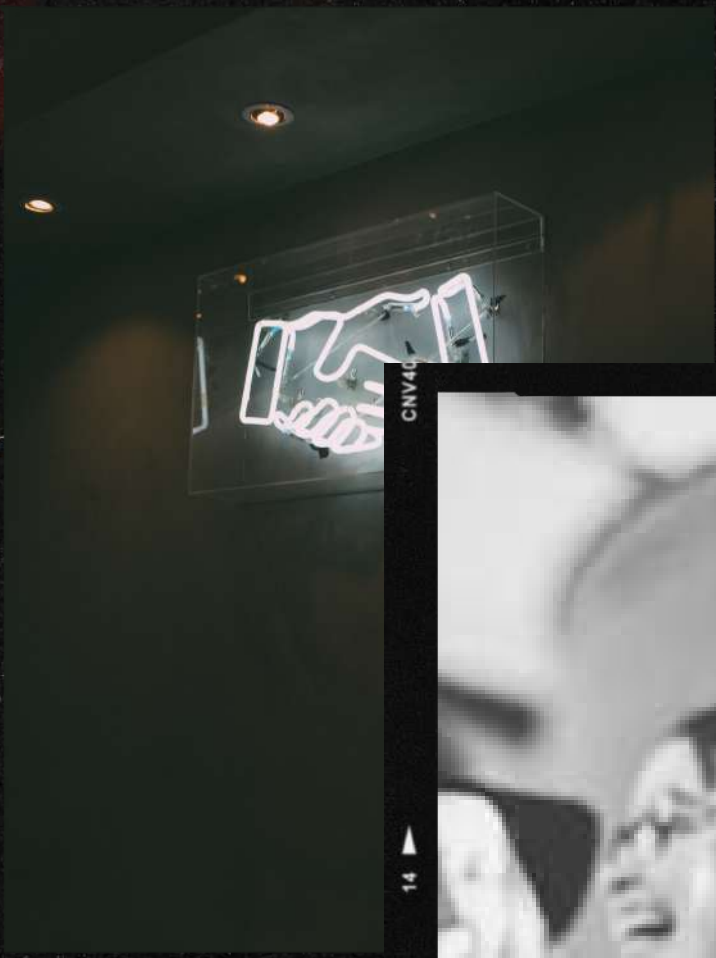
VIRTUAL MEETS AND LOST HUMAN TOUCH

by Prajakta Barve

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The year 2020 taught us so much. Right from the possibility of schooling from home to all the hobby classes, and even the physically interactive events like attending sports day from home were made possible. All get-togethers, gatherings took place virtually on Google Meet or Zoom. Birthday parties were organized on video calls; elderly people were unable to go for a walk and instead were talking to their neighbors from windows. Moreover, counselling, yoga classes, meditations etc. also shifted their medium of interaction to online. And this list goes on endlessly...

If anybody had told us to attend school online, celebrate festivals online, or have a virtual get-together of family members, we wouldn't have believed it. COVID 19 indeed has changed our perception of looking at these possibilities. We've all seen this virtual medium transforming into an excellent opportunity for everyone during these tough times, we at least could see each other, be it virtually.

But now, in 2021, the scenario has changed a little. When I interacted with a few of my cousins who are school and college goers, I was surprised with the response I got from them. My question to them was, "So are you guys satisfied with the mode of your education", "Don't you think that learning on campus will be more fun?" To which they answered, "Tai, don't you think it is saving our time?" "We don't have to travel any more and we can attend our lectures lying on our bed, wearing pajamas, no need to dress up properly anymore." One of my sisters also said, "Tai, it is so comfortable to sit on my bed and attend the lectures, isn't it fascinating for you too?" You simply can eat, roam, relax and learn at the same time!"

After hearing this, I started introspecting. Although I agree with the fact that working from home can be comfortable by avoiding the hassle of traveling far away which in turn also saves a lot of time. But what struck my mind was that what about the physical presence of the people? What about the vibes which they carry with them, that is, the positive energy of people which at times helps us to rejuvenate ourselves and most importantly what about the sense of touch which we all are missing? Though meeting people virtually is fun and we can even meet those of our friends and relatives who stay out of town, somewhere I

feel that we are losing the personal touch, the immensely imperative human element.

Touch, the 5th sense of human beings, is a necessary component of the socio-emotional, physical, cognitive, and neurological development of human beings and a non-verbal form of communication. Holding hands in a particular way, hugging each other, patting backs, tickling, kissing, and even slapping tells us a lot about the other person without actually speaking. We are used to such activities, as most of the time it conveys our care, comfort, compassion and establishes a connection between one another (Cohut, 2018). But, the ongoing pandemic has resulted in touch deprivation which, in my opinion, is going to affect everyone's mental health.

When a person is stressed or anxious, the body produces cortisol, also known as the stress hormone. Now to balance the level of cortisol, the human body needs to produce oxytocin, which according to various psychologists and therapists, is produced when a person is involved in activities such as hugging, caressing, touching, etc. Due to lack of production of oxytocin, mainly due to deprivation of touch, a person continues to feel depressed, stressed, or anxious (Uvnäs-Moberg et al., 2015). According to a research by Insel (2003), release of oxytocin helps in attaining well-being by stimulation of dopamine in nucleus accumbens, which in turn increases social interaction and decreases anxiety.

Basically, the right type of touch calms us down, helps build our immunity and sleep peacefully (Jha, 2020). Although we are connected through the internet, somewhere deep inside, we all miss those hugs, cuddles, and shaking hands, which certainly was an important part of our lives. Meeting people “offline” gives us a sense of satisfaction and togetherness; a feeling that someone will be with us no matter how hard life hits us.

Hence, according to me, while adjusting to the new normal, which demands from us to be present virtually, we should at least try and have an actual conversation with our family and nearby living friends. This will make us realise the importance of our precious 5th sense, the touch and once we are back to our old routine, will also strengthen our bonds with our colleagues and peers.

Covid- A Revolutionary Change

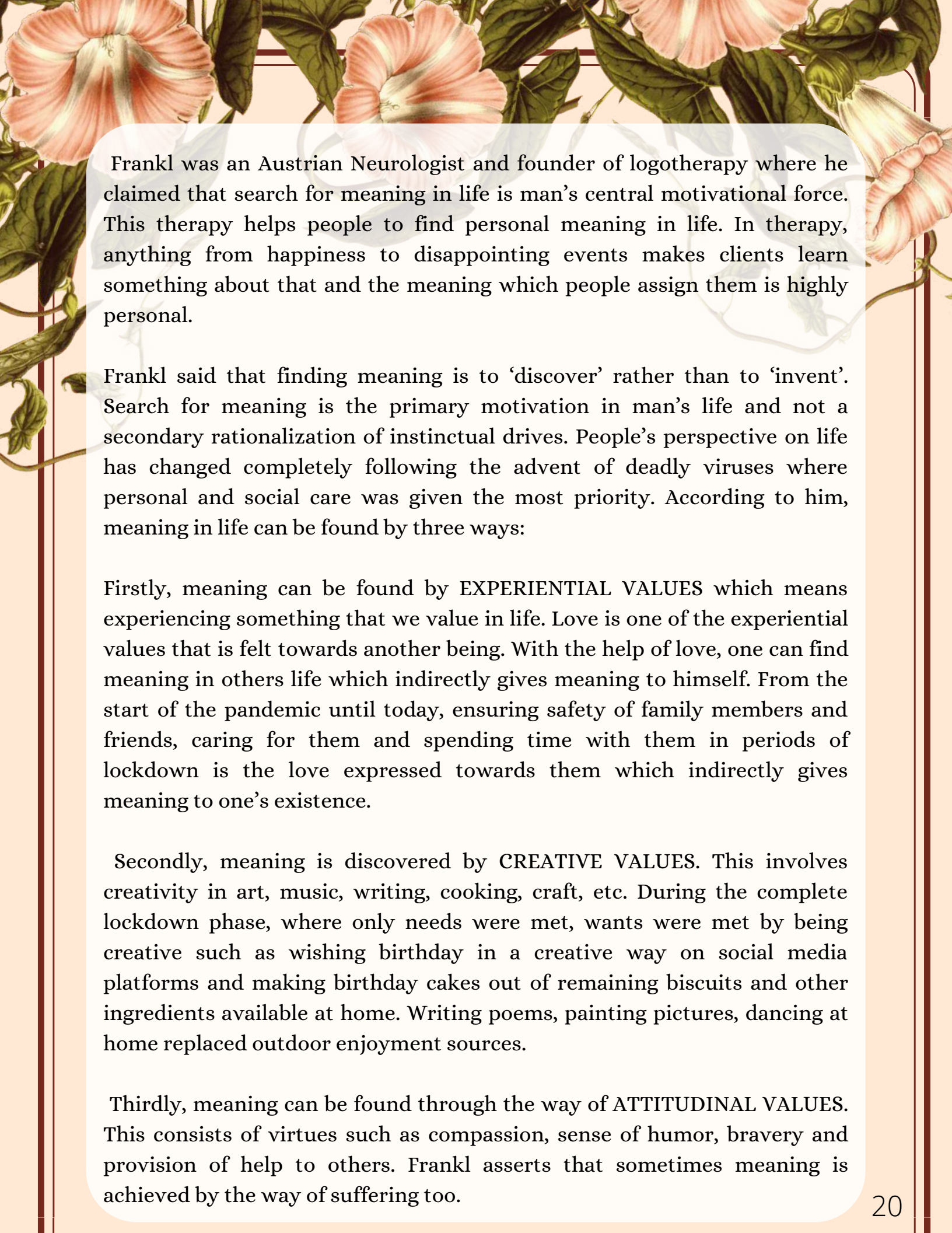
by Hasti Shah



Covid has led all people to discover different things about themselves. The questions that arise within are- who am I? Why is this virus affecting us? Is this life worth living? If yes, then what meaning does it have? This is in relevance to EXISTENTIAL FIELD OF PSYCHOLOGY where the world in which people live is best understood from their own perspective.

Lord Krishna in Mahabharata announced that if there exists an imbalance in the world, then there will definitely be a war to establish humanity again. In this war, many innocent people will have to lose their lives. Consistent with this, since March 2020, India and many other nations faced complete lockdown. World was in war against deadly coronavirus where many innocent people passed away. There will be change worldwide and humanity and its principles will be reestablished.

This is one of the meanings that can be applied to the pandemic situation which is related to Victor Frankl's Logotherapy. That meaning can be personal to each and every human being because the subjective experience of all people varies. Even during difficult times, people learnt something about themselves and others, their suffering was turned into achievement and accomplishment. A new outlook was formed and life was viewed from a different lens. Unity among humans was seen in vivid ways right from helping others to praying for peace of people who passed away.




Frankl was an Austrian Neurologist and founder of logotherapy where he claimed that search for meaning in life is man's central motivational force. This therapy helps people to find personal meaning in life. In therapy, anything from happiness to disappointing events makes clients learn something about that and the meaning which people assign them is highly personal.

Frankl said that finding meaning is to 'discover' rather than to 'invent'. Search for meaning is the primary motivation in man's life and not a secondary rationalization of instinctual drives. People's perspective on life has changed completely following the advent of deadly viruses where personal and social care was given the most priority. According to him, meaning in life can be found by three ways:

Firstly, meaning can be found by EXPERIENTIAL VALUES which means experiencing something that we value in life. Love is one of the experiential values that is felt towards another being. With the help of love, one can find meaning in others life which indirectly gives meaning to himself. From the start of the pandemic until today, ensuring safety of family members and friends, caring for them and spending time with them in periods of lockdown is the love expressed towards them which indirectly gives meaning to one's existence.

Secondly, meaning is discovered by CREATIVE VALUES. This involves creativity in art, music, writing, cooking, craft, etc. During the complete lockdown phase, where only needs were met, wants were met by being creative such as wishing birthday in a creative way on social media platforms and making birthday cakes out of remaining biscuits and other ingredients available at home. Writing poems, painting pictures, dancing at home replaced outdoor enjoyment sources.

Thirdly, meaning can be found through the way of ATTITUDINAL VALUES. This consists of virtues such as compassion, sense of humor, bravery and provision of help to others. Frankl asserts that sometimes meaning is achieved by the way of suffering too.



Sonu Sood, an Indian actor, showed compassion, and exhibited bravery by sending many people back to their homes whilst risking his own life. He arranged for oxygen bottles and helped people gain access to the remdesivir injection. He says that helping people gives his life a meaning to his life.

Apart from Frankl, another contributor to the Existential field is Medard Boss. Boss introduced the term BODYING FORTH which means the way people relate to their bodies. Openness to the world is indicated by bodily openness and extension of the body out into the world. Taking into consideration the pandemic situation, personal vehicles functioning as ambulances and their owners as drivers and provision of food to needy people were examples of how people extended themselves out into the world which conveys that people are not locked up inside their bodies. Hence, human existence is shared existence. People stay in a world where they are not only concerned about their own well-being, but also are concerned for that of others. People live in a shared world where they help illuminate each other.

Hence, existence is associated with growth and unique change. Frankl says that everything can be taken from a human being but not his freedom which is to decide, to survive, to choose one's attitude and one's way to survive in any situation. WE ALL ARE SPIRITUAL BEINGS ENTANGLED IN THE PHYSICAL WORLD.

The pandemic gave us time to reflect on oneself amidst the busy life of humans. Meaning was given to different things which conveys that even a minute human experience has a purpose and all strive to discover that and make the situation more purposeful. Physical bodies were restricted but the soul was free to explore different dimensions of life. Similar to post the Mahabharata war, our current world post-covid will hopefully live in a place equipped with principles of liberty, equality, fraternity, brotherhood and most important- humanity.

BETWEEN HOPE AND DESPAIR

Written by
Ishika Ratish

Work from home

Distorted sense of time

Disturbed body clock

Use of technology like never before

Uncomfortable physical sensations

Declining mental health

Surprising realizations

This has been our life from the last year one year, or to be precise, more than a year. The pandemic needs no introduction, having affected everyone's lives, all over the world, from small, big to irreversible ways. The 'new normal' – that is in trend again – signifies the difference that this crisis has brought in our lives.



Uncertainty, vulnerability, and change, everything is going hand-in-hand. Change, according to the dictionary, has different meanings such as to exchange one thing for another or become different. Unpredictability becomes a problem when our brain isn't able to protect us without knowing what is to come.



This leads to an overestimation of threats, underestimation of abilities, and jumping to conclusions very fast, giving rise to our vulnerable side, which in turn, fuels emotions like anxiety.

A year on, the feelings have gotten worse as far as I observed. At the start of the pandemic, at least we had the hope to surf the waters and reach the shore someday. But this sea has started to feel endless now. It started with a mixture of fear, and hope – fear of the unknown and hope that it would be short-term. We are again feeling these emotional punches, in varying degrees, along with other emotions such as anger, frustration, and the rapidly declining hope.

Whatever you feel – newfound confidence about your abilities, worsened mental health than the year before, or even numb...just emptiness – every emotion is valid. All of these emotions and feelings are understandable. There is nothing right or wrong, or good or bad about it. The worsening physical disturbances, such as the lack of sleep, energy, feeling exhausted, weary...the list is endless.

We have been thinking, realizing, and doing many things – our identity, our purpose, the importance of a break...to even nothing. Yes, nothing! Some of us also felt miserable, and guilty when we saw people around us being productive and donning their creative hats. It's okay to not be productive, that it's okay to do nothing at times.

It is okay to feel everything. Unexpected things are happening and maybe will continue to happen. Not positive or negative, but just change. It can be anything, something, or nothing. Researchers have pointed out that the unfolding, large narrative is inclined to be multifaceted. The anxiety that we all are feeling is helping us bond, and connect.

“It is a story between hope and despair.”

What can we do?

Focus on the purpose of our life.

Focus on the here and now.

Find help and support when needed.

Anything that works for you.

I personally, had some time of hopelessness, stress, and numbness like never before. But instead of pushing away my feelings and emotions, I chose to accept them. And the first step towards acceptance is acknowledgement. I acknowledged that irrevocable events have happened, and they have changed my life, but it's okay. It's okay to feel weary, stressed out, and hopeless. I acknowledged that the pandemic is here to stay for an uncertain period of time and thus, it led to acceptance that I have to adapt both, my emotions and myself, according to the present scenario.

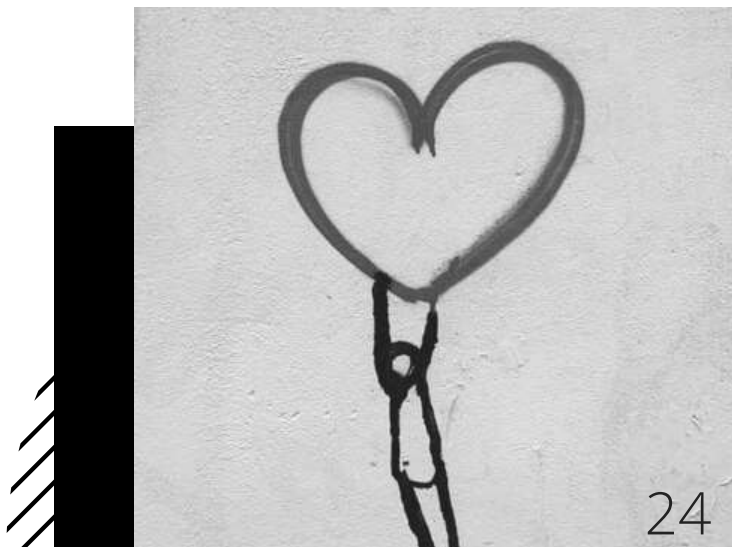
This isn't about brushing off our feelings, instead it's trying to acknowledge, and accept both our emotions, and the current situation. It is about being mindful about what we feel, and how we feel it. Mindfulness is indicative of awareness of the present experience with acceptance.

If following the guidelines is going to help, I will do that.

If me lending support to somebody is going to help, I will do that. I will do all that I can do, without pushing away how I feel.

Instead, I will take a moment to acknowledge the dissonance within my mind, make sense of it and then accept those feelings. This will help me get clarity in some way, thus making it at least a little better to move forward. Focusing on what is important to us in our life is one of the ways which can help us in these times. Another way can be to change our perspective of hope, our definition of just wishing for a better future, but actually envisioning how it can be better, and how we have the capacity to achieve it.

Prioritize your mental health, too. A little self-compassion can go a long way, one step at a time.



A SYNTHESIS OF WESTERN AND EASTERN IDEOLOGIES- THE NEED OF THE HOUR

by
Prajakta Barve

I'm currently watching the famous American sitcom 'FRIENDS' for the very first time. It is a US based series showcasing the lives of 6 friends and how they tackle all the odds. The series is a representation of the western thought process, which for me as an Indian, is quite astonishing. The casualness of relationships at an early stage (a.k.a. dating), the competition between humans to be successful, in general the thought process of "I" being stronger than "WE" or "US" is a little difficult for me to comprehend.

Dating in the western culture is a very old concept of seeing people without any sort of commitment. They try to understand the other person first before ensuring any commitments. Although this better helps in understanding a person but somewhere I feel that this also increases the casualness among the two would be partners. Since here they do not promise to be with each other, they have a chance of breaking up at any point of time. Hence the uncertainty increases. In the west, there exists competition between each and every individual. Instead of moving towards a desired goal together, people tend to pull each other down, to win.

This concept of individualism, where 'I' is more important than 'WE', leads to a deadly competition and results in hatred.

Growing up in traditional Indian culture, I was always taught वसुधैवकुटुंबकम् i.e. the entire world is my family. I was also taught, at school and at home, that I should provide help to people who are in need of it. Examples of relationships were set in front of me in the form of my grandparents, who were there by each other's side for over 40 odd years. Slowly I realized that somewhere I'm still stuck in the old school thought process whereas my friends have adapted to the "FRIENDS" culture.

This culture which predominantly resides in the USA and Europe focuses mainly on achieving individualistic goals. As stated earlier "I" is important there. People are more into being independent. The strong sense of competitiveness is less observed in the Eastern culture, comprising the countries of India, Japan, China etc, which focus more on achieving collectivistic goals. Here people are taught to succeed collectively, hence reducing competition. People are taught to become interdependent, and help each other. Although this helping and interdependence at times takes over our personal space and after a point one might feel over protected.

As stated by Hofstede in his cultural dimension model, people following eastern culture tend to score less on individualism vs collectivism index (IDV) indicating that they give importance to group over self while people following western culture tend to score high IDV showing their nature of thinking about self over others (Insights, n.d.).

With our generation being exposed to the western culture as well, we are adapting to it at a very rapid rate.



The problem according to me is not adaptation but partial adaptation of western culture. All of us today want independence but none of us are ready to accept the responsibility which comes with independence, gradually becoming more self-centred.

According to me, if we are trying to adapt something new then accepting both its pros and cons is our responsibility. I also think that moving away from our roots is not a good idea as otherwise our culture, our traditions will slowly become extinct.

For instance at times it is important for an individual to be a little selfish, but up to what extent is in our hands. Same goes for relationships. None of us will entertain any kind of torture by our partners but at the same time we should make our mindset to adjust a little, which of course should come from both ways, to strengthen our relationship and make it long running.

Also, the idea of competition, according to me, is an excellent way of keeping oneself motivated but then we should not forget that it is a healthy competition and not indulge ourselves in a rat race. Hence a better solution, for me, is to synthesize.

Take the good ideas from both the cultures and imbibe them to become a better human being. Trying to create a balance between extreme collectivism and extreme individualism i.e. forming synthesis of both the ideologies is the need of the hour and this change will probably increase the happiness quotient of human race.



Break the Cycle

By Nicole Mehta

“Mom, my heart is racing, my body trembling,
The worry is all I’m ever feeling.
I’m irritable, I fidget, can’t concentrate
Spend hours at night staring at the ceiling.”

“I’m anxious about all the little things Mom,
About everything, everyone, and myself.
I think I’m going crazy Mom,
I think I need some help ! “

“My Child, take a deep breath, sit with me,
About all your concerns, I hear you.
I have faced the same hardships before,
The worries have overwhelmed me too.”

“For us, seeking help was stigmatized,
Mental troubles were taboo.
But now that we live in changing times,
I promise you child, it will not be for you.”

“Take my hand, let’s turn the page,
On the taboos and stigmas of the past,
Let’s call the professionals and seek out help,
Change the ‘old ways,’ and break the cycle at last.”



LET'S BE THERE

By Simi Susan Shibu

Smiling is easy,
For tears have to be explained.
What a jolly face can subtly conceal,
A puffed up one, would give away.

Inner demons plaguing,
Clawing for their desired release.
Placing the naive human in a turmoil,
Of helplessness and unending grief.

The human seeks help,
As the world flashes by.
But who has time for woes?
When "Time is Money",
Is the principle we are running by.

Prisoned within a haven of extreme emotions,
The human faces a tough time.
Exhausting all resources possible,
For relieving his troubled mind.

When the sadness is unbearable,
And the pain too much to bear,
The kind, where the body functions,
But the mind surrenders in distress.

The climax is clear, as words run away,
For the loss of will...The will to live,
Is irreparable, with a lot at stake.

I wish we were more compassionate.
More human, per se.
For the fellow human needs Love and empathy,
To overcome those inner demons...
Slowly engulfing him, with no escape.

Where facades are easy to clothe,
And regrets hard to wear.
Let's be there.
For our mere presence can do wonders,
That our absence can drastically aggravate.



दुसरा पडाव

by Pranjali Mane

दुसरा पडाव सुरू झालाय..
काही महिने मिळालेली सूट आता अंगाशी आली..
पुन्हा उंबरठ्या आत राहण्याची वेळ आली ..
पण आता घाबरायचं नाही..
कारण सराव परीक्षा आपण दिली आहे..
पेपर पॅटर्न आपल्याला अवगत आहे..
पाठ दाखवण्या ऐवजी आता दोन हात करूया..
नकोशा विचारांचा आता जरा विचार करूया..
परिस्थितीशी झगडण्यापेक्षा तिला समजून घेऊ..
'मीच का ?' असं विचारण्यापेक्षा 'का नाही' असं म्हणू.
डार्विन भाऊंच्या म्हणण्याप्रमाणे जरा अडॅप्ट करून.
नसेल जाता येत बाहेर मग काय झालं? सध्या आतल्या
विश्वात डोकावून पाहू.



बदल- काळाची गरज

by Prajakta Barve

बदल ही काळाची गरज आहे असं म्हणतात सारे...
मागचं वर्ष बघता मात्र हे वाटत नाही खरे!
आले तसे सारे दिवस निघोनिया गेले....
एक गोष्ट नक्की कळली, आयुष्य क्षणभंगुर झाले...
सार्यांच्याच जीवनात अनिश्चितता आली...
Routine ची कामं स्वप्नात विरून गेली...
सतत सतत त्याच बातम्या, सारंच कसं *negative!*
मग मीच म्हंटलं स्वतःला, शोध यात काहीतरि *positive...*
तेव्हा मात्र ठरवलं आणिक कंबर माझी कसली...
अंधारात शोध घेता घेता, प्रकाशाची लकीर दिसली...
घरच्यांसोबत वेळ घालवणं, आनंदाचा स्रोत होता...
DD, Serials, Prime आणि *Netflix*,
दुःखाला स्कोपंच नव्हता.
आईने मग शिकवून पोळ्या कश्या लाटायच्या...
गोल नसल्या तरी चालेल पण आनंदाने वाढायच्या...
शुभंकरोती, पसायदानाचे पठण पुन्हा चालू झाले...
यानी मिळते खरी मनःशांती, हे नव्याने कळाले!

आज्जी आबांच्या जुन्या किस्स्यांची मज्जाच होती निराळी..
तेव्हा जाणवलं ही *generation* आपल्याहून नाही
वेगळी..

सगळ्यांच्याच कामाचं आता महत्त्व पटू लागलं....

पण आत्मनिर्भर सुध्दा व्हायचं, हे मनानी ठरवलं...

Negative negative म्हणता म्हणता सकारात्मकता
सापडली

अर्ध्या भरलेल्या ग्लास ची किंमत आता कळली!

नाही नाही म्हणत बरंच काही दिलं, या कोरोना रूपी
बदलांनी...

शीकवून दिलं, कसं जगावं आपलं आयुष्य समाधानानी...

बघ मना, मिटले ना सारे तुझे गैरसमज

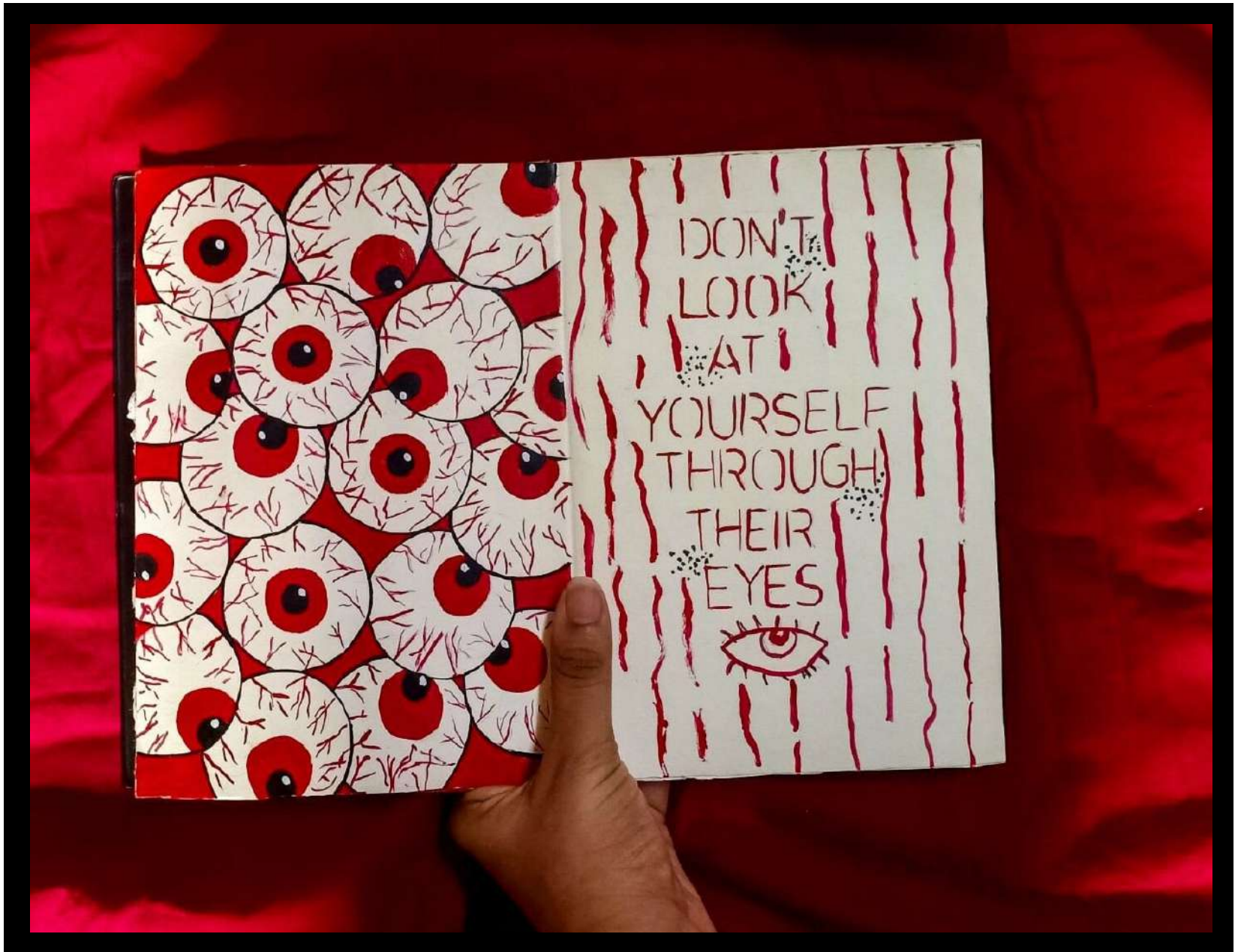
आतातरी पटले ना...बदल आहे काळाची गरज!!





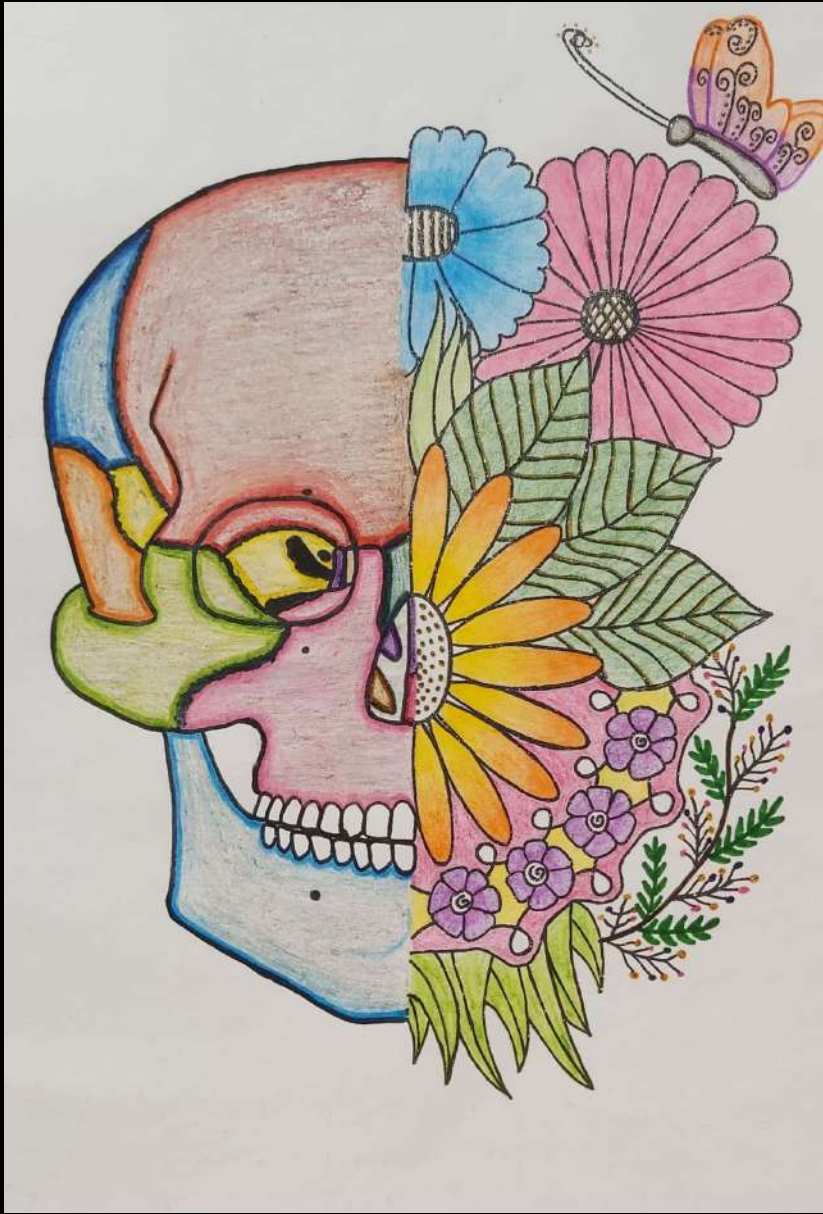
What has a start; has an end and so did my thread. Everytime I flipped it back to tie a knot, I told myself how messy it was. But aren't we all messy? Entangled in hopes, thoughts, and sense gratification. Those different shades of colours reminded me of the intensity of emotions we all feel from time to time while dealing with certain things. But as time flies we start to acknowledge those problems and commit to change them and that's when we blend in with each situation flawlessly creating a beautiful picture. It's no more blue, it's a balanced shade of blue. We flow with the wind and shine like the stars.

By Bhavisha Nakashe



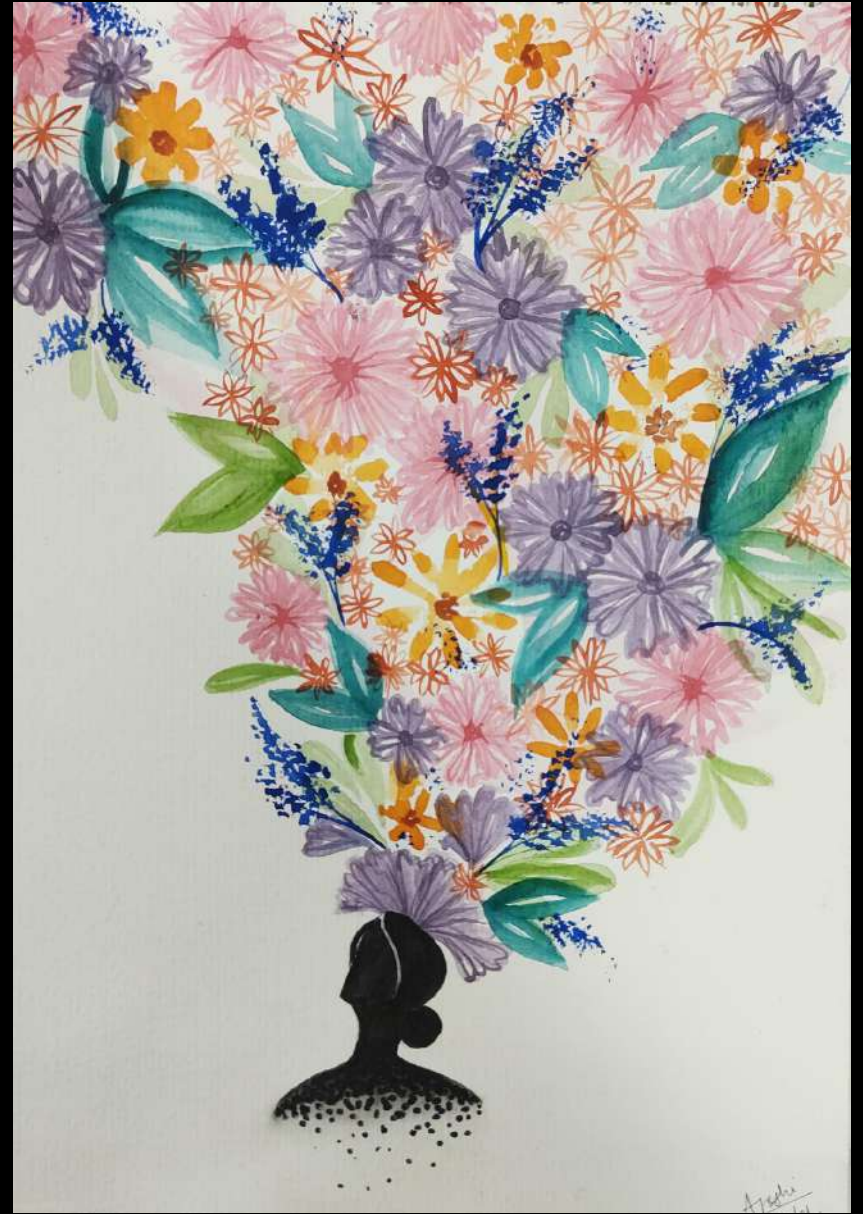
Things change around you when things change inside you.

by Niyati Ranawat



Friendship between mind and body.

By Hasti Shah



BLOOMING

By Aishwari Joshi



THE WAVE

The beauty of a wave is in the moment before it crashes. The moment when the wave has built up but is not ready to break yet. It is symbolic of the thought that goes in before we make a change. We fret, we fume, then we ideate and plan. Just like the wave hesitates, so do we. And then the change pours out of us.

By Ama Reshamwala



FOUR SEASONS

With all it's mightiness and beauty, nature teaches us some eternal fundamentals- Change can be beautiful.

By Aishwari Joshi



It may feel as if you are missing out on things, but don't forget that you are also encountering a lot of things that this world has never seen before.

by Pranjal Mane

Midnight Muse

By Candida Noronha

They say that nothing in
this world stays the same...




...and that is true.



Each night as you lay in bed,
know the magic is all inside YOU!





SNDT
through the
AGES

M.A. Clinical Psychology

Batch 2015-2017



by Deepika Bhandari

When I first entered SNT, my thoughts were there's no way this could be the college for me. I was a nervous, slightly entitled, and extremely tired bachelor's graduate. I had a certain image of what my life in masters was going to look like, and the look of SNT didn't meet that. But boy was I proven wrong, and how! What the college lacked from the outside, it more than made up with the avenues it gave you to explore yourself.

My two years at SNT were a period of change, a transition. The course pushed you to your limit, not because it demanded so much, but it gave you the space to take from it what you wanted to. Now, be it exploring a new research area, or methodology, or pushing you to participate in talent competitions, or coming up with an interdepartmental conference, we've seen it all. What was more was that the faculty was always a second away to answer any question, or to offer guidance/encouragement.

They truly said a professional course is not so much about what they can teach you, but what is your ability to learn. The atmosphere created, the space to explore, and the constant change amidst familiar surroundings is what helped me discover my ability to learn. As a direct contrast to when I entered, my only thought leaving was 'amidst these rickety walls and confusing architecture, who would have thought I'd find myself?'

M.A. Clinical Psychology. Batch 2018-2020



In this apocalyptic era where everything is virtual, we were the last ones to savour the pleasures of offline classes, where waiting back after the classes to speak to the professors was a norm. The real fun began in Part Two, the entire 8th floor was occupied by Psychology post grads. On our non-fieldwork days, we were at the university, either attending lectures, conducting practicals, collecting, or discussing our theses with our respective guides. To someone who is not from a psychology background, these activities may sound boring. But trust me, we enjoyed this overwhelming yet exhilarating experience.

by Madhureema Neglur

Standing on the 8th floor, looking at the glorious BMC and Railway buildings, heavy winds, and pigeons! —This is exactly how I remember my Masters at SNTU, Churchgate. Although the university is tucked in a neat gully next to the ever so crowded khau gully, bookworm's paradise, Sundrabai hall, and the noisy Churchgate station, these distractions didn't really matter to us psychology geeks, for we had only two hangout spots —the library and the department at the 8th floor.

Today, although these memories seem distant, I really hope the current batch experiences SNTU MA psychology like we did!



Yuva Mahotasav festival

M.A. Industrial Psychology.

Batch 2019-2021

by Prerna Mehta

The first list was out....

It is an amazing feeling when you get to see your name on the list of that very college you had hoped to get admission in!

The hustle of filling forms and submitting them to the admin despite heavy rains, did not dull the determination!

Holding an umbrella, bag on my shoulder filled with hopes and dreams, I entered SNTD university.

The feeling was enthralling!

An entire year there has been amazing

Now, when I say amazing I of course mean the classroom, campus view from the 6th floor, the library, auditorium and sitting in those corners in the campus before the exam!

And then suddenly, there came a notice which said, "exams canceled due to the pandemic" It felt momentary but it culminated into an entire year.

Second year has been entirely virtual from meeting friends to turning the camera on, somewhere the spark was lost!

No field trips, no staying back after college, nothing!

Virtual college, if I were to compare, is like this favorite dish of yours you enjoy in the start and think it's the best, but eating it daily makes you kind of dislike it and want dal Chawal roti !



*M.A. Industrial Psychology.
Batch 2020-2022.*

by Ashmita Malik

The only existent experience I've had of Mumbai was this school trip in 10th grade, and the only thing I can vividly recollect is Gateway of India, for obvious reasons.

The idea of being able to explore more of psychology and Mumbai has always been very exhilarating, and admission to SNDT seemed to make it happen. Imaginations have jogged all day and night, of how Mumbai ki baarishein look in real life, if Churchgate is as elite as it sounds to be, if SNDT's infrastructure and ethos deliver the very ancient essence that it's website does, and so on..

The reality diverged and all that this one year of SNDT has been, is this bed where the levels of fellow feeling between me and my laptop takes a switch every half an hour. There is also this desk that gets utilized on some immensely motivated Study-from-Home-days.

Mumbai rains aftereffects are now leading to network crashes instead of traffic jams. The corridor meetings and staying back after classes are now shared emails and whatsapp texts to professors. All the canteen chin-wag now happens over this informal SNDT whatsapp group, where you'll find hundreds of messages, if you, by any chance, keep your phone away for even an hour. Some 74 names over a Google Meet screen, recognising everyone from their voices more than their faces, constant collective ranting about assignments, exams, hectic schedule, lengthy screen times – it all feels like the entire class is so close, accessible and in reach despite being hundreds of kilometres away. Beautifully intimate in changed ways, isn't it?

There's still another year ahead, and a ray of hope that times would change again for good with each resetting clock and that MA-II won't just be a Google classroom, but a confided physical space for us psychology geeks.