

GAZETTE

INDIAN SCHOOL OF HOSPITALITY

for margins that
prove indispensable

#11

EDITION XI

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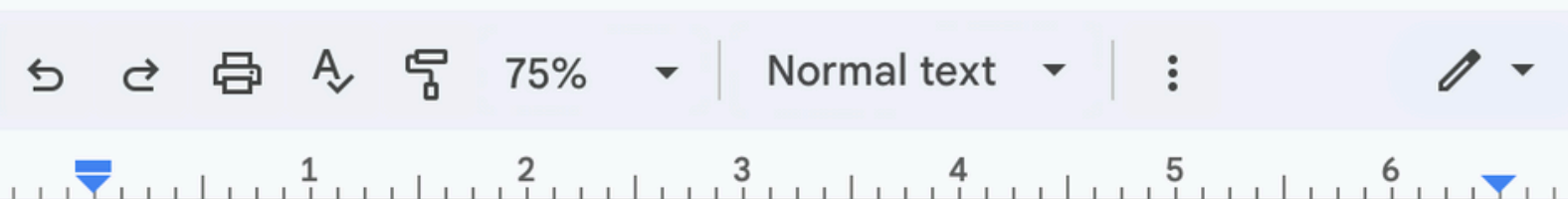
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GAZETTE

October 9, 2025



Letter from the Editor

I've never really struggled to write these letters before. Words usually find their way when I sit with the magazine; we somehow end up figuring out exactly what we're doing with our editions and of late, I can't seem to keep track of it all. I've been circling around what to say like I've been circling around how I feel – a little out of place, unsure of where I belong, grappling with the idea that maybe I don't.



That feeling has followed me through this edition, it's been strange to work on – not because it's ugly, because it isn't, it's actually quite pleasing to look at – but because I've felt distant from it, like it's only half mine. I've tried to stop myself from dwelling on insecurities and on the ambiguity of whether I belong in these pages at all. And yet, watching each piece fall into place, that feeling of being misplaced has started to feel almost comfortable. Like a reminder that things don't have to sit perfectly right to make sense. Imperfections, I've realised, have their own kind of gravity – they pull everything together in ways order never could.

And honestly, that is exactly what this club has always been: the odd one out, in the best way possible. We've never really fit neatly into the framework, always guided more by instinct than by any rulebook and still, somehow, people keep showing up – with their honesty, their idiosyncrasies, their corners of thought that don't quite fit anywhere else but feel at ease here. It's been incredibly moving to watch that happen, to see people trust this space enough to leave a piece of themselves in it. That, more than anything, reminds me of why we do this at all. Creation feels lighter when it's shared.

So fittingly, that is what edition XI is for me – a quiet nod to the beauty in what never sits quite straight.

With love,
Rhea



Letter from the Creative Director

Sometimes, I think the concept of placebo stretches far beyond medicine. It seeps into the way we navigate life. Once you convince yourself of something – truly believe it – the world around you begins to subtly rearrange itself to match that belief. Opportunities appear. Coincidences stack up. Situations unfold in strangely familiar ways. And if it happens often enough, it starts to feel uncanny, almost forced, like life is following a script you didn't write.



And maybe that's exactly what's happening. A script is, after all, just a pattern we've begun to recognize. Once you spot it, it's hard to look away. Patterns have a way of emerging from the noise: quietly at first, then all at once, until they start to shape how we move through the world. When something happens often enough, it stops feeling random; it becomes a sign, a superstition, a rhythm we instinctively tune into.

I grew up surrounded by these rhythms, sometimes without even realizing it. At home, for instance, we couldn't step out if someone sneezed right before we left. No matter how late we were running, everything paused. Plans could wait; the sneeze could not. I'd stand at the door, shoes on, bag in hand, watching the clock tick as everyone silently recalibrated the universe. Somewhere in my mother's past, a single moment of fear turned into an unshakable rule, one that still has me leaving fifteen minutes late for a movie I was already twenty minutes late to. What fascinates me is how these tiny repetitions quietly build the architecture of our lives. Some offer comfort, soft guardrails that keep things in place, while others unsettle us once we become aware of them. And every so often, something unexpected slips through the cracks and breaks the rhythm just enough to make us notice.

This edition is an ode to those moments: the subtle scripts, the patterns we inherit, the ones we write ourselves, and the rare instances that interrupt them. It's about paying attention to the quiet choreography that shapes the everyday and finding meaning, humour, and beauty in it.

Mitodru Ghosh

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Between the Mists

Longing, Solitude, and the Soul in *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*

Mudduluru Uthej; Standing before *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, painted in 1818 by German Romantic artist Caspar David Friedrich, I feel drawn into a landscape that is both utterly universal and achingly personal. The wanderer's back, silhouetted against the whirls of mist and the endless sky, feels like an invitation – as if I am silently called to step into his boots and gaze out with him at the mysterious depths of the world. In that moment, the fog mirrors my uncertainty, the distant peaks my unspoken hopes, and the rocky ledge like a threshold between the familiar and the unknown. I find myself wondering if we can ever separate the emotional force of art from the spirit of its creator?

As I contemplate Friedrich's solitary figure, adrift above a boundless ocean of mist, I am struck by the profound longing, wonder and uncertainty this image evokes. Is the wanderer truly alone, or is he accompanied by the artist's hopes and fears, intimately woven into every swirl of fog?

This question matters to me personally, because standing before this painting, or even imagining it, awakens a visceral longing toward the unknown – to the threshold between beauty and despair.

It is *here* that I find both the artist and myself gazing outwards together, searching for the meaning in the silent expanse.

The Two Faces of Art

Friedrich's *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog* unveils the two profound faces of art – its universal embrace and its fiercely personal core. As I look upon the solitary figure, his back turned and his gaze fixed on the *boundless*, mist shrouded world, I sense a silent invitation pulling me into the depths of the painting. I find myself longing to step onto the rocky cliff, feeling the chill of the wind and the weight of uncertainty clinging onto my shoulder.

While I lose myself in the wanderer's world – projecting my dreams, anxieties and searching for spirit into the fog – I am reminded of how undeniably humane he remains. His posture is heavy with stories unknown; each muscle, tense, speaks of heartbreak and a sense of hope that can never be fully shared. The landscape is **sublime**, yes, but the real mystery lies within the man who stands alone. Is he savouring a triumphant moment or mourning a loss invisible to me?

The wanderer is both a mirror and a my-

stery. He invites me to inhabit his solitude, to reflect on my own presence within the enormity of the world. But he guards a secret, his past forever veiled by swirling mist and silent contemplation. It is here, in this delicate tension between universality and individuality, that Friedrich's masterpiece cuts deepest. I am offered **communion** with humanity's eternal search for meaning, and yet I must honour the artist's own trembling heart, knowing that every step into the mist brings me closer to myself and to mysteries I may never unravel.

“In an age where the shadows of the past often lead to erasure, I find myself reluctant to cast aside either the wanderer or his creator.”

The Sublime Dilemma

The dilemma that pulses through his work is one I resonate with whenever I face this painting. It captures the romantic tension between longing and independence being **irrevocably** entangled with the artist's soul. I wonder if this painting can ever truly stand alone or is it forever bound to Friedrich's pain and yearning. The fog feels alive, a swirling memory, hiding and revealing in ghostly waves, as if Friedrich's very spirit lingers in every brushstroke, whispering his silent story.

As I take in the painting's vastness. The cold, bracing air, the endless misty expanse, and that trembling figure of

solitude. I feel torn, stretched in conflicting directions. Am I embracing Friedrich's melancholy, his view of the world cloaked in uncertainty? The painting holds a fragile space where my emotions hover between wonder and shadow, and I suspect this tension is precisely what gives it such unforgettable power.

Living *now*, in an age where the shadows of the past often lead to erasure, I find myself reluctant to cast aside either the wanderer or his creator. Yes, they carry ghosts and scars– complex shadows that whisper of sorrow and struggle but to erase them feels like denying the fullness of human beauty and frailty. The wanderer remains a beacon, a symbol of both breathtaking beauty and uneasy trepidation, reminding me that art is not merely an escape but confrontation with the self and the world. This persistent allure keeps drawing me back – to face not just the mist but the truth that is our deepest solitude, we are still bound to the echoes of those who came before.

My Private Dialogue with the Fog

As I lose myself in the shifting expanse of the fog, an almost sacred intimacy envelops me. The wanderer, a figure at once mysterious and painfully familiar, becomes the vessel for my own silent dialogue where my unspoken fears, old regrets and tender hopes drift amongst the clouds. Each time my gaze returns, I discover new shades of emotion: the loneliness that grips the soul too tightly at midnight, or the fragile thrill that comes with facing the unknown. I imagine Friedrich standing with me, the

“Is the wanderer truly alone, or is he accompanied by the artist's hopes and fears, intimately woven into every swirl of fog?”

weight of his own sorrows fleeing into the freezing wind, his heart yearning for redemption echoing my own search for meaning. Together, we reach toward the same distant light, even as the fog threatens to engulf the path ahead.

What moves me the most is the revelation that beauty and pain are not **adversaries** here, but companions. The landscape does not merely mirror my solitude, it invites me to dwell inside it, to feel sorrow not as emptiness but as a birthplace of possibility. There's a strength in letting the fog wreath me, in living with the ache of uncertainty and the trembling promise of hope. To stand with the wanderer is to remain open to both loss and light, to accept the grandeur and melancholy braided through every human longing. In the deepest mist of Friedrich's vision, I find myself changed – a little braver, a little more vulnerable – *aware* that clarity is not always found by piercing the fog, but by learning to walk within its mysteries.

In embracing this ambiguity, the painting reminds us that no universal answer awaits on the other side of the mist. Instead, we are empowered to forge our own meanings, to hold our personal

boundaries and wrestle with evolving perspectives. It teaches us the value of critical engagement over blind acceptance and rejection, urging us to live not outside the fog but within its embrace, changed and illuminated by experience.

As I stand, even if only in imagination, beside the solitary figure perched above the sea of fog, I find myself caught between awe and vulnerability. The painting poses an unspoken question, one I now extend to you: *imagine yourself stepping into the wanderer's boots – feeling the chill of the wind, the weight of isolation and the vast unknown stretching endlessly before you. What emotions swell within?* Is it trembling fear of what you cannot see, or a fearless embrace of life's mysteries? Do you find solace in solitude, or ache at your own insignificance amid the infinite?

So, as you close this reflection, take a breath and linger a moment more on that rocky cliff. Feel the fog, the solitude, the awe – and then carry that feeling as a touchstone for your own journey into the unknown.





TEDx ISH

September 19, 2025 - 10 AM
Indian School of Hospitality, Gurugram

A closer look at the personal stories behind resilience,
self-belief, and the redefinition of success.



Swapnali Bhosale

Q: What motivates you when times are tough?

A: (laughs) "Are you going to ask me more tough questions? Honestly, it's a mix of faith and self-belief. I believe we're all children of God, and knowing He's there for us gives me strength. At the same time, I trust in my own abilities – that whatever comes my way, I can handle it. That combination keeps me going."

Q: How do you deal with fears?

A: "Everyone has fears. The key is awareness. The moment I notice a fear, I take it as a challenge. I work through it, and in doing so, I grow. Fears are great teachers – but you can't learn from them unless you first acknowledge them."

Dr. Ajay Yadav

Q: How do you deal with uncertainty? And what advice would you give to those choosing unconventional careers?

A: "Very interesting question. Here's the truth – it doesn't matter what field you're in. What matters is how good you are at it. You can be a cobbler, but if you're the best shoemaker in the market – in the top 1% – the world will come to you. You can be a culinary master, a designer, an artist – if you're in that top 1%, the world will be at your feet, wanting your work. The world today rewards excellence, not just titles. Top CEOs, industrialists, artists, politicians – they reached that point because they pushed themselves to the top of their game. That's what matters. So whatever you do, aim to be in that top 1%. Strive to be the best – even if you never reach number one, the effort will take you somewhere great. You might be number three, number ten – doesn't matter. If in your heart, you know you gave your 100% and didn't hold back, that's success. But giving only 50% and calling yourself number three? That's not it. Your 100% has to come from your heart – your own drive. It doesn't matter if you're a gastro, vascular, or cardiac surgeon – just be in the top 1%. When you reach that level, in any field, you'll find more satisfaction there than in any amount of money."

Sandeep Singla

Q: How did you get into running?

A: (laughs) “Honestly? One day, I looked in the mirror and thought, ‘I need to be healthier.’ That’s where it started. I began running in June 2020 – not that long ago. About five years ago, I ran 250 meters and absolutely hated it. I thought, ‘No way am I doing this again.’ But I’m wired differently – I don’t like giving up. That 250 meters eventually became 5 kilometers, then 10, then marathons, then ultras. Now it’s an addiction. I genuinely cannot survive a day without running.”

Q: That sounds like the runner’s high people talk about. How real is that for you?

A: “Oh, it’s very real. When you go for a long run – by ‘long’ I mean 20 to 30 kilometers – you reach a point where you just don’t feel the pain anymore. Your ankles are killing you, knees hurting, heart pounding... but somehow, you stop feeling it. You sync with nature. You feel like you’re flying. That’s the runner’s high. You really have to experience it to believe it – otherwise, it sounds imaginary. But once you do, it’s addictive. You’ll keep chasing that feeling again and again.”

Satish Kumar

Q: What role does art or creativity play in your perspective?

A: His love for movies and spy thrillers ties back to his curiosity about human nature. “You can learn from anywhere,” he says. Series like *Fauda* or limited thrillers on Netflix keep him hooked – not just for entertainment, but for the lessons hidden in the stories.

On the concept of being an artist, he breaks it down simply: art + heart. “Hotels can become mechanical – check-in, check-out, repeat. But for a guest who’s travelled 14 hours, that one check-in is everything.” For him, being an artist means finding the emotion in every interaction and making the guest feel seen.

He watches movies to disconnect, plays chess to stay sharp, and spends time with family to recharge. “Life’s heavy enough,” he says, “so I like darker stories – they make the next day feel lighter.”

Prasoon Shrivastava

Q: How do you personally deal with pressure or stress?

A: “I just sleep over it. (laughs) Usually, the next day you don’t think much about it anymore. The best thing is not letting stress enter your mind space too much. You have to protect that.”

Q: You mentioned humility earlier – why do you think it’s so important?

A: “Being humble is essential. It’s not easy, but very important. Arrogance closes your mind, while humility keeps you curious.”

Shajai Jacob

Q: What would you say to someone who feels lost?

A: "I still feel lost. And I'll say it a third time – I continue to feel lost. You'll always feel lost if you're walking uncharted territory."

His advice? "Just put one foot in front of the other."

He explained that when you're lost, the solution is rarely outside you – it's in your gut. "Follow that inner voice, even if you change paths halfway through. Don't feel guilty for pivoting. We've pivoted fifteen times in five years before we found success. The sixteenth time it worked."

For him, feeling lost is not failure – it's evidence that you're still exploring. "I was lost this morning too," he grins. "I had no script. I wrote a few points on the flight, mailed them to Rajat, and just walked in. One foot after the other. And I was happy."

Vikas Dimri

Q: What motivates you when times get rough?

A: "Fear is a very common thing – everyone has fears. I have lots of them: fear of failure, rejection, denial, making mistakes, even fear of snakes or heights. But here's how I deal with it: I rationalize. I pause and ask myself, 'Is this life-threatening? Will this cause serious damage?' If the answer is no, I face it and move on. If there's real risk, I take mitigating actions. That's how I navigate challenges and stay motivated during rough times."

Kunal Vasudeva

Q: Who's the smartest person you know?

A: "My mother. Because in Bombay, in the 70s and 80s, she was a single parent and a homemaker. Bombay is ruthless if you don't have an income. She was the smartest hustler I've ever seen. May God bless her."

Q: What principles guide you in tough situations?

A: "Humility, perseverance, consistency, and kindness. It's better to be nice and ignorant than conniving and shrewd. When you succeed, take your people along with you. Don't ever unplug your feet from the ground."

Q: What's your view on adaptability and success?

A: "Adaptability is everything. Everything is unpredictable, uncertain. Small, daily adjustments are what success is made of. Don't forget where you come from, but always look forward. Be so big that thousands knock on your door and millions come to you."

ज्ञानार्थ बैंक

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First Copy

Plagiarism is just a love language

Here's an article exploring the idea that plagiarism is just a love language.

I'm kidding, this is definitely an original article – as original as words can be, considering the dictionary got there first. We treat plagiarism, copying, imitation, whatever you want to call it, like a crime – *but isn't that how we all create?*

Art, entertainment, *even people* wouldn't exist in a vacuum, unless we mimic what we admire, sometimes even without realising it. The way we talk, the music we listen to, the way we text, it all comes from somewhere.

And because I will take absolutely any excuse to bring her up – Sabrina carpenter, my favourite artist, has never been shy about pulling from Christina Aguilera and Rihanna. If she hadn't drawn from their sound, would she still be the Grammy winning artist she is today?

The Office (US) was just *The Office (UK)* with a longer runtime and a better budget, until it wasn't. If copying was a crime, we wouldn't have had the show we adore today.

Every “new” trend is just a revival but with a fresh PR team. The 90s came back in the 2010s, Y2K came back with low-rise vengeance and *quiet luxury* is just the *old money aesthetic* as a rebrand. But we don't call these designers *thieves*, we just call them *visionaries*.

Fashion survives on imitation. Virgil Abloh once said, “Streetwear is 90% an existing idea,” yet we've revolutionised his work in the industry – Balenciaga's *oversized silhouettes*? Lifted from Cristobal Balenciaga's *own* archives. Dior's *new look*? Just Victorian corsetry with better tailoring.

Yet, the second someone imitates a *little* too obviously, they're branded a "copycat". Covers and remixes are praised, but an uncredited similarity? *Scandalous*. Meme culture unironically *thrives* on replication but we still act like originality is some sacred, untouched thing.

Enter AI, the *ultimate* copycat. It does what humans do, just faster, slicker, and without the existential dread. Maybe that's why we hate it, maybe we're just jealous that it copies, or just *bitter* that it does it better?

Sure, it leaves little room for originality, but let's be honest, so does every cinematic universe milking nostalgia or your favourite book-to-screen adaptation that tells the same story in higher resolution.

The real problem isn't copying, it's *intent*. AI doesn't want to create; it just stitches together what already exists. We, on the other hand, at least have the decency to pretend we're being original.

Farzi (2023), starring Shahid Kapoor and Vijay Sethupathi, is a crime/thriller that tries to blur the lines between art and deception, following a struggling artist who finds success not through originality but through perfect imitation by counterfeiting currency. The show doesn't frame forgery as mere fraud, it romanticises it as an act of genius – not that I'm endorsing financial crimes, just admiring the craft.

Meticulous duplication, down to the finest detail, is framed as mastery instead of deception. If something is copied flawlessly, indistinguishable from the original, should it still hold less value, or does it become just as real? Maybe even more so, if it serves the same purpose. After all, we don't doubt the talent of a cover band that sounds exactly like the original. Maybe imitation isn't just flattery, maybe it's proof of skill.

But if perfection is all it takes to make something real, where do we draw the line? When does imitation stop being impressive and start feeling hollow? Skill alone doesn't create meaning, intent does and that's where the difference lies between a counterfeit painting and an artist's reinterpretation, between a **deepfake** and an actual performance.

Got it! Let me know if you need to make any changes.

Probably Rhea Budhraj



Gastro Escape

Dum Pukht

₹₹₹₹

Aditya Roy; This iconic restaurant beckons you to partake in a royal experience, recreating the 200-year-old culinary legacy of the *majestic* Awadhi Nawabs. Dum Pukht cooking originated in Awadh, India, during the 18th-century famine, supposedly to feed the workers of the *Bara Imambara* by Nawab Asaf-Ud-Daula, though Persian and Central Asian influences are also cited as precursors. The technique involves slow-cooking ingredients in a sealed pot, sealed with dough, to lock in aromas and flavours. What started as a luxurious method for meat dishes eventually became a hallmark of fine dining in India, spreading to Lucknow, Hyderabad, and Kashmir.

The dining experience there was nothing short of exquisite. From the moment I walked in, the ambience set the tone — regal, elegant, and deeply rooted in the rich heritage of Awadhi culture. Nawabi-inspired decor, live instrumental music, and the subtle aroma of slow-cooked

delicacies created a stage for a truly memorable evening.

The Dum Pukht Biryani was the *undeniable* highlight — aromatic, perfectly cooked, and bursting with subtle flavours that only slow cooking can bring out. The kebabs melted in my mouth, beautifully seasoned and paired with their in-house chutneys. Each dish felt thoughtfully crafted, balancing richness with authenticity.

What stood out *just* as much as the food was the hospitality. As someone studying the subject, I couldn't help but admire how seamlessly they blend culinary excellence with guest experience. It's not just a restaurant — it's a journey into the timeless flavors of royal kitchens.



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Chard

₹₹₹

Tanvi Raavi; Chard is a grill and bar that's become famous for its burgers, and the credibility is well-earned – created by the same culinary minds behind *Plats* and *Genre*: Chef Jamsheed Bhote and Chef Hanisha Singh.

I'm not usually one to chase burgers. I don't dislike them, but I wouldn't make a special trip – except, *somehow*, I did for Chard. Maybe it was the endless burger

reels after I stalked them once. Or maybe my sister forced me to tag along – probably this one. Whatever the reason, it completely changed my mind. I found myself going back more than once – not just for the burgers, but for the effortless comfort the place always seemed to radiate.

Recommendations: Order the *Bonjour*, a lamb burger with goat's cheese, caramelised onions, and *jus* on the side – perfect bite every time – and pair it with the out-of-this-world spicy *Hokkaido Prawn Roll*. If you're vegetarian, the *Trufflesroom* burger is surprisingly *smashable*. The food here is incredibly satiating, so skip the pasta and save room for dessert – particularly the warm *Sticky Toffee Pudding*.







Naivedyam

₹

Rhea Budhraj; Naivedyam is a chain that's become a family favourite, especially among South Indian parents and grandparents who find in it the closest thing to a home-style spread. Their Maharaja Thali, meant for two – generous enough to test anyone's appetite, is the star attraction – Malabar parathas with *kurma*, *puris*, the rice of the day, *sambhar*, *rasam*, two dry vegetable dishes, and a range of condiments, all put together in a way that feels abundant yet never heavy. That's the beauty of the food here – it's satisfying without weighing you down, each dish layered with flavour but still light on the palate.

Their *uttapams* deserve a mention too, best enjoyed alongside their filter coffee. Whether you're here for a big family outing or sneaking in a solo visit when the craving hits, Naivedyam is consistent, comforting, and smooth in both service and experience. Great value for money only sweetens the deal.



Mohinga

₹

Rhea Budhraj; Located in Safdarjung, Mohinga is a Burmese restaurant that I've grown far too attached to – we even took our ex *Editor in Chief* there. But truthfully, I've been back more times than I can count, and it never fails to satiate me. The food alone is reason enough, but the space adds to it – cozy, warm, and always managing to feel like stepping out of reality for a bit.

Menu wise, it's hard to go wrong. The *Fermented Tea Leaf Salad* is almost non-negotiable, bright and tangy with just the right crunch. The *Tantanmen Ramen* is rich and comforting, while the *Khao Suey* and *Egg Bejo* bring layers of flavour that feel both familiar and exciting. The *Golden Fried Prawns* are dangerously addictive, the kind of starter you promise to share but never really do. Honestly, the safest bet is to order a little bit of everything. And when you're done, grab an *Apple Beer* to wash it all down.

For me, *Mohinga* isn't just a restaurant, it's a ritual. One that makes you want to return, again and again.



Genre

₹₹₹

Mitodru Ghosh; My expectations walking in through the doors of *Genre Journal*, were at an all time high. Months of swiping through their socials, friends telling me how good the place was, I really just had to see it for myself. I was sat at the table right next to the now *iconic* Genre Turntable, my face lit up with glee when I found *Anderson Paak* was the featured artist for the night. I spent 15 minutes browsing through their extensive beverage menus before placing an order for the *Smooth Operator*, *Summer Love* and *Stay Fresh* from the *Signatures Menu* followed by the *Paper Plane* from the *Classics Menu*. I wasn't really in the mood to get something to eat but felt the need to find something to snack on to justify all this liquor. We then ordered the *Ginger Sesame Ponzu Tartare* and *Grilled Prawn Toban* from the *Tapas* menu.

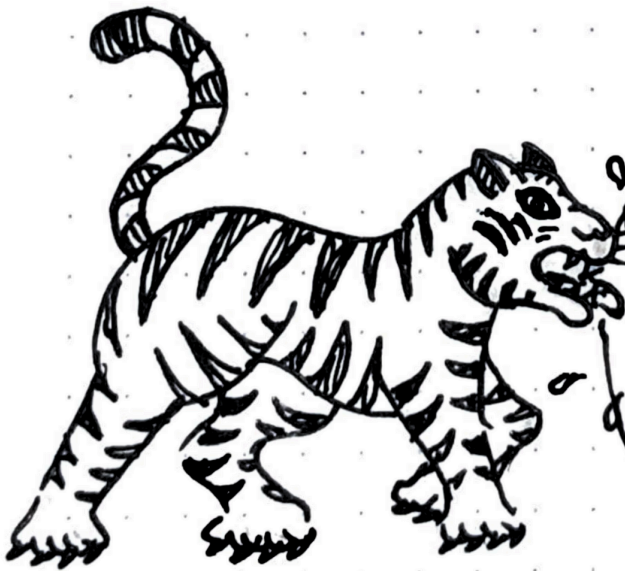
The drinks were well balanced, the alcohol did not feel imposing rather sang well with everything they were paired with. The *Paper Plane* acted as the perfect control, for someone who isn't

an avid whiskey drinker, the team at Genre did a wonderful job mellowing out everything I find difficult about whiskey and transformed it into something I'd be willing to order for myself the next time I visit. Something I cannot stress enough on is how you *need* to get yourself a glass of the Genre Signature, *Stay Fresh* — their nannari root and gin concoction. It is genuinely one of the most interesting cocktails I've had in a minute. I fear the extensive survey I carried out sampling Genre's beverage options *may* have hampered my judgement on their Tapas, I will still happily report that they were great.

Overall, my experience at Genre Journal surpassed my expectations in every way possible. Great music, incredible ambiance and food and drinks to write home about.



INJA



When Aam Papad Met Tuna

Chronicles of Inja

Sarthak Dubey: In New Friends Colony, New Delhi, hidden amongst the bungalows, lies the Manor Hotel. From afar, it looks like the many houses surrounding it. Only when you get close do you realise that what seemed like just another house is actually one of the best boutique hotels in India. And if you delve deeper, you'll find that this hotel also houses a fine dining restaurant like no other — INJA.

When I first heard the name, I was intrigued. What could this exotic-sounding word possibly mean? Imagine my surprise when I discovered it was literally India and Japan put together — IN. JA. — JAIN was *already* taken. Pushing past the *oddity* of the name, I was still determined to visit. With my growing fascination for Japanese cuisine and no prior fine dining experience, it felt like the ideal place to begin. The only hitch was the price — after all, I'm just a college student barely making it through the month. Luckily, my family happened to be in town and were in the mood for a tasting menu (big shoutout to mom, dad, and *bhai*). Lucky them. Making the reservation had me nervous, almost like calling a crush for the first time. I didn't

realise then that this love affair with food was about to leave me breathless.

On the day of the reservation, my mom wasn't feeling well, but she insisted we go anyway (love her for that). For context, my family lives in a small town near Varanasi called *Bhadohi*. Trips to Delhi aren't frequent, they like to go all out whenever they're here. We reached the restaurant, and I strutted in with the biggest smile on my face. The person at the front desk **ushered** us straight to our table. I didn't have to say *a word*. Looking back, I should've known right then that this night would leave me wanting more — but the romantic in me was already too far gone.

The table was set with envelopes for each of us. Inside was a short explanation of the menu. Our server chatted warmly, asking where we were from. Small talk. I already felt at home — like I was a regular there. And then, the show began. The first course — out of eleven, though I'll stick to the highlights — was a *Nimbu "Kombu" Paani*: a *nimbu paani* gel, with an edible lemon peel topped with kombu. My mother joked



about how we'd leave the place starving, since everything looked like it was made for tiny, delicate bites. But as soon as we took one, silence fell across the table. Palates excited, brains working overtime to decipher the taste — we didn't quite know how to respond.

Once we'd recovered from that whirlwind amuse-bouche, the next course arrived: *Ganne ka Ras Sencha Somen*: a delicately seared scallop placed on top of somen noodles in a sugarcane-Juice broth. My brother had always believed that charging exorbitant amounts of money for food was propaganda he'd never fall for — slowly but surely, this meal changed his mind. By the time he finished slurping the

noodles, his face was glowing with delight. The first two courses had already done their job — they teased what was yet to come. The *Aam Papad Tuna* was possibly one of the best fish dishes I have ever eaten. A thin layer of *aam papad* wrapped around raw tuna, stuffed with barely visible juliennes of cucumber. Some dishes looked deceptively simple — things my family thought they could easily make. It took them a bit to understand the genius behind the intricate plating and contrast of flavours. The *Aam Papad Tuna* was what finally shifted their perspective. Food, too, could be art. I sensed a change in their attitude. Even though I thought I understood and appreciated food, I realised that knowing about it and



truly experiencing it are two very different things.

But the dish that truly blew me away — the one that perfectly captured the essence of what the restaurant has to offer — was the palate cleanser: a Chaas Kakigori ice cream. Chaas-flavored ice cream layered with hung curd for extra creaminess, topped with spiced Kakigori (shaved ice) flavoured with cumin seeds, black pepper, and other spices. Our first bite felt like a real *Ratatouille* moment for my brother and I, and all four of us let out a shared, satisfied sigh. After seven courses, it felt like an invitation to pause and reflect — a reminder that, at the end of the day, we were simply there to enjoy good food.

The textures, even more than the flavours, made it the perfect palate cleanser.

There's so much more I could say, but no matter how hard I try, words can't fully capture the experience. That night, we left INJA full — but not just with food. We carried with us a shared memory, one that transformed an ordinary family dinner into something almost sacred. For me, it reinforced why I want to pursue Japanese cuisine — not just to cook, but to craft moments like these for others. That night, INJA was more than just a restaurant — it was a lesson, a love letter, and a promise that food has the power to connect, surprise, and transform us.



The Embalming

Cras es Noster

Manya Kadian; *"Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, step right up! We bring you the finest talent from all seven continents, gathered under this great big top for your delight and delectation... pure, unfiltered madness presented for your entertainment!"*

The circus has a scent.

Beyond the popcorn and peanuts, the sweat and smoke, the citrus note lingers distinctly, almost naturally, of excitement. It goes by many names: adrenaline, panic, anticipation. It is a scent that suffocates your nose and fills you with a buzz swelling in your chest; your ears slowly stop registering the chatter around you, trading it for the sound of your heart thumping with anticipation.

As you take your seat, caught between the old man who's there to kill time and the young boy who is predictably excited, the lights fade; the spotlight catches the ringmaster, and the opening act begins.

Circuses are a fascinating piece of history born in the great Roman Empire, where performers entertained both the senate and the people.

"We need our next generation to truly make art for art's sake. Not for recognition, but to express."

It evolved, as all art does, into trapeze acts, lion shows, sword swallowing – that whole blindfolded man with a goatee hurling daggers at the attractive young lady tied to a bullseye, the ringmaster sticking his head in a lion's mouth.

Before the rapid influx of information and easy access to dopamine boosters, we had performers – people who knew exactly how to **rouse** you, making the mundanity of life into something bearable.

Arts developed out of boredom. Now, *usually*, necessity is the mother of invention, but the evolution of the soul and the species are often contradictory in nature.

Perhaps it was a non-negotiable for our poor ancestors, and I can't help but agree: the arts *are* a necessity.

I've seen *Cirque du Soleil* perform live when they came to Delhi in 2014 or 2015, I think.

The scent of damp, cold air from the tent, the spotlight and the hilarity of not one but three clowns falling over themselves was enjoyable.

I believe that was the first time I had understood the *infiniteness* of human potential.

Culturally speaking, our species has evolved quite **sporadically**, and circus culture is proof of the somewhat genetic desire we have to enjoy the unconventional. We crave the edge of the knife.

If I were to ask you to picture a circus, you'd likely see the bright red and white and sense the fear as someone walks the tightrope, balanced between life and death.

It's the same as loving horror movies – the rush of adrenaline, **trepidation** from controlled spaces to cope with our obsession with absurdity, without the consequences.

The law of *Equivalent Exchange* (I know you know) seems to conveniently cancel out when you visit the tent.

I wonder if you know of the different masks and faces of clowns beyond the red noses and exaggerated paint. Not too different from the variety of theatre masks, both aim to draw out specific emotion from the audience. Clowns take it the extra mile, *however*: 20 of them fitting into a comically tiny car and making a fool of themselves for the entertainment of the masses, caters to an odd affliction people have, one that makes us enjoy it. Watching people willingly roll over pathetically has a way of extracting an under-explored



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emotion, one we fear daily.

Throughout history, two types of performers were created – the circus act and the freak shows. One is loved for its excitement, and the other draws out the ugliest emotions of cruelty by being ridiculed for existing, much like the clown and the faces they paint.

The tent itself is a nirvana of sorts, both for performers and observers. A miraculous, magical land where anything is accepted – all the strangeness and authenticity that mankind cannot express due to the invisible shackles of conformity, all to generate profit. Liberation is strong inside the tent, and within its confines, it creates an environment of acceptance for all. It's no wonder the concept of Disney has such massive appeal: it sells you liberation, freedom, hilarity.

And now we say our goodbyes to our entertainers and begin to understand the question of *why*. *Why is the circus at two ends of the extreme?* A constant battle of euphoria for what it presents and a desperate tragedy behind the glitter and knife act. The circus was an early form of the capitalist asylum – a breeding ground for raw emotion, no matter how scripted the act.

Have you ever heard someone say they're living vicariously through someone else?

That person, unable to fully explore all emotions in the spectrum to the extreme, now pays whatever sum to watch others do it, trying to feel those 'forbidden' emotions through them.

Eve bit the apple because of many reasons – at least biblically – but I do suppose she deserves gratitude for proving my theory on how human curiosity leads the mind into a deep craving for something new.

It's why crashes and buildings getting torn down hold our attention so much. We can't stop finding new simulants. And we go to the strange and absurd to consistently revive them.

Act II:

As we leave the circus, shall we jump down a *rabbit hole*?

The talking flowers in *Wonderland* were, I believe, the most accurate display of a neighbourhood aunty, and I've yet to come across a better one in writing.

Mr. Carroll was an individual who understood the term whimsy to its highest degree. Any annotation of the word, and what it means, will always carry some trace of *Wonderland*.

It's a blueprint escapist fever dream: tea parties and shocking shades of purple and aqua.

Built on the same principles of absurdity



and unfamiliarity that make the circus thrive.

However, the circus has limits. It can only show one method to madness. The mind and words, on the other hand, can break that small barrier. The possibilities are endless and entirely – *maladaptively* – custom to the imagination of the reader. We all envision Wonderland differently, but we'd always choose to stay in our own Wonderland because it brings out the subconscious desires we are scared to admit we enjoy.

Like Matryoshka Dolls, we hide the smallest, ugliest desires deep within ourselves, letting them surface only in the folds of our minds, though our obsessive fascination with the uncanny, the unsettling and the weird.

Act III:

Let's answer a very important question now: *why am I talking about the Jabberwocky and trapeze?* Unravelling its layers? Asking you to think about it deeply?

To make you create, to think and to imagine.

Imagination is how we got the *Hangover*

movies and the *F-22 Raptor*. We pulled out our thinking caps and locked into making, creating, and evolving.

Imagination is the most potent chemical for change. It is how revolutions and museum art are made and held in the same light.

We're choking it in the womb.

Society mocks the arts today, pays it a **pittance** and thinks it's the most respectable and replaceable waste of time to exist and how we'd have developed much more without it.

So art morphed to stop being taken advantage of. It began cold, set to please the masses, riding the latest trends rather than showing what the artist truly wanted to reveal. Perfect, big, bold, tragic and surreal.

Mediocrity is necessary to create a small cultural glimpse of what we were like for generations to come. You don't understand how children used to laugh and play games by looking at statues – you understand it by their immature scrawl on walls and



footprints engraved into a room.

We need our next generation to truly make art for art's sake. Not for recognition, but to express.

The 13-year-olds who were writing on *Wattpad* have more emotional maturity than stoics and non-believers combined. Theatre nerds who are horrible actors but still help in production because they desperately want to create a performance.

I want the world to be filled with first drafts, no matter how ugly. Incomplete, desperate art is humane.

It's the best way to raise a strong future and to show the face behind the façade.

It's going to be art as hobbies that save the world, with

curiosity about how we used to live in society.

Greatness is the second step; the first shall always be *authentic* imagination.

Curtains:

Returning to the circus tent with the show still going on, the little boy got his first taste of thrill and the old man of **boisterous** nostalgia. Our imagination is a circus waiting to perform.

Let it be messy, let there be tragedy, and *by God*, let there be humour.

Don't let the greedy jaws of the world snatch you from what you've been dreaming of.

Make you ugly art, your SoundCloud rap, your failed pasta.

And remember, despite the horrors, the show *must* go on.

BUILT TO FIGHT.



**SINCE
2018**

BOXING.

**BORN
FOR THE
BELL
FORGED
IN FIRE**



Knockout

A tribute to what saved me

Grant Vohra;

Round 1

I joined my school in grade 5, an all-boys boarding school and to say I didn't fit in would be an understatement. I was fat and sensitive, I cried a lot. I used to puke whenever someone tried to talk to me – an awful anxiety-vomiting thing; I needed candy or a mint in my mouth just to speak (which explains the weight). Naturally, I was an easy target to pick on. Being that vulnerable in a place that demanded you bathe in masculinity didn't exactly help. I was bad at everything physical: couldn't run, couldn't play, couldn't join interhouse competitions.

My brother was in grade 10 then – the kind of overachiever you can't help but compare everyone to. Gymnastics, wall climbing, yoga, weight lifting – name a sport, he owned it. So naturally, comparisons landed on me in all the worst ways. My first year was rough, and I knew I had to do something – anything – to prove to myself that I'm more than just everyone's expectations – and that opportunity landed itself sooner than I could've imagined.

Every year we've had an individual boxing championship and one day the boxing supervisor came to junior school. "Whosoever is interested, raise your hand," he said. I did mine – without a thought. Maybe it was to show I could be tough. Maybe it was to scare others off. Maybe I just wanted that one thing that was just mine. I don't know what ten year-old me was thinking, but after that, things changed.

After two weeks of training – and nearly backing out a dozen times – championship day arrived. The entire school *and* our sister school was present. My brother was in the audience, I fought someone a year senior – in boxing age doesn't matter, weight does. Walking into the ring, I said to myself, "I can do it. I'm going to win."

The bell rang: "Round 1, *fight*." The first punch landed and all my confidence shattered. "What have I landed myself in?" I lost, and when it ended, I cried. Not because I was hurt, but because I was so *utterly* disappointed in myself for not being enough.

Round 2

In grade 6 I skipped the boxing championship – too afraid to lose again. By grade 7 we had to pick a sport for the term. I wasn't good at anything except one sport I'd tried two years earlier: boxing. So I chose it. Training meant an hour and a half every day, under seniors who were ruthless. I quit boxing three times that year and **flitted** to table tennis and archery just to avoid physical scrutiny. Each time my brother coaxed me back, promising he'd tell his batchmates to go easy. I kept coming back.

IPSC – *the Indian Public School Conference* – was coming up. I was selected for under 14. The last weight bracket was 48–50 kg; I was 52. To compete I had to lose 5 kg in a month. Huge for a 13-year-old. So I ran – a lot. I tightened my diet, skipped the canteen, and learned a routine. I lost 6 kg in a month.

I won a bronze at IPSC. I was ecstatic. Finally, something sports-related that was mine. After that, not much changed outwardly – just daily training and a slow insistence on showing up. At the colours ceremony, I got college colours for boxing and a sports scholarship that year. One bronze had ignited something. *I wanted more* – but COVID hit.

Round 3

I turned into a couch potato and lost the gains of grade 7: the runs, the routine, the discipline. School shut and opened in fits; when it finally reopened in grade 9, boxing wasn't even offered – deemed too contact heavy. Again I was

a fat kid with no sport.

So I joined athletics – the one place where fitness mattered more than flashy skill. I trained hard, ran kilometres, and by the end of the term I could outrun half my batch. My fitness came back – I even felt like I could walk around shirtless (small victories). When I asked the boxing supervisor to restart boxing, he said there weren't enough kids interested – challenge accepted.

I went house to house, giving little recruitment talks, wrote down names. By the end I had over 20 kids signed up – the most boxing I had ever seen at our school. The sport became popular again. It felt like an achievement.

Grade 10 IPSC was brutal: we competed against the best sports schools – *Rashtriya* military schools, army public schools – kids who were built differently. I didn't get a medal that year.

Knockout

Grade 11 was serious. I wanted to be a college boxing captain in grade 12. My main rival was Arjun: tall, well-built, heavy-weight, good at stalling opponents. I won a medal at IPSC that year; Arjun went to states. That scared me – selection could cost me captaincy.

In the individual championship both our opponents were beginners. I chose not to go for a knockout; Arjun ignored that and fought aggressively. My bout went three rounds – I stretched it, showed technique, and maximised my aura as *the kids say*. Arjun got flattened in the first round by a surprising onslaught; though he'd won earlier, he lost his



reputation that day.

I earned college colours again; Arjun didn't. At the end of the year I became college boxing captain and college vice-captain. Things had come full circle.

In grade 12 the IPSC was cancelled because of last year's heatwave, and Board Examinations meant other competitions were off the table. But at the final individual championship I walked into the ring one last time – my girlfriend watching from the stands, my best friend (hi Sarthak) announcing to

me on the mic while Seedhe Maut blasted – "In the red corner, we have the float like a butterfly, sting like a bee incarnate – the college vice-captain, the college boxing captain – Granth Vohra! – " the school went mad. I entered with half my batch at my side and juniors chanting. I felt complete. I felt like the boy who once wanted to be tough had finally made him proud – and this time, everyone was rooting for him. I fought where I had fought eight years earlier, wore the same colours, and this time I knocked the other guy out.



Royal Dansk? Royal Scam!

Heartbreak in Household Thrift

Harlene Singh; My first heartbreak was not because of a playground crush, it happened at six years old, in my grandmother's drawing room, when I realised that I had been duped. I am a victim of the cookie sewing tin scam. Have you ever actually found cookies inside the Royal Dansk tin? Honestly, think about it. Have you ever opened that iconic blue box with trembling excitement *only to discover...* needles, buttons, a measuring tape, maybe some rusted safety pins?

This isn't about cookies – this is about betrayal, memory, and household culture. The Danish butter cookie tin, more than a container for confectionery, has become a global symbol of disappointment, thrift, and domestic inventiveness. The company itself may still imagine their tins stacked proudly in kitchens across the world. What they *may* not know is that the tins are empty of cookies, but brimming with the shared experiences of entire generations. So let us, quite literally, open the tin and take a look inside.

Imagine – it is nine o'clock, already past my bedtime. The family is still gathered in the drawing room, laughing over cards, with the hum of a Sony television ad competing against *Lata Mangeskar* crooning softly from the radio. I sneak down the hallway in my *Chhota Bheem* pajamas, the *Pink Panther* theme in my head, determined to pull off the heist of the century. I drag a chair towards the cupboard, stretching just far enough to reach the glimmering blue tin perched on the top shelf. My tiny hands prise off the metallic lid. And *boom* – heartbreak – no buttery aroma, no golden biscuits tucked into little paper cups – just spools of thread, a tangle of needles, a measuring tape, and a clutter of household *saamaan*.

This story is not mine alone, it is a universally experienced event: the crushing disappointment of a child betrayed by a biscuit tin. Whether in Delhi, Lagos, Manila, or São Paulo, generations of children share this exact memory.

The Royal Dansk tin has become not just a container, but an international inside joke – like literally inside the tin joke.

Yet behind this heartbreak lies great logic. See these tins simply looked too nice to throw away. Grandparents polished them, stacked them neatly, and deployed them as household multitools. Sewing kits, spare change, trinkets, leftover food – all safely stowed in a container that was durable and instantly recognisable. Ask any grandmother and the reasoning is clear, “it was practical, it was pretty, and everyone in the house knew what the blue *dabba* meant.” My own *nani* laughed about how much easier life became once objects had a fixed home, what seemed a cruel prank to a child was, in reality, just household ingenuity in action.

Naturally, the internet has ensured that this betrayal has been immortalised. Memes circulate of children peering into tins with crushed expression. But, ‘tis not just the cookie tin – ice cream tubs filled with *daal* grains, margarine boxes crammed with coriander, biscuit tins that rattle with nails or screws. Families across the globe have weaponised food packaging for storage, and now the world bonds over these collective deceptions online. It has even become an “aesthetic” in itself: the trinket tin renaissance, where people proudly collect and display ornate containers, elevating them into curated decor – feel free look it up on Pinterest.

Beyond the humour lies something more profound. These tins reveal entire value systems – **frugality**, creativity, and the

instinct to reuse long before recycling bins appeared on every street corner. Grandmothers have been exercising zero-waste decades before it became fashionable under the banner of sustainable living or “clean girl aesthetics”. The blue tin, in its second life, becomes a time capsule of domestic resourcefulness.

But it’s worth asking if this tradition is fading? In an age of IKEA boxes and plastic organisers, do families still treat tins with the same reverence? Mine certainly does and I’d wager my lucky *dabba* that yours does too. Perhaps, fewer children today will resonate with the sting of reaching for cookies and pulling out a sewing kit instead. But when the time comes, we might just hand our kids the same disappointment – I know I would. One day my son or daughter will pull down a gleaming Royal Dansk Quality Street box, eyes wide with hope, only to discover coriander stems or batteries, a sewing kit.

After all, what’s life without a little generational trauma? And so, what began as a scam circles back into love. The Royal Dansk tin may never have contained biscuits for too long, but it has always been full of essentials – of practicality, of memories, and of stories retold across generations. What felt like betrayal in childhood becomes, in adulthood, a sign of care and ingenuity. Parents and grandparents stretched every resource, made do, and turned a container into a household legend.



Meet The Team

Into the half light and shadow go I. Within
my head Not a dream, but some sensation
works its will. Not a dream, not peace, not
love, A sensation born in my very being.

An excerpt from *Bodh* by
Jibanananda Das

Glossary

adversaries

noun (ad·vuhs·uh·reez)

one's opponent in a contest, conflict, or dispute.

boisterous

adjective (boy·stuh·ruhs)

noisy, energetic, and cheerful.

communion

noun (kuh·myoo·nee·uhn)

the sharing or exchanging of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially on a mental or spiritual level.

deepfake

adjective (deep·faek)

too great to be overcome.

irrevocably

adverb (uh·reh·vuhk·uh·blee)

in a way that cannot be changed, reversed, or recovered.

flitted

verb (flit·uhd)

move swiftly and lightly.

frugality

noun (froo·gal·uh·tee)

the quality of being economical with money or food; thriftiness.

pittance

noun (pi·tns)

a very small or inadequate amount of money.

rouse

verb (rawz)

make angry or excited.

sporadically

adverb (spuh·ra·duhk·lee)

occasionally or at irregular intervals.

sublime

adjective (suh·blime)

(of a person's attitude or behaviour) extreme or unparalleled.

trepidation

noun (treh·puhd·ay·shn)

a feeling of fear or anxiety about something that may happen.

ushered

verb (uh·shuhd)

show or guide (someone) somewhere.

GAZETTE

INDIAN SCHOOL OF HOSPITALITY