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makes you glad you are alive.

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Many Views from My Window

By, Udayprakash Sharma,
Assistant Professor, USLM



It is amazing to discover the things we human beings do to keep ourselves busy. Before this lockdown, I had never noticed the view outside, from my flat's window. It was just a simple window without any magic.. I have put up a desk near the window, which faces an apartment. Towards the left-hand side of the apartment is a road and on the other side an open field. I enjoy doing my academic and non-academic work from here. This place has a good vibe.

During the evening time, I see many Blue Bulls (Nilgaay) grazing in the open field and tending to their young ones. Recently, the group has been joined by four new calves that play with each other, pranking here and there in the field but never out of the sight of their mothers. Mothers lick their young ones' faces to keep them clean and moist during the summer.

The road remains deserted for most of the time yet I see some human beings making endeavours to go out and buy their daily essential stuff. Most of the flats on the opposite side of the building are vacant since it is newly built and has only a few residents.

The building also offers a glimpse into the life of the families residing in it, which remained completely oblivious to me before the lockdown. I mean who has the time? There is a middle-aged person in one of the flats, who always occupies the swing in his balcony. It seldom happens that he does not sit on it, an opportunity which no other family member exploits when the person is not there. Not even pigeons. This man reads newspaper on the swing, he eats on the swing, uses mobile phone on the swing. Hell!! It gives me nausea from the imagination of so much of swinging time! There is a small ceiling fan in his balcony which rotates on its own when there is a strong wind. The view seems to be incomplete whenever this person is not sitting on the swing.

There is another middle-aged woman in the other flat who competes with me in putting the washed clothes on the dry line in our respective balconies, as if we compete to see who finishes first. Pigeons drink water from the water pots freshly kept out by one of the residents of the building. The kindergarten area looks like a scene from a deserted nuclear accident site. May be this is the time when the plants, trees and the birds talk

to each other and conjure how to rearrange their lives in the absence of the hustle and bustle of the human beings' daily life.

In the night, the flats with the occupants light up in the shades of red, blue, yellow and white. It is the time we can show off our skills in interior design and home décor aesthetics to the people living in the flats of the opposite buildings. Right outside my window there is an air conditioner outdoor unit under which resides a family of pigeons which has recently laid eggs. The bird couple takes turns to try to keep the eggs warm or cool. Soon the eggs will hatch and new pigeon squabs will open their eyes to this temporary new world.

In the evening, I observe the ruckus created by the squirrels that play hide and seek with each other and gorge on the grains put out for the pigeons. I see bee-eaters sitting on the palm trees of the society's garden, chirping and shaking their fork tails. A cat, walking by the tree with her kittens, alarms the squirrels who run to their nearby trees and its hollow spaces to save themselves for Ms. Kitty. Pigeons are carefree since the cat cannot climb up to their nests which are high up in the buildings. Soon the cat and her kittens get lost in the nearby hedges. May be they are migrating, too, in these times of isolation.

The society has many breed of dogs as pets and their owners bring them out for a walk every day. Most of these dogs look gloomy as if they have had enough of the company of their owners who have not been leaving them alone for long hours like earlier. They seem to look fed up. A Beagle looks over at my balcony from his balcony and wags his tail whenever I go out to stand or water the flower pots. Maybe he has not had enough of the human beings. He greets me and I greet him back by waving my hand. It seems he likes me or wants to bite me.

These myriad views from my window offer me an opportunity to imagine living the life of the other beings and imagine the best out of them. I become the tree, cat, bee-eater, pigeon parent or a squab, squirrel in a jiffy and bounce back to being me. It is as if I have found a time travelling machine from which I am able to travel in time, here and there.

Faces

By, Smit Soni,
Sem-2 Student, USLM



When I opened my eyes,
I found myself in a place where, there are no humans left,
there were some faces which were familiar,
faces with some futile emotions,
faces with monotonous expressions,
faces who reject things that they don't understand,
faces who are no more civil,
Faces who compelled me to close my eyes and go back to the world where I belong!!

Home

By, Ghata Joshi,
Sem-2 Student, USLM



Home.
I have been searching for homes,
In places,
In people,
In poetry,
In books,
In thoughts,
In sky,
In the deep-rooted earth,
But,
The day left,
With tinge of its sweetness
Inviting night
To be more sweeter and romantic,
I found myself,
There,
Where I left myself,
Decades ago,
For me,
House was never a place,
It had no address,

It had people whom I loved,
Because I loved them,
I keep on wandering,
Seeing this vast place,
Huge White walls,
And some paint on it,
To survive boredom,
I always feel alone,
Being around people,
And then,
I find some old love,
In my memories,
Which were almost lost,
In between the chaos of life,
And the unconscious process of growing up
I forgot to live and
Learnt to only leave,
Everything and person,
That felt like my own,
Sweet home!

Love Birds – Gender Bender

By, Rashmi Chouhan,
Assistant Professor, USLM

The topic and the issue of gender were never hilarious to me until Maganlal and Kajri made them. These are two cockatiels, our companion parakeets, at home. Kajri is grey-bodied, with specks of white feathers on the outer edges of its wings. Maganlal is beautiful bright yellow. Trusting the scientifically-accepted common indicator that male birds are more colourful than the female birds, Maganlal was named Maganlal, and Kajri, Kajri.

It was Maganlal, who first marked its place at home. And the fact that it was without a partner prompted us to get Kajri home a few months later. The duo made for a great couple — playing, chirping, dancing, singing and even ranting once when Maganlal fled home for three days. But eventually, they made love... but to our horror! Yes! To our horror! And that was when it was established that Maganlal was not actually Maganlal, and Kajri not actually Kajri. As in, Maganlal, who we assumed to be a male was actually a female; and Kajri a male. Well, nature did not mix-up their chromosomal configurations, but we unknowingly configured their identities wrong, thereby imposing the societal expressions of gender. And so we always said, “Maganlal kha raha hai,” when it could also have been “Maganlal kha rahi hai,” thanks to the linguistic expression of gender identity. Nevertheless, after the revelation, the masculine name “Maganlal” was simply not fitting, in our stream of consciousness, with the feminine expression “rahi hai” (Speaking in English saved us sometimes).

Ostensibly though, we were purged of any form of gender discrimination, for we had already given a feminine name to a male bird and masculine name to a female one (Again, who categorizes names is the question). Thankfully, the duo had no other gender “privileges”. After all, Barbies, pink frocks and Cinderella stories are meant for humans (read: girls)!!!

The Oxford Learners’ Dictionaries defines “gender” as “the fact of being male or female, especially when considered with reference to social and cultural differences, not differences in biology”. And for me, the Maganlal-Kajri mishmash actually brought alive the entire “Gender Studies” discourse we used to have as students; and that how we have divided our nouns, pronouns, and adjectives into different genders; that how it is ingrained in our subconscious. Does it also lead to different



expectations and rules placed on the two genders?

Anyway, the two little birds in our home somewhere have helped us question the idea of gender, gender roles, and gender expressions.

Now, how will you translate, “Maganlal has laid an egg”? It actually has!!!

The World in My Fridge during Quarantine

By, Dr. Udayprakash Sharma,
Assistant Professor, USLM

It has been over a month since the lockdown in India. I live in Ahmedabad while my family lives in Vadodara. A month before the lockdown was imposed, my family shifted with me to Ahmedabad. My parents were here for a short visit and had not cleared their refrigerator at the house in Vadodara. Who knew then that we would be in a lockdown?

I am now wondering about the perishables in my fridge and the kitchen in my house in Vadodara. Thankfully, there are no meat leftovers, as my parents are vegetarians, otherwise the neighbours would have called the police by now thinking that someone has died in my house from the odour of rotting meat.

The freezer has not been defrosted for a month. I feel pity for the peas and chocolates that lie there shivering and may have frozen to death. What would have been the last conversation between the two before they went in hibernation like Polar Bears in the Arctic? Peas must have envied the chocolates stating the fact that they were well insulated in their elitist layers of wrappers whereas the poor peas covered only in a blanket of a thin transparent plastic bag. A complete Marxian situation in the freezer! The chocolates for sure must have witnessed the peas last moments through their transparent plastic bag. The chocolates would have lived longer and then frozen to death. May be after this quarantine gets over we will be able to revive the life in chocolates and peas.

On the second rack of the fridge tray, there is leftover Paneer Tikka Masala in a container next to a packet of bread, of which one-fourth was consumed. There also lies a packet of milk which is unopened and is swelling up with fats and anger. I am imagining Mr. Bread may have turned green and yellow. A group of lemons on the top shelf of the fridge door are having fun looking at this orchestra happening on all the three floors of the fridge. The group of lemons like small minions will have a happy life and they will die of old age with a life full of entertainment.

The third rack of the fridge is a vegetable drawer at the lowest rung of the fridge hierarchy which houses a colony of multicultural vegetables. Looking at them the little bottle of eye drops must be saying that the vegetables look like the passengers travelling in a Mumbai local train and giggles.



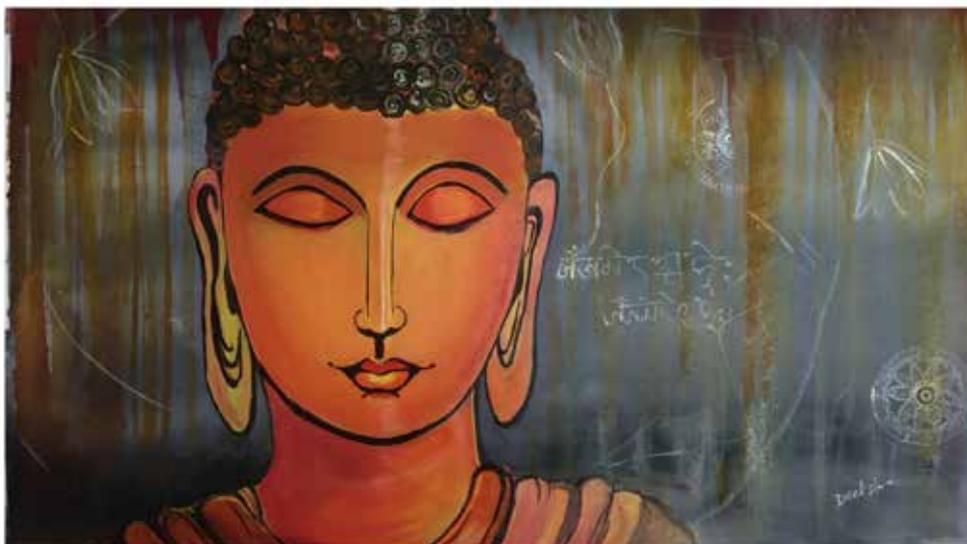
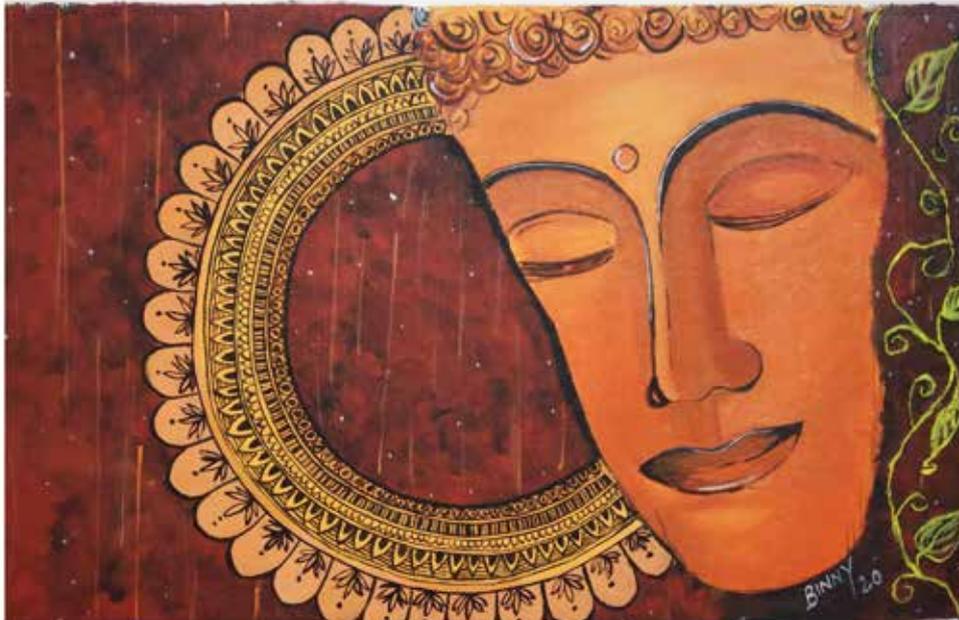
Mr. Tomato and Mrs. Tomatino are the most loyal couples in the fridge complex with the motto of 'live together and die together'. I have heard that their species mate for life and when one tomato loses a partner the other partner doesn't survive for long. They die of black fever, black patches engulf their body and they die a horrible death. God bless this couple! The group of drumsticks are going strong together and laughing at the deteriorating beauty of Ms. Cauliflower and Ms. Cabbage. They continuously tease them and they are not even sparing Mr. Brinjal who is ageing with the speed of 10 years each day.

The sprouts in the basket have given birth to new ones and they have got new hair growth. Soon they will grow longer and stronger hair. They are longing for water which is being rationed at a low speed by the cruel fridge. Potatoes have got wrinkles on their faces due to the global warming going on inside the fridge, they long for fresh air. Bananas have developed a skin disease which is making their yellowish glow wither away.

The leftover chapattis in the casserole must have developed green, blue, black and yellow fungus and if we are lucky we will discover mushrooms in the casserole when we return. Who knows that in secret my fridge is conjuring the atmosphere inside it in such a way that it is creating new bacteria and viruses that may serve as an antidote for Coronavirus.

Art Work

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