



# QUIRK

## Law School's LitMag

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Contribute, Criticise, Abuse, Praise  
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## A Quirky Effort

We barely got started on it, and here it is already. QUIRK. The informal literary magazine straight from the heart of Bangalore's National Law School of India University (Law School in less imposing terms). Collaborative space, monthly pulpit, political soapbox - there's a lot we would like to be. And a whole lot more that we want to do. Starting out on what is undoubtedly going to be an enriching learning experience for the green-but-spirited Quirk team, we stand tremulous at the foothills of a giant learning curve whose crest we can only imagine. The good news is that we've started climbing. Reflective of its newness (and perhaps the muddled times we live in), Quirk too is searching for an identity - for aspects that'll mark us. At one plane, we want to help create a truly facilitative, comfortable, and enjoyable forum for the articulate, intelligent, and oh-so-unexpressed college fraternity in India. To truly achieve such

an objective, we feel that an essentially informal style, incorporating maximum participation from the widest gamut of enthusiastic contributors of literary merit - has to be integral to Quirk's conceptualisation and production. Having had occasion to view the competitive atmosphere that pervades most universities, we have decided to accept the relaxed way of the informal - deadline-lethargy and all - in a genuine effort to create a truly comfortable medium. For a while now we have felt Law School lacking in adequate spaces for creative literary expression. The volume of unpublished (unseen even!) literature that inhabits computer storage spaces, yellowed wrinkling notebooks, and other such sources here, is highly indicative of such a void. Perhaps consequently, little exists in the nature of a smart archive that mirrors the trajectory of progress and captures the essence of the students' mood and spirit. We hope to address this scenario

through a monthly (all nine Law School months!) literary magazine that could well become a time-capsule of our lives. Big words, and you may say we are dreamers, but.... Quirk, in its own little informal way, will provoke minds and push limits through the medium of a high-quality literary magazine. We will fire the first salvos for a sorely needed literary renaissance - college-variety, college style. Soon enough, given our tenacity at this, we will serve as a catalyst for fresh expression at some level. We guarantee. Creating the foundations for a vibrant, progressive, and literally qualitative college community ultimately remains a project for everyone who thinks the idea as laudable. Quirk hopes to start by stimulating interest and action as regards literary expression/appreciation, within Law School and within the expanding circle of college students we 'connect' with. Shake on that?

## WHY LITERATURE?

# The Contours of University Literature

### ABHAYRAJ NAIK

It was the impudence of the question that first broke my sharp resolve of lethargy and spurred me along this little journalistic mission that I now find myself wrapped up in. Why Literature? The shock that out there in the yonder world, other cognate souls didn't feel ditto about the utter defunctness of such a question, compelled me to prudently check my premises. Literature, the golden voice of expression, is not unanimously sacred? Law School's busy subterranean world of Nags (Nagarbhavi, O uninformed outside reader), hostels, academic blocks and the like provided the perfect ambience for me to mull over the issue, and dwell on how literature, when taken in its broadest sense as free expression, is an important facet of any healthy university community. The first flavour of university literature that merits attention is its potential to create change, to influence, to be dynamic. This could be in a wide spectrum of ways dependent on the forum of expression. An analysis into all of the notice boards in Law School, for example, will show you how significant their mere functioning as forums for expression is for a wide array of people. A close look at an e-group dedicated to any subject, from gender studies to law school bitching, would show you that the mere facilitative functioning of the e-group as a forum for expression is very important. An informal play reading session with no hang-ups under the stars in the Quad (I couldn't resist the old fogie romantic line) could well be a healthy and needed forum for several literary buffs. The benefits of forums of expression are common-sensical almost - exchange of ideas, promotion of thinking, shared views, deeper understandings, convenience of communication, meeting grounds for people, etc. etc. The aspect that I'd like to focus on though is that though the benefits are so obvious, the effort to respect, promote, and most importantly, participate in forums of expression somehow remains a fairly tedious chore for most people. Acceptance of this all-too-dreadily-evident fact, brings me to the next

flavour of university literature that needs thinking about - its sensitivity to 'an infinite number of other, more important, more directly life-affecting, factors,' at any given time of one's university existence. The present status quo regarding such sensitivity, I believe, stems largely from the absence of truly healthy and facilitative forums for expression within the university setting. The notion of a silent, non-participating, majority seems wholly incongruous with the conception of an intellectually thriving college community. The truth of the matter is that radio-stations, bands, magazines, discussion clubs, societies, communities, etc. within a university setting, flourish primarily in scenarios where their potential and importance is publicly and meaningfully recognized. A college radio station, for example, would survive only if there are enough people within the college community (students, faculty, visitors, guests, etc. all included) who recognize its importance and therefore will participate, in their own individual ways (from organization, to funding, to hosting a show, to support, to listening in, etc.) in such a venture. University literature's sensitivity and innate shyness, it is believed, are also largely bolstered on account of the in-built resistance pervasive within the closed university context towards bringing unwanted attention to oneself through expression in any public forum. This leads us to the next distinctive flavour that university literature is often hued with - the pernicious potential for negative use. Co-terminous with the benefit of broad distribution flowing from a forum for free expression is the added damage possible through negative literature, say hate-speech, or possibly public display of pornography, expressed through such a forum. Anonymously written lewd personal messages, defamatory content over unregulated electronic channels, speech inciting minority oppression, personal attacks in response to public notices, etc. when expressed in the unique contextual setting of a university, often bear greater damaging potential than is normally acknowledged, owing to the heightened significance of notions such as students' 'reputation' in college, peer-pressure, adolescent insecurity, the student-faculty relationship, etc. The ideal situation, of course, is a community which remains conscious to the un-needed ramifications of hate speech and negative literature, and thereby responsibly enjoys the

fullest use of literature for constructive gains. The final flavour for university literature which can never be over-emphasized is its potent significance as a tool for the forward development of the university/college itself, through its contribution towards public accountability, transparency and constructive criticism. Institutional apathy, whether in the form of non-functioning faculty, or lack of adequate facilities, or non-participation in vital institutional activities from the stake-holding community, will generally be responsive to well-directed and well-intentioned accountability drawn through forums for free expression. The exact balances to be drawn in each discussion forum will undoubtedly be tricky and delicate, and it remains crucial in this endeavour for criticism to be constructive and not insulting, for suggestions to be helpful and not pompous, for humour to be tasteful and not demeaning, and so on. Equally important, is for the accountable entity to accept the logical consequences flowing from such accountability - for example, a reasoned public appeal on 19 (1) (a), Law School's central notice board, asking why the standard of education delivered through a particular legal course is abysmal, should ideally trigger off a chain of dynamic possible responses from the Powers That Be - an objective, expeditious, and non-political enquiry into whether the claim is substantiated, and if so, the effectuation of necessary remedial action. To present the other face of the coin, a reasonable appeal as to dropping academic standards on account of student inertia, made by concerned faculty through comfortable public forums of expression, should ideally catalyze some genuine soul-searching amongst students credited to be India's finest potential legal brains. At the end of the day, the answer to the big question is simple. Why Literature? Well. Literature, because it can build a better tomorrow. Literature, because it garnishes a lively today. Literature, because it promotes a healthy university life. Literature, because I agree to respect Literature.

## A HASTILY-WRITTEN POMPOUS PIECE TELLING PEOPLE WHAT TO DO

(Inspired by Jagannath Iyer)  
by SATYAJIT SARNA

- Contents of my bag:  
a)CPC Bare Act (1999 & 2002 Amendments)  
b)Floppies (2, Neither functional)  
c)Xeroxes  
d)Crocic (6 remaining)  
e)The Aeneid, translated by C. Day Lewis, 1952.

It's the last item that I want to talk about. I bought that copy three years ago for about 35 bucks. I've read it twice and it's still kicking around the bottom of my bag. Why? The answer is a little depressing. Halfway through my life in law school, I stumbled into lost and dark stretch of my literate life, where I wasn't reading much, and what I was reading

was absolute tripe (Ludlum, Tom Clancy, and very forgettable Indian fiction). Naturally I was depressed and mulled it over for a long while. The crux of the problem is this, and may strike you as nothing new, really, but no one has as much time as they want. However, this is greatly exacerbated by the fact that in Law School, reading time is by and large low quality. I read in class, or late at night, because something else is always going on otherwise. Effectively Law School ends up sapping the desire, ability and focus necessary to read truly rewarding literature, which for the purpose of this piece, I mean literature proper, political, analytical, classical fiction or non-fiction. That's the lifestyle explanation, but in part, it's also symptomatic of a political change. A few years ago, people in Law School enthusiastically went out of their way to read Foucault and

Derrida, even after the courses involving them were over. For better, honestly, and not worse, Law School was a more pseudo, political space. People sat out in the Quad just about every night, talking about "issues", and they talked about them all the time. They talked about sex and gender and identity and faith and power and rebellion and of course, making Law School a better/fairer/prettier place (Remember the mini-furore when the canteen was Nestleified?). They basically talked a lot, and people read to that effect. Somewhere along the line, we stopped caring about the way Law School was run beyond the way it affected us and lost our stake in the place. And alongside, we lost our taste for political and social literature, because it no longer applied to our lives. We stopped caring and commensurately stopped reading about it.

So, between scarcity of quality time and a change in the local intellectual climate, many of us quit reading anything heavy, anything that takes time to process. At that point I mentioned, I was reading some crap, light and enjoyable, but slow murder on the soul. The repercussions are obvious and danger evident; the lighter we read, the less we get out of it. We're buying ease and comfort at the price of intellectual and spiritual nourishment. And now, caveat time. None of what I've said should go to mean that first, it is possible to distinguish between light and heavy reading in a watertight way, second, that so-called light-reading is per se bad or third, that no one reads anything challenging anymore.

Continued on page 2



## 500-Plus-Words without saying much

This is not a discourse on the joys of writing in the tradition of Messrs. Joseph Addison and Richard Steele who popularized the modern English essay through their journal 'The Spectator', now in its 176th year of publication. So this will not be one of those 'about angst' or 'on mundane routine' type write-ups. Neither will this be a means to garner support for the formation of an anarchist movement a la Fight Club, though the idea seems appealing at times. This is also not an attempt at self-exploration by means of highlighting my predispositions. In fact there is no statement of aims and no strategy to be laid out in this first paragraph, which is why this instant magazine should be better described as an attempt at consolidating 'literary' expressions and not mere mechanical academic output.

Having duly addressed the preliminaries, the writer now takes the liberty of describing the benefits of why it is expedient at times to appeal to the idea of

'literary creativity' when nothing else seems plausible. Literature here of course would mean creation and consumption of the written word in any form possible. So the range pretty much covers everything from 'War and Peace' to accurate descriptions of the human anatomy engaged in multiple functions as well as the supposedly descriptive posts on the college notice-boards. First of all, it is extremely convenient to employ the written word when the aim is to highlight certain behavioural deficiencies in other people. More so when the people in question are in your immediate proximity and verbal articulation can often be counter-productive. Such depictions need not even be in the first, second or third persons since the author has the liberty of incorporating allegories and metaphors at will. So instead of calling a spade 'a spade' in a first-person conversation, it would be preferable to record all the disagreements and frustrations for the purpose

of an award-winning autobiography in fifty years time. More immediate ends can be served with anonymous letters and exploitation of a public forum like an e-group, a 'blog'-site or a community-notice board. Anyhow, the means are secondary as long as the ends are served.

The second obvious motivation to persist in indulgences with the written word is that even when you have nothing to say in concrete terms in ordinary conversations you always have the option of representing to the rest of the world that you have not run out of ideas since the written medium affords substantial latitude for expansion and enumeration even when it's not necessary. Take for example the preceding sentence.

The next issue may not be applicable for most people but at least in my case written messages via e-mail among other means appear to be more effective than what I actually manage to put across in direct conversation. This does spur a rather disturbing chain of thought. Perhaps the reason behind

the dependence on the electronic media would be that it provides a natural insulation from the direct physical or verbal reaction from the second party. It just gives you that extra-margin for those not so polite expressions. Conversely just like hand-written letters, e-mails also provide leeway for extrapolation and self-comforting interpretations on the receiver's side. The choice of a letter as an indicator of 'literary orientation' proceeds on the line of thinking that different literary forms whether they be novels, comics, short-stories, poems, plays, novellas or commentaries, are all in essence means of inter-personal communication at different levels. For the time being I believe I have accomplished what I set out to do in respect of an oft-repeated cliché i.e. to say nothing despite using more than five hundred words. Till next time!

- SIDDHARTH CHAUHAN

### Writer's Block

by Priyadarshini Kedalya

They said, with thoughtless concern,  
'You win some and you lose some.'  
Puzzled, I'm still unable to discern,  
So far, I've lost them all, how come?

The persistent thought, I've been escaping,  
The faltering heartbeat heralding the inevitable,  
The lump in my throat that is reappearing,  
Remind me to forget, of what, I'm capable.

They said, in stagnant encouragement,  
'Try, try, try, but never say die.'  
Genuine efforts later, the harsh judgement;  
No surprise; I've lost again. Why?

The whole rigmarole is familiar now,  
Mirrored before me, wherever I roam.  
Deflated esteem in hand; yet somehow,  
I'm still not packing up and going home.

reading for greater gains. Of course, it is a matter of individual taste, and heavy reading does mean different things to different people, as well it should, but I'm just saying we should shoulder a little heavier a burden, for our own good.

This is not a black and white argument, but merely a plea for each of us to adjust the balance of our reading away from vegetation to denser, meatier works. I'm not dictating public taste, just pleading with it.

Which brings me back to what I opened with: Virgil. It is my own personal opinion that in terms of fiction, I find that focusing on the cornerstones of our literary heritage, delving into the ancients really works for me. I offer the Aeneid up as an example of rewarding reading, which helps me make connections between worlds mythical, literary and historical.

Again, it's a personal choice, but I feel it helps define what I'm going after in this little diatribe.

I know that this pompous, hard-line, unsubstantiated stand will certainly earn me criticism, both educated and moronic, but, in the words of Martin Luther :

*Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise.*

### Pompous Piece... (Contd.)

People do read literature proper, but there are few of them, especially in more niche categories. I know about a dozen people on campus with truly catholic tastes in verse. Similarly, light literature is a lovely thing, but I believe that it should complement heavy lifting. Since people don't have that much time around here, I think it's best invested in more serious provocative

## SOUNDS OF SILENCE: ON LITERATURE

Art comes across as something you will find in a gallery. Decorative and divorced from more hard-core definitions of utility. Nevertheless, it has complemented man's creative instincts and brought meaning into life.

There are works of art that you appreciate mainly because everybody else does - like the Mona Lisa. And then are those that enslave your mind by resonating to something so personal and so perfectly tuned to what you feel your life means or ratifies or dreams for. It may bear the most irrational relationship to any objective pattern your life has followed. But it will still vibrate in tune with every muscle and nerve your body and mind may have known. I would have never known had I not had the fortune to find it in the music of Dire Straits and Lata Mangeshkar (unlikely combination though).

As a ten year old, devoid of the fantasies of romance, I still cried to Lata Mangeshkar's *Dil Hoom Hoom Kare (Rudaali)* and as a sixteen year old I was stunned by the enormity of Mark Knopler's rendition in *Lady Writer (Brother's in Arms)*.

It was as much to do with what he said in the song as much as it had to do with what he did not. The pure emotion that seemed to engulf me when he cried 'Just the way that her hair settled down/Around her face/And I recall my fall from grace/In another time, another place' seemed for the first time inexplicable. The disjointed meaning with touches of musical rhyme and a moody guitar

for company would have seemed an unlikely combination when transcribed on paper. In my mind, it was not.

As years passed, I was caught unexpectedly by the raging bass which metallic rock throws in with the anger and protest in the lyric. The high ended metal complemented the crude poetry that seemed to disagree with rhythm and beat. The guitar was a wordless affirmation of the unsaid. For a more traditional fan of music, the ritualistic repetition by the acoustic guitar in "Temple of the King" (Rainbow) would have the same effect. The disjointed meaning in Dire Straits, the silence between Lata Mangeshkar's high pitched tones, the guitar which silently cried on after the singer tired himself, all created a space for me to dwell in. A space to imagine myself in.

This is the lesson the musician taught the writer in me. The writer sets out to do the same thing as the musician albeit with different instruments. Communication is seen widely to be the very purpose of writing or music. The writer or musician, on the other hand, will call it expression, so as to encompass the so many other purposes her/his art may serve. It may serve to attenuate his thought process, stretch blurred and mixed emotion to clarity, help justify an inclusion or exclusion of reason, unshackle the mind, satisfy the need for expression or that which he refuses to depart from, and therefore record.

### LET THERE BE

Aju John

Let there be and there was  
Light and Dark, Heaven and Earth, Land and Sea.  
Infinite arbit divisions from the endless Empty.  
In an unlikely supreme hedonism,  
Indulging Himself in the Creation  
Of some maniacal hallucination.

Was He lonely?  
Pre-Creation must've been a darker place,  
No friends, enemies or even a painted face.  
But could He ever find company?  
The ruler and the ruled: strange bedfellows at best;  
His great purity, the stronger test.

Bored and brooding,  
Boiling with energy, inaction:  
He Created with passion  
Galaxies, DNA and the human mind.  
The original creation that artists envy;  
Its emulation forever a dream be.

The seminal masterpiece,  
That glorious height of an aesthetic attempt!  
A similar human quest would fate tempt.  
For neither Bach Chaplin Picasso,  
Nor Tyagaraja Homer Shakespeare  
Have risen to that ancestor, I fear.

Macondo, Madna and Middle Earth;  
Love-diagrams on a pearl white beach,  
Conquered by the ocean's reach.  
A visible reality more alluring  
And Intricate; frightens and shocks more than  
The wildest human dream can.

This ancient quest of the artist,  
Ever elusive like the Holy Grail,  
Parchment and videofilm are destined to fail!  
But ah! To even compare (Of course,  
A question of degree!) Is to find Him,  
And for while perhaps, even be Him.

The silence between the lines of song or the scream of bass seek to create a space. This space is what differentiates the artistic work from a government order. Writing creates a space for imagination as much as it fills what was empty and meaningless. But it cannot saturate that space and leave nothing for the reader to cherish and create. Nor can it refrain from creating any space at all, and thereby orphan the reader. It is quite common to hear from an avid reader that he or she would not like to watch the movie based on the book because it would spoil the story that he or she imagined between and with the lines in the book. I found the *Bourne Supremacy* a horrible movie. Matt Damon could hardly describe my once godly Ludlum's Jason Bourne.

A sentence, a poem, an essay or a story would strike a chord in me only if it were to complete the feeling or idea in my mind as much as it did in the writer's mind when she sat down to write it. This is probably because, for me, writing does not describe an idea or a feeling as much as it completes it. The writing is itself forms a part of the idea.

Wordsworth probably gave more life to the daffodils on paper than he did in his mind. In fact, I am positive that he breathed more life into them than they probably possessed in

### IN YOUR HEAD

Cyrilus

In your head,  
Illusions sparkle,  
Like the sound of glass,  
Blown into bits,  
Thoughts wander,  
As though there is nothing,  
Emptiness swallows everything,  
Reality seems non existent,  
Non conforming, non relenting,  
Countless nightmares,  
Thoughtless fears roam about,  
Bleak, bold , beyond control,  
Limits run into unwanted territories,  
Feelings seem lost,  
Eaten up,  
Fear like tears dry up.  
In your head.

real. A good writer would be one who can put all emotion or ideas in words. But the best writer would just use enough words to inspire the same emotion or idea in all completeness in the readers mind.

This logic is not alien to common parlance. It is not uncommon to hear someone say "R.K. Narayan is great. He conveys so much in so few words and simple phrases." Or the much more common - "Some things are best left unsaid".

This is for me the string that connects all art and separates it from that which is not. The ability and requirement of the work to say more with less. To convey to the other while confirming to the self. To do justice to both heart and mind. To complete the perception of reality. To rhyme with the world.

The talent for recreation of what is captured in the mind is a blessing none of us can waste. And it is only this recreation that will do complete justice to that beauty which appeared in that closed space in our head. This literary magazine tries to create a space for all of us who want to contribute our perceptions of life and fantasy to this monthly literary album and help record at least a little of that runs through the minds of a 400 odd minds in this brilliant place.

Acknowledgements: Dire Straits, Lata Mangeshkar, The English Language, Anupama (II), The Quirky LitMag Team.

- SUHAS BALIGA

Coming This March!!

Quirk  
the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition



# Racism in the Lord of the Rings

SRIRAJ RAMESAN  
SRIJONI SEN

The world of Middle Earth is timeless, enjoyed by all the generations which have read it so far. Recently transformed into a movie trilogy that has grossed more than 3 Billion USD in the world box office, it has now been brought to the notice of an overwhelming number of people around the world.

The popularity of the movies, however, led to a lot of attention of the negative sort—namely, allegations of racism. Though such murmurs have been around since the books were written, the movies seem to have blown things way out of proportion. One of the reasons for this could be that many were disturbed with the movie—why were all the good guys white and the bad guys predominantly umm...black, sometimes for good measure with dreadlocks? Even the men from the east and the south who had sided with Sauron the villain were not spared. They all had a rather Arabic appearance with their black hair, black eyes, darker skin and gold earrings riding elephant like creatures called oliphaunts.

Die-hard fans of the films will be quick to point out that the tangled straight hair of the fighting Uruk-Hai are seen as dreadlocks, while the fact that all the orcs are dark isn't exactly accurate. There are grey-skinned orcs shown, and I believe that the issue of skin-colour doesn't really arise in the film. The orcs are depicted to fit in as far as possible with the idea of their being creatures of the night.

While the author can't be blamed for what was shown in the movie, people who went back for another read after watching the films often posed some more questions. The major question being whether Tolkien was referring to the African and the Oriental when he was describing Orcs and the men who allied with Sauron. If this is the case then was he associating the evil natures of the Orcs, Southrons and Easterlings with Asian and African races?

The word "swarthy" was used by the author six times in the entire trilogy. In five of these instances this word is used to describe the appearance of negative characters namely the Haradrim, Easterling and the men from the south who were under Sauron during the war of the ring. Were these people of "fell" character, intrinsically bad as they were touted to be? Well there is a passage in the book which signifies otherwise. Sam, the ringbearers trusted companion witnessed a skirmish where men of Faramir killed a group of Southrons. The following passage from the book makes it quite clear how Tolkien feels about the men of the east and the south:

"He wondered what the man's name was and where he came from; and if he was really evil of heart, or what lies or threats had led him on the long march from his home; and if he would not really rather have stayed there in peace—all in a flash of thought which was quickly driven from his mind."

Were these people siding with Sauron because they were by nature bad or because they were forced too? In The Silmarillions, a precursor to the ring trilogy, these very people had fought against Melkor, Sauron's master.

Melkor is several times referred to in the Lord of the Rings as possessing evil powers far greater than those of Sauron. This shows, in a way, that the men of the south and the east were not evil by nature. They are part of the Dark lord's army, nevertheless, only because they were deceived by him, overwhelmed by his power. Even the Numenoreans fell into this trap which ultimately led to the sinking of Numenor. If the racist argument were to stand, then the races of the north should be pure. The fact that the Southrons and the Easterlings aided Sauron is seen as a form of racism. However, the Witch King of Angmar—the leader of the Nazgul, ruled over a region that was at the northernmost part of Middle Earth.

One basic fact that isn't mentioned in any of these arguments is that the Lord of the Rings doesn't deal with different races...it deals with altogether different species. Even when we consider the different races of men, such as the Numenoreans, who are considered superior to the other human races, it must be remembered that they are also the ones who committed the most grievous sins and caused the most damage...including the very loss of Numenor itself. The sinking of the island of Numenor had been caused not only by the machinations of Sauron, but by the folly of the men themselves.

In the story Orcs are treated as intrinsically bad deserving nothing more than death. The elves were 'fair' and shared the features of the Anglo-Saxon, while the Orcs, according to Tolkien in a letter to Forest J. Ackerman (June 1958), are "squat, broad, flat-nosed, sallow-skinned, with wide mouths and slant eyes: in fact degraded and repulsive versions of the least lovely Mongol-types." Many considered this statement an indication of how Tolkien wanted to connect the Orc to the Asian race.

However, the evil Orcs who have been described as "swarthy" and "slant-eyed"—aren't really a separate race either. They are corrupted Elves, created by the Enemy himself. As for being "black", isn't that really a description of them as creatures of the night?

Which leads us to the core of the debate—when races are described as black or white, is it a reference to their skin, or is black being equated with darkness, traditionally associated with evil, while white represents light? Throughout ancient mythology and literature, hundreds of associations of this sort can be seen...in ages where darkness was to be feared, wasn't it also linked with evil? Tolkien himself intended his work to be a kind of Anglo-Saxon mythology...which is perhaps why he perhaps carried on these traditions. In western mythology, isn't it only natural that the heroes have Caucasian characteristics? The ideas of beauty, also, are in conformity with western ideals. This does not make Tolkien a racist. The 'slant-eyed' argument, for example—replace 'slant' with 'squint' or 'shifty' and you get a pretty standard description of an untrustworthy character. It is coincidental, in my opinion, that this particular phrase should have been used when it is also associated with Asian races.

The theme of light and dark is well-explored in the Lord of the Rings...Mordor is the land 'where shadows lie', while darkness is associated with great peril on Weathertop Hill, and in Shelob's lair, where it is Galadriel's light that saves Frodo and Sam.

The idea of there being completely good and evil races can also be challenged—the Numenoreans being a prime example. The Rohirrim are seen as noble men, and are attacked by the advocates of the racist theory because they are described as being tall, with yellow hair. However, the Rohirrim are seen in an adverse light when their treatment of the Ghan-Buri-Ghan's people comes to light. Neither do all fair-skinned characters belong to the side of good. Chief among these is Saruman the WHITE, second only to Sauron in the Lord of the Rings.

The Black Riders are also frequently mentioned as proof of racist attitudes in the Lord of the Rings. Black Riders, however, only wear black...during the confrontation at Weathertop Hill, the Nazgul are clearly described as having "white faces" with grey hair.

The champions of the racist theory draw many parallels between the story of the Lord of the Rings and aspects of western thought. The evil creatures of the east were separated from the heroes by a vast mountain range. Similarities have been traced between Tolkien's map and story, and the Aryan Invasion Theory (which was taught to us in class this trimester), used by the colonialists to prove their racial superiority over the local population. This theory talks of a group called the Aryans, who were fair, tall and sharp featured who travelled to the east on horses to the Indian Subcontinent which was separated from them by mountains. The people of the subcontinent were darker, shorter, and had blunter features. Questions are posed as to whether this is purely coincidental.

Tolkien's predicament can be equated to that of Herder whose theory of racial differentiation was the precursor to the dreadful Nazi ideology. Whether Herder would have sanctioned this is not known as he died before the Nazi's came to power. At present rightist groups like the neo-nazi British Nationalist Party has put Tolkiens works as essential readings. Racist groups have embraced his works as much as anti-racists have censured it.

While there are some extreme allegations that Tolkien was a complete racist, there are many who conclude that what appears to be racist to us is just his Eurocentric, colonialist attitudes coming to play. Tolkien was living in a time which was quite different from ours, when the British empire was still strong, and his writings are just an indication of his times.

There is another group of admirers of his work who disclaim any allegations that Tolkien was racist, insular or Eurocentric. They emphasize the fact that Tolkien had set out to create a mythology for the English people, and that the books are a work of fantasy. Perhaps Tolkien was not as obsessed with appearing politically correct as we are today, but if anything, his works, when one gives them more than a superficial reading, are champions of anti-racism. The story of different people, such as Elves and Dwarves, coming together in spite of their differences and past conflicts, to fight against evil, can be read as a message of anti-racism if one is not carried away by mere descriptions and adjectives.

## A COMMON-LAW ENTRANCE TEST?

The case for a common-entrance exam for NLSIU as well as the colleges modeled on it

The entrance procedure for admission to NLSIU has been under the scanner on account of the consistent increase in the number of applicants each year. Some general criticisms offered are that the test inherently favours those with good English-medium schooling and that the

nevertheless be a step in the right direction.

The inclusion of institutions for the purpose of such a common-entrance exam, can be left to the discretion of an apex body comprising of members from the Bar Council of India or eminent academics. The modalities of designing and administering a common-entrance procedure can follow the example of similar tests conducted for engineering, medical and management institutions.

The primary motive for a consolidated entrance system is that it will bring about standardisation across different institutions. It can work on the 'rule of thumb', that the applicant with the better performance in the test gets an earlier right of preference in respect of the seats available at the institution of his/her choice. Hence, the 'brand-name' of the particular institute will be an important criterion and it will precipitate direct competition between the various law colleges.

The first benefit of implementing a common procedure is that it removes the need for individual spending on multiple admission forms, which as per current practice are highly priced and deter a substantial number of people from even applying for the preliminary process. A

applying for the preliminary process. A single application process will be convenient to applicants and also amount to a net saving of resources spent in conducting the same. The criticism offered against this argument, is that separate entrance-tests also serve as income-earning opportunities for institutions. However, it only follows that the institutions should forego these collections which are at best marginal amounts in their total budgets in order to accommodate students' interests.

Secondly, a substantial number of high-school students are deterred from applying to individual institutions on account of regional considerations, i.e. they are generally averse to the idea of moving to campuses in far-off locations. This tendency holds truer for prospective applicants who do not come from a legal background and are unsure of their long-term prospects with a law degree. A common-test for several institutions will circumvent this trend.

The only argument against a common law-entrance exam that deserves attention is that of possible 'brand-dilution' or the disregarding of some distinct criteria demanded by individual institutions. It is true that in case of NLSIU, several people would feel that it enjoys a head-start over other five-year law courses in India in terms of recruitment prospects for students. This argument only proceeds on the idea of the need to maintain high standards in

an institution -- evaluated on how students perform through law school and thereafter and not in the entrance-exam. On comparison of the test-results for eminent law-schools like NALSAR, NUJS, NLU et al with the NLSIU list and it will be clear that the same individual applicant may not have performed consistently across the different tests. The entrance-tests are, therefore, not conclusive indicators of legal aptitude and for all practical purposes there would be little to differentiate between the incoming batches in the top 4-5 law-schools. The argument for a common-test is made to cover only the institutions following the NLSIU academic model in the short run. However, with more and more of the 'old-school' law departments in colleges and universities starting five-year programmes following the same structure, the coverage of the test can be widened on the conditions of an institution fulfilling clearly laid-down standards relating to administrative efficiency, quality of faculty and provision of infrastructure.

- SIDDHARTH CHAUHAN

AGREE? DISAGREE?

Write to

Quirk



### Counterpoint 19(1)(a)

high fee-structure as well as requirements for ancillary spending create an 'elitist' profile of students. Another point made is that despite the provision of financial aid schemes, only the 'well-off' would have access to preparatory resources. I do not intend to address these issues directly in this note. I propose a reform that might enable a slightly more diverse profile of incoming students. Though a common-entrance test for admission to NLSIU and the Law-schools that have subsequently followed its model, is not an exhaustive solution to the shortcomings in the admission procedure, it will,



# The Asylum at Bergen

ADITYA SUDARSHAN

Two hours into the journey I put my book away and looked out of the window. It was early evening and overcast but the light was still good, as I knew it would remain until past midnight. Outside, the country was speeding by- dark woods of pine and conifer lay grimly across the low mountains, bathed in the cold sheen of a Norwegian summer. As the train climbed higher I could see patches of snow clinging to the mountain walls- the white glistening against the dark green surroundings. I watched for several minutes until the austere beauty grew forbidding; then I pulled my jacket closer around me and reached again for my book.

'Excuse me, are you the brain surgeon?'

The man seated opposite me looked middle-aged- bald and slightly overweight. I smiled at him and replied- 'Yes.'

'I've heard of you- you were in the papers about that transplant. Oh, you're from India, aren't you?'

My smile broadened- I was used to having my ethnicity arouse more interest than my work, sometimes even in my colleagues. I nodded and turned to my book, trying to find my page.

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On the inter-city, the journey from Oslo to Bergen is a little less than six hours, and it was well past seven o'clock when we reached our station. I climbed down onto the platform, smarting in the chill of the evening air. Like every other platform in the country this one was both deserted and uncovered. Glancing up at the murky sky I felt suddenly cold at the thought of the Norwegian winter, when the snow piles high on the railway platforms and the Scandinavians stand shivering in their woollens, priding themselves on their hardness. There is no such thing as bad weather, they say to each other here, only bad clothing. Come to New Delhi in June, I smiled to myself, feeling instantly warmer at the thought of home.

From the station I made my way on foot through the city, to the funicular. Bergen is famous for its funicular- the cable railway that cuts its way through to the top of the mountain, from where one can see the whole city along with its magnificent harbour. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Bergen had been the political and economic capital of Norway, and it still remained the most important port on its west coast. But the cities of Norway sleep early and I walked quickly along empty cobbled streets past closed shop doors and drawn shutters until I reached the entrance to the funicular.

The funicular ascends along a tunnel through the mountain, which slopes steeper and steeper until it is almost vertical. An eager crowd had gathered at the bottom to watch the car inch slowly towards its resting place, the tension in the cables relaxing as it halted. When its doors were opened I pushed my way through to the back, where a thick sheet of glass afforded an excellent view of the receding mountainside. As the vehicle gathered speed the cold wind rushed in through the windows at the side and we hurtled upwards faster and faster till I could see the drop of the tunnel almost directly below where I stood. For several minutes after the climb the exhilaration of ascent still lingered.

The railway ended alongside a grassy esplanade on the mountaintop that looked over the city. Standing there I could see the inlet of Vågen dotted with trading ships from the south, and the ruins of a twelfth century castle jutting out from the northern edge of the harbour. Further north, Bergen's oldest church-bells struck eight, and as the sound cut through the heavy summer evening I felt a sudden thrill. My eyes wandered to the thickly forested mountain walls that stood rooted in the city below and stretched forebodingly upwards. I felt a hand on my shoulder.

'I am sorry to have kept you waiting.'

I turned to see the doctor. He looked exactly like in his photographs- tall and gaunt, with a prominent forehead and deep-set blue eyes that now looked steadily into mine.

'It was no trouble, Dr. Saks. I am honoured to receive your invitation.'

'The pleasure is mine. We will have to travel on foot from here- I hope you are not too tired.' His voice carried genuine concern.

'Not at all,' I lied.

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He led the way along a narrow path through the forested hillside. 'It is not wide enough for a vehicle.' The doctor sounded apologetic.

I made a motion to indicate that it did not matter. It was darker now; the twilight sun was obstructed by the canopy overhead. We walked in silence for close to half an hour until I spotted the white walls of the asylum in the distance, incongruous amid the thick woods that closed in all around them.

'I have asked for dinner to be kept ready.'

My pace quickened at the prospect of a hot meal. Soon we were close enough to see the building whole. It was an imposing structure of considerable dimensions and severe angles, built in the strict functionalist fashion. I knew, although we had not yet entered, that very few of the higher storeys were ever used, and that the lowest levels of the building- where all the most dangerous patients were housed- were all underground. The asylum's renown stemmed in large measure from that of its patients. They had flown in from all over the world- Francis, the cobbler from Toulouse who would slip scorpions into the shoes of his clientele for fun, Jerome, the Tennessee banker who had stabbed his invalid wife to avoid having to look after her, Kurtz, the German cannibal who had successfully advertised on the Internet for a victim, and the Ngaio sisters from



Tanzania, who had managed to smother an infant a week for two months before being caught. The humanity of the law meant that it could not touch those it deemed insane, so the better connected among them were sent to the mountains of Bergen, where under the supervision of Dr. Saks they were tended to in the hope that they might be cured. It was not clear that the doctor's treatment was effective, but it was not an evident failure, and those subjected to it had given no further cause for complaint to anyone. But more than this it was Saks' own name- there was none bigger in his field- that had built the reputation of the asylum. He was widely regarded as the man who, though still young, had single-handedly rescued psychotherapy from the limbo of pseudoscience and given it the principles and tools it needed to be both respectable and successful. In spite of my recent triumphs therefore, I had been more than pleasantly surprised to find myself asked to visit the doctor here in Bergen, and not even the mysterious absence of a reason for his invitation had dissuaded me from accepting it.

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One section of the ground level of the asylum had been converted into living space for the doctor, while the rest of the staff lived in rooms adjoining the main building. We passed from the reception and medical wards through white-walled corridors into a small, plush room, carpeted in red. A wooden bookshelf in the corner overlooked a low table laden with food. Over dinner, I initiated conversation.

'Now you must tell me, Dr. Saks,' I spoke easily in the comfort of his quarters, 'to what do I owe this honour?'

As I spoke, I noticed for the first time that the doctor did not look well. His eyes were bloodshot from an evident lack of sleep and the thin lines of his mouth were turned downwards, accentuating the hollow of his cheeks. He replied in a low voice-

'It is a very personal matter. It will take some time to explain.' I said nothing. When he spoke again a remarkable change had come over him. He leant forward, eyes shining with a strange urgency and devoid of any trace of fatigue-

'A year ago I realized that my work here was a failure.'

He continued without a pause, speaking quickly but distinctly. 'All along I had been convinced that madness was a creature of circumstance- that some deep-rooted impulse in these unfortunate souls,' he waved in the direction of the basement, 'impelled them to the things they did. So I took it upon myself to discover the source of that impulse. I spent hours and hours with each of them, probing, questioning, interrogating them with every technique of my science. And at first I imagined it was working. But I was wrong.'

For a brief moment his eyes fixed on mine with an odd intensity. Then he continued-

'More than once something happened that ought not to have- some brief but inexplicable outburst of insanity. Word did not get out, of course, but I knew then that this illness was not psychological, and that my therapy was useless before it. I was shattered; you will understand, my life's work was wrecked. But I resolved to tackle the problem afresh. I studied it for several months. Then, only last month, I had the answer.'

He stopped here, and I felt he expected me to speak.

'What was it?'

The doctor smiled slowly, as one savouring a deep secret- 'The solution lies in your line of expertise. The madness I deal with is an inability to tell right from wrong. I know that it has often been conjectured that such madness is a defect of the brain, and I also know that much tomfoolery has gone into trying to prove that hypothesis. But now I have succeeded, and for this I must thank you.'

'Why is that?'

'Because it was your work on the Penfield map that led me to the answer.'

This struck me as curious. The Penfield map- named after its Canadian discoverer, Wilder Penfield- is one of neuroscience's most fascinating discoveries. It refers to the 'map' of the body that is carried in the brain, such that when any part of the body is stimulated the sensation is transmitted to the area of the brain where it is mapped. The map is fascinating because in it the hand is next to the face, the feet near the genitals, the ears adjacent to the breasts- nothing is as one would expect it to be. My own work in this field, which had dragged my name out of obscurity, was to explain some of the oddities I had encountered while studying my patients. One of them had had his left hand amputated, yet swore that when I

touched his nose he felt the sensation in his absent thumb. Another, who had lost his right leg in a car accident, claimed that his orgasm now extended to his missing limb. I had shown that in these patients the parts of the brain that normally received sensations from the hands and the feet now somehow overheard signals from their neighbours, the face and genitals. But the Penfield map itself had nothing to do with human reason, or emotion, or insanity, and I said as much to the doctor.

'Of course the map itself is irrelevant,' he responded impatiently, 'but your work on it has wider implications than you perhaps imagine. You see, it is not just some areas of the brain that are capable of responding to the signals sent to those close by - it is every single one of them.'

Slowly, I felt understanding dawn upon me in its familiar, gradual fashion. And yet, it seemed almost too fantastic.

'You mean, the frontal cortex-'

'Yes.' I could sense the triumph in his voice. 'The frontal cortex of the brain is the seat of our moral sense. For some reason it is not reached, not even by the most revolting experience, in those who cannot tell right from wrong. But if every part of the brain can be reached simply by stimulating the parts adjacent to it, then, in this manner, so can the frontal cortex.'

'By stimulating the parietal cortex?' But I already knew the answer.

'Yes. By stimulating the parietal cortex. And the parietal cortex, as you would know, responds most powerfully to that most animal of sensations- Fear.'

Neither of us spoke for several minutes. As the silence sounded through that little room I felt a sudden, powerful desire to leave it. I wanted to ride the funicular once more and to descend down the mountain onto the cobbled streets of the city below. The doctor spoke again, softly, as if sensing my discomfiture-

'Shall we go outside?'

We passed through the bleached corridors, back the way we had entered until we were outside in the cold mountain air and the forest surrounded us once more. Now the darkness hung heavy all around and though I looked I could not see the road leading away through the woods. The doctor motioned towards a small opening in the asylum wall near the ground-

'I am sure you cannot wait to see the results of my new treatment.'

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The lower levels of the asylum were its most ancient. Long ago a network of catacombs had been constructed at this site, for a purpose now forgotten, but the old labyrinth still provided a convenient if inhospitable home for the asylum's most famous names. There were sufficiently few patients for each of them to be housed in their own individual cells, which were situated- not packed close in rows one next to the other- but discretely, in separate parts of the underground complex.

The stone walls of the aged labyrinth had been reinforced and many of the pathways blocked, so that the corridors now served not to mislead the ignorant visitor but to guide him. We had been walking for several minutes along one of the many long and narrow corridors that led east and deep towards the heart of the asylum building, when the doctor halted and motioned to my left.

'Look.'

I could sense the excitement in his voice even as I turned to follow his gesture. On my left and set deep into the wall was a large, bare room lit only by a single uncovered bulb hanging from its ceiling. The bulb swayed continually, sending strange shadows dancing across the room. In one corner was crouched the figure of a man, his features hidden in the gloom. I strained to look as the diffused glow of the light bulb settled upon his face. The man's cheeks were round and smooth. He had a squat nose and thick, shapeless lips, which I dimly recalled having seen photographed in the newspapers several months previously. But now I barely noticed the cheeks or the nose or the lips, for in the midst of these very unremarkable features were the man's eyes- staring out at me- large brown eyes that were opened wide in unmistakable, abject terror.

I spun around to see the doctor smiling at me.

'His cell is soundproof. And we are looking through a sheet of glass that is opaque on the other side.'

'But what is he looking at?' In my mind I could still see his mad, staring eyes.

'I don't know how to describe it best. He sees himself being hunted by supernatural things- ghouls, demons, wraiths. Perhaps you and I would think of them as childish fancies, but for him- for him, they are the things that he fears the most. You see, it is not a difficult matter for someone of my training to discover what it is that a man is most terrified of. And very often it is possible to create a simulation of that thing, an alternate world where only that fear, and nothing else, exists. And then to bind the senses to it, so that the retina perceives no other image, and the ear drums vibrate to no other sound. So that it is impossible to get away from.'

'Does he not know that it is not real?'

'He does not; that is the beauty of it. His every conscious hour is spent in the simulated world of his fears, so his

*Continued on Page 5*



# The Asylum At Bergen (continued)

brain can no longer tell what is real and what is illusion.’

‘But what does this achieve?’

‘It is perfectly simple, although, I admit, a trifle crude. It creates fear. It stimulates the parietal cortex of the brain, stimulates it powerfully and continually.’ The doctor smiled a strange, lopsided smile- ‘After all, if you want to wake a sleeping man it is not enough to whisper. And it has worked, do you not know’, his voice rose, tremulous with the passion of triumph, ‘the dead moral sense in these men and women has been awakened on more than one occasion- in time, I feel sure, it will awaken forever. I have seen these patients show revulsion- true moral revulsion- such as they would never have experienced before. Often they turn violent when that happens. At other times, they simply cry.’

He paused, and I asked ‘Is this the treatment you give to all the other patients as well?’

‘Broadly, yes. But of course, no two people fear quite the same things to quite the same degree. So the stimulus we provide is catered to each individual.’

Then he beckoned to me- ‘But come, I will show you; let us finish our tour.’

How many hours we spent in those dark catacombs I do not know. We passed from one cell to the next, and at each one we saw the inmates and their faces all alike, fearful and cowering in the face of unseen horrors. The doctor was like an eager child showing off a new toy as he led me through the maze of subterranean corridors. Finally it was over, and we were outside once again, where the perpetual Norwegian sun was now all but extinguished by the thick forest above. We stood in the darkness facing the asylum’s main entrance.

He turned to me-

‘Before I show you your room for the night, shall we share a bottle of wine?’

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In the warmth of the doctor’s quarters I felt once more at ease. I complimented the doctor on his choice of wine- a truly excellent Lambrusco. I remarked favourably upon the arrangement of his room. I commended him on his administration of the asylum. Then something struck me.

‘Dr. Saks, I understand that you benefited from my studies on the Penfield map, but did you not say that you wished to speak to me about a personal matter?’

He was looking at me keenly as I spoke. Now he nodded slowly-

‘Yes, that is right. I desire a favour of you. It concerns me, but equally, it concerns you.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘I have followed your career with great interest. You have done some very notable work and achieved many excellent successes, although you are but a young man.’

‘Thank you.’

## Beggary

She rattled the few coins  
Thrown distastefully at her  
And sighed - resignation, defeat  
Eyes turned heavenward  
Saw but pallid sky and grey smoke  
Watched the shiny new cars speed past  
People with faces lit up, permanent smiles  
'Why did God choose them, not me?'  
Cleared this bit of pavement-on-the bridge  
Sky above, swirling water below  
Lives hung in the balance? Have but  
This space on earth to call their own  
Bits of paper flee, scurrying in the wind  
Do they too know - written words are sacred?  
'The unlettered - like me - should know'  
To me, they're just dashes,dots and lines  
Unforgiving world this, unkind life  
Too many people, too little time  
Too little wealth for starving lots  
'I swallow my pride, fear and pain'  
Stretch out a trembling hand for alms  
Necessity, not choice, dictates my fate  
Only to be looked upon in scorn, slapped in the face  
Showered with curses and turned away  
I want to scream out loud and let them know  
'I don't like this either  
But have I a choice?'  
But I'll have to stay alive and fight  
Till the bitter end when my time comes  
Then I'll let go and fling away  
This hunger, suffering and searing pain.'

Kalyani Ramnath

‘And yet’, he spoke slower now, as if choosing his words with care ‘you have also had your share of failures.’

‘I certainly have. But as has every surgeon, I daresay’, I laughed, but it sounded forced.

‘Of course. But not quite like yours.’

‘What do you mean?’ I asked again, trying hard to affect a cool curiosity but unable to keep the edge out of my voice.

‘Only that you take risks which others in your position might not. I wonder if you remember a certain patient of yours, a businessman in Bombay, six years ago?’

‘Not precisely, but-’

‘Or the artist from Cuttack, in the same year.’

‘Why-’

‘Or the Bangalore industrialist, two years ago. They all ended up more vegetable than human, didn’t they? And of course, there was the transplant with the baby only last year. That was not an advisable procedure, was it?’

‘It worked.’ I spoke hotly, feeling waves of anger wash over me.

‘Yes, it did that time. But not six months ago, when you tried it again.’

I tried to speak but could not, as if something was fastening itself around my throat. My fingers gripped the arms of my chair tightly, even as a tide of alarm and fear engulfed me. I felt myself struggling for breath, gasping for air. My eyes turned wildly to see the empty wine glass by my side, and suddenly its image began to blur and grow dim.

The doctor leant towards me, his deep blue eyes searching for something in mine.

‘I have studied your career most closely. And I have long suspected that you are not a well man. But now, after today, I am certain of it.’

I looked at him numbly.

‘You see, I watched you most closely as we visited each cell down below. You saw what we are doing to these wretched creatures, you heard me describe it, you witnessed it for yourself again and again and again. You were astonished, yes, but not once- you understand- not even once did you so much as flinch.’

I staggered to my feet and tried to move towards where the doctor sat just a few feet in front of me. But my legs gave way, and I felt myself fall heavily to the carpeted floor. I turned from where I lay until I could see the doctor’s silhouette standing over me.

‘A man who would experiment as you experiment, unthinkingly, upon those who depend upon him for assistance, a man who would continue to do so in spite of tragic and repeated failure- over and over- is a man who cannot tell right from wrong. An insane man.’

# THOSE UNFINISHED SHEETS

AJU JOHN

Devan’s day began before dawn. Shivering with an iced-up pleasure, he would wash himself by the well and clad in his dhoti, sit down by the table lamp with a cup of steaming tea. A stack of paper by his side, he would write. Often he would continue what he had written the previous night. Sometimes he would be starting afresh and sometimes, planning something new. If he still saw the cobwebs in his eyes, he would light up the day’s first beedi. And then he would write. On occasion, his bin overflowed. Most of the time however, the need was not felt. With the first rays that pierced the coconut groves, he would get up and stare at the golden. His wife would wake up any moment and get him his second cup.

And then he would write some more. This was the hardest part of his day. His children would wake up. His youngest son, Vishnu, would cry about having to drink milk and then about school and then about having a bath, all of which Devan shut his ears to. He would clutch his pen and think about the serenity outside, only to hear the incessant scraping that the sweeper woman made. The swish of the newspaper through the air, its thud on the gravel, the screeching pressure cooker, the fisherwoman haggling with his neighbour, his wife shouting at him to go out and buy some fish, pots and pans and other kitchen noises; he would give up when his father woke up and switched on the radio for the morning news.

Forty five years old, Devan liked to believe he had everything he measured life by. He pursued his poetry with a vigour that matched his khaddar clad, chain smoking days in Kerala University. He also had a job which paid for his wife and two sons. Reporting for a Malayalam daily, he liked to say that he liked his job.

After a day of ceaseless discussions and driving in the unremitting Thiruvananthapuram heat in his ancient dark blue scooter, he would go to the Press Club and have his whisky, neat and in solitude, and smoke his beedis. Only when the photographers and reporters from his office started singing would he get up from his regular table - in the darkest corner of the bar. And then, disgusted at not being drunk, he would leave for his house.

His wife would be chopping onions or tomatoes or beans in front of the TV, both eyes on the soap, leaving Devan wondering whether she was crying for the dying grandmother or if it were the onions. His dinner would already be on the table, cold and closed with a stainless steel plate. He would dig into the rice, make balls with it and the red fish curry and down them with water. After rinsing his mouth, he would sit at his favourite place by the table lamp and stare at the recycled sheets of paper, the jingles boring holes into his skull. Sometimes his patience would not last and muttering, he would stomp to the bed. Even when it did, and the TV was switched off, he wouldn’t write a lot, the alcohol slowly dragging his eyelids down.

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At his father’s house in Nagercoil, a smaller town to the south, Devan had stopped trying to find out when his day started. He did not know when he slept and there was no clock in the room to find out when he woke up. Sometimes he did not even know when he was awake and when he was sleeping.

And even if he was aware of it when he woke up, it was difficult to let another person know. After a few weeks of trying, he had given up. Sometimes his wife would chance upon him and see his open eyes and make him a cup of tea. Perching him up on pillows, she would hold the cup to his lips for every pitiful sip. Once in a while, he would remember that he was hungry or that he had to go to the toilet, and would mumble for his wife. Usually she came in a few minutes, from one of her sewing classes, the end of her sari tucked in, to shift him on to his wheel chair. Twice, he had to burble for a few hours.

His wife had stopped trying to speak to him a long time back. The classes and the tailoring paid for the children and other domestic expenditure.

Whenever, he knew he was awake, Devan would stare at the ceiling and at the fan and the cobwebs. Sometimes he would gaze in the direction of a ceramic Taj Mahal in a glass case on the shelf, a relic from his wedding. Nobody knew whether he was looking at it, because his eyes were always wet. The confusion was compounded because the shelf also contained his books and his unfinished sheets. Everyday, some time before night, his youngest son, now twelve years old, would sit beside him and talk. About school, about his new friends and teachers and about football. He would also tell his father about his grandfather’s paddy field and the price of fish. Devan rarely replied to his son. His eyebrows would flicker when he heard something interesting. Sometimes a solitary drop would brim over and hide itself in his hair. Now and then, Vishnu would catch a smile on his father’s face, especially if he were talking about school.

At night, Devan would gaze at the darkness, willing himself to go to sleep. Often, his thoughts would drift on to his table lamp and his dark blue scooter and his own dark corner at the bar. Still awake, he would think of that night, five years now, after enduring his whisky for longer than usual, he had crashed into a parked Fiat. Paralyzed from neck down.

And sometimes he would think of his poetry. And when he did that, he would long for that fisherwoman’s voice.

Now he knelt down close to me, and though I could no longer see anything but a faint movement in the blackness that surrounded me, yet I knew from the sensation of his hot breath on my face that he was very near. Then he spoke-

‘I will treat you, and you will become well. You need my treatment.’ He paused here; then continued, speaking very slowly now-

‘But more than that, do you not understand, I need you to be my patient. For if I can cure you- then think, just think-I will know that there is still hope for me.’

Oppression: heat is a cruel janitor. And looking out of the window, the light brigade shimmering and glinting off metallic surfaces; patrols alertly, leaving no choice but to look inside. Backdrop of silence; giving way to the sound of rotating tri-blades.

In the foreground there are words permeating the disinterested auditory passages reaching the supposed control tower where they bang on closed doors until a long pause joins them and together they force their way into the inner sanctum where they are out on the waiting list.

Underground, hunger rumbles irritably, urged by wafting smells of foods and simultaneously by the inner secretions produced in response to chewing mint flavoured gum.

The dial announces, mutely, to the frequent glances at it that the philosophy of life is that every agony has an end if you wait long enough. Transgression: progression: but if you wait longer every agony is followed by another.

- Priyadarshini Kedlaya

# ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST?

(SPOILER WARNING: VITAL PLOT DETAILS REVEALED)

S ometime around the middle of the movie, there's a scene where Randal P McMurphy (Jack Nicholson), bets that he can lift a heavy control panel (an assortment of sanitary controls). 'Stand back, sissies, you are using my oxygen', he says as he bends down and puts his hand around the levers on both sides of the panel. He puts all his strength into it, his veins pop out and for a moment the inmates think he's going to do it. And then his 'breath explodes out of him and he falls back limp against the wall'. As he walks out of the room, he looks everyone in the eye and says, "But I tried, though". "Goddammit, I sure as hell did that much, now, didn't I?"  
That for me is what the whole movie is about. Based on a novel of the same name by Ken Kesey (yes, one of the Merry Pranksters) in 1962, *One Flew* was directed by Milos Forman. When it was released in 1975, it won over the critics, audiences and the Oscar jury, winning five Oscars including Best Film, Actor, Actress, Director. *It Happened One Night* and *The Silence of the Lambs* are the only other two movies to have won the four major Oscars. Many think, only *One Flew* deserved it.

The novel is considered a modern classic, one of the best anti-authority work to come out of the 60s counter culture movement. It tells the story of an American Indian, Chief Bromden, who lives in a mental institution filled with patients who are subject to total control of Big Nurse Ratched (Louise Fletcher). The Chief describes the first day when McMurphy walks into the hospital and ruffles the morose calm of the place. We are told that he is faking insanity to escape a prison sentence. What follows is a series of conflicts between the Big Nurse and McMurphy, each winning some rounds. In between this wild trip, the inmates start believing in McMurphy, challenge Big Nurse's adherence to rules, vote for watching the baseball World Series, go for a fishing trip, play basketball and have a wild sex and booze party. The last leads to the climax of story resulting in suicide of an inmate induced by Big Nurse and lobotomy on McMurphy. The Chief, who cannot countenance his friend reduced to a vegetable, kills him by suffocating him with a pillow and escapes by dislodging the control panel and breaking through the window.

*As I write this..the cave shudders with their approach.. this must not interfere..I must write this chronicle for the day it ends as it has been foretold that it shall. I feel like a character out of old: writing when there is night out, by lamplight, but that is what my beautiful land is reduced to.Here is the work of many centuries, descendants of Quentin the desortor. Know that we died to save you..*

Aegos cursed with frustration. The paper had self destructed: the technology was incredible. But it was not a time to marvel the technology, a decade's worth of work was at risk. And they had so little information.. With no proof, how could they convince the Holy Symposium? They would come again and it would not stop them from doing, well, whatever they did. After all this effort he did not even know what it was, or who they were. What little he could decipher of the manuscript was not encouraging, The trouble was in not knowing which of these bloody documents was a joke, and which wasn't. The Shavians had been known both for a great love of practical jokes and for great subtlety. It was not a combination one wanted while deciphering bloody prophecies of doom. They all seemed so ludicrous anyway. Impossibly heavy sun showers that prevented stellar movement and starved planets? Even more ridiculous things had happened: a virulent plague outbreak on almost every planet, a rise of the old messianic cults: it all pointed to doom. Nearly every marker had come to pass, but no one yet knew what the doom was, who brought it or how to stop it. *And all we do is decode riddles to find more. Time seems to slip away faster and the pile to read keeps increasing. But that's a good thing he reminded himself more material means more chance of finding it all out..and more shit to wade through.*

Aleena forced her body into the sleep position.. She felt old and overrun, but couldn't fall asleep. *Too many years on this damn ship. What I would do to feel the sand on the beaches of Wynona again..the best technology in the world can't replace the actual thing.. but Wynona is plague ridden, and I'm lucky to be here, alive and whole. Atleast the work's going well. Once I knew what strings to pull, the documents have flowed in. Having a powerful benefactor was useful.....much as she hated using him.* Her mind drifted to more peaceful things..to Michael, direct line of Father Quentin and a powerful voice in the Symposium, and, less importantly, her lover.

The novel arose out of Kesey's experiments with psychedelic drugs and experience as ward attendant in a mental institution. The story is narrated by the Chief, who is deaf and dumb for more than half the novel and keeps hallucinating – 'fog' seems to descend into the environment every time his mental clarity takes a dive. On reading the novel, one ponders what the visual rendition of certain powerful events will be like. But, Milos Forman and Jack Nicholson don't let you down. In what is considered to his second best role (*Chinatown* is obviously his *pièce de résistance*), Nicholson makes us sympathise with him, share his anger and frustration. McMurphy's body language, devil-may-care attitude, facial quirks could not have found a better artist.



at the movies  
ANKUR SINGLA

Foreman is successful in creating a claustrophobic atmosphere; with slow pondering camera movements and close-ups of the Big Nurse's stone-like face (Fletcher's role remains uncelebrated despite the Oscar – she succeeds in making you hate her so much that you forget she's acting out a role). The outdoor scenes serve as adequate contrast to the mental institution occupied by excellently portrayed stuttering, confused invalids. That the movie substantially departed from the novel is undeniable – the main focus is Randal McMurphy instead of the Chief which completely changes the narrative angle. In fact,

*Of all of us, he is the only one with both the perception and the courage to fully understand the situation. Wilhelm has the descent, but he is weak...maybe this time Michael might..??*

Michael strode down the long hallway scattering servants. *Why does Wilhelm never listen to me? As a younger son do I have no say in Family matters? How can he be so cowardly as to not even acknowledge its existence? 'Come to me with proof. Is it so difficult to find that even your party of geniuses can't find it (should it be genii...FOCUS)?' He sneers. He holds the lives of 20 billion people so lightly...and tips their existence with each weak vacillation...* Michael stopped: he had reached the movement chamber. It would not be long now.

## The Chain Novel

What Happens Next?  
What Happened Before?  
Write in:  
quirk@nls.ac.in

Nathaniel stepped out of his quarters. He had not gone to anyone else's for close to half a century .His long legs poked out of frayed and beaten jeans. His white shirt had once been black. *I must get new clothes, especially if I'm to make this a habit.* He had nearly finished the walk to Aegos's quarters when a brilliant idea struck him: he would not announce his presence. As a result, Aegos nearly jumped out of his seat when Nathan walked in and informed him "I believe I know what it is. Do you think we should set up a discussion date next week?"

Nathan looked very surprised when the whole ship turned up in the quarters in a matter of seconds.

- NANDINI RAMACHANDRAN

Kesey was so angry with the makers that he refused to associate his name with the movie. But then, who said that if your characters originate from the confines of a text, they become sacrosanct? I believe that the director as auteur of the movie has legitimate freedom to execute a literary text as he wants to. A change in medium cannot be dismissed lightly. From introduction of the characters (how they are brought into a frame) to depicting their thought processes (by showing physical action or by narrative), a movie works very differently. What literature can do for you, a movie never can. And a movie can touch you as no piece of literature can. And very rarely does the movie ever equal the text's magic fully. *One Flew*, I think, was one of those rare ones.

If you were just wondering about the name of the film, here's the answer – it was taken from a children's rhyme:

Vintery, mintery, cutery, corn,  
Apple seed and apple thorn;  
Wire, briar, limber lock,  
Three geese in a flock.  
One flew east,  
And one flew west,  
And one flew over the cuckoo's nest.

Been to the Movies Lately?  
Review, Recommend and Bitch on

Quirk

## REALITY Shubho Banerjee

day in and day out we are settling down relaxed and secure in the comfort of this mundane life of ours taking in what each day may bring with a carefully prepared smile and no one knows that something is askance but did you ever spend a minute to ponder what answer would you get if you stood aside from the flow and ask yourself with all sincerity if the real that you know and protect is really real and if all around you is true forced for the sake of courtesy towards countless faceless nameless strangers we conform to social norms of civility and follow thankless daily procedures while every day and every waking hour the pain of our memories eats us through like a malevolent cancer it lays hidden but inside us unseen from prying visions it grows with its own hideous charm possessing as if a life of its own seeps through our very veins bleeds us dry and sucks us hollow in the land of the living dead skeletons are we all as we stand today while we remain rotting from the core and all the colours and all the masks that you may pile on to hide the blisters cankerous and ugly they will be and they will remain

we all need to ask ourselves where we are going from here thus spake george of the fab four beware his words my dear unsuspecting friend and beware of them that hunt today your number's soon up and they'll get you too.

Yes, I would like to join your venture, but.  
PRIYADARSHINI KEDLAYA

I roam the corridors of my mind,  
Ideas Appropriate, I cannot find.  
The expanse barren and undulating;  
Only Excuses galore are sprouting.

Deadlines sap the muses away,  
Topics keep the thoughts at bay.  
I'm afraid of revealing more me,  
'See through', poems tend to be.  
Presumably there'll be an extension,  
No hurry to receive my first rejection.

And won't there always be another chance?  
I'll definitely join in before the last dance.

Yes, I would like to join your venture, but.



## About Law School...

The National Law School of India University (NLSIU) was established on August 29, 1987, after thirteen long years of suspense and uncertainty, when the Karnataka Government established the university through a Gazette Notification under the National Law School of India Act (Karnataka Act 22 of 1986). While NLSIU's formal rating as India's foremost centre of legal education has become an almost predictable confirmation, the true estimate of NLSIU's stature as a centre for legal excellence remains reflected by acknowledgement of the visible impact that NLSIU has had in every possible sphere of legal thought in India: legal education, policy formulation, research initiative, student enterprise, faculty expertise, legal services, university-Bar association, and so on. The University is currently administered under Dr. A Jaya-govind, Professor of Law and holder of the Ministry of Commerce Chair on WTO, who was appointed as Director of NLSIU from August 1, 2003 onwards. The small student community at NLSIU has earned itself



a fairly enviable reputation within the college fraternity in India through regular and prolific achievements in various academic and extra-curricular fields. In its fairly short history since 1986, the student community has been attributed with many different flavours: pioneers, achievers, elitists, activists, arrogant boors, and so on. Despite NLSIU's wide-ranging involvement with students, academics, organizations, governments, etc. at the level of a legal university, one of the oft repeated complaints has been the highly restricted and narrowly defined space available for student interaction and development. Flushed with success at one level while still grappling to define itself at the other, students of NLSIU hope to continue to actively push for the outlines of a truly participatory, vibrant, and intellectually active student community.

A shadow, a curtain  
A veil of love gone  
The floating clouds of expectations  
Having burst, still thirsting.  
The moon, like a winking eye in the sky looks on  
And the night, a dark well  
Gapes, with its mouth wide open  
Paths winding on, beneath my feet  
Not pausing or stopping to ask  
What it is this life searches for.  
The life-force fades and tires  
And its look-alike hanging on  
Wanders the streets  
Still looking, still searching.

- Deeksha Singh

## ARBIDNESS

Nisha Thambi

Wandering brains and foggy skies  
Purple frogs and one green eye  
Silky hair beneath my hand  
A drunken angel in the band

A walk, Mary Jane and the world of Gah-Poo  
Arrested, and then let off too  
Escapes, bag first, through a back door  
Excessive amounts of blood and gore  
The lonely shepherd and a chef's finest sword  
The face of the lioness, if you're just that bored  
The Walrus, the Wily and the Orangutan  
Why, oh why, can they do what they can?

Mighty, Puree and Pie in the sky  
A second-time rash and the God is still high  
Lip gloss, grapes and a blue floppy hat  
Pink Tweety bird clips and the absence of cats  
Hammerman and the Cornershop stage  
The march of a white stripe might just take an age  
Mint-flavoured chocolate, requiem for a dream  
A burning door and an editor's scream

Wet leaves and their smell on Thirteenth Night  
A star and no signals: White Socks doesn't bite  
While humans try their very best  
To survive in the corridors of the Wild, Wild West

A yapping dog and a circular wall  
Did we miss them? The former, not at all  
A diary, some humming on the side of the road  
An ice-cream man who doesn't resemble a toad

The loss of a silver high-heeled shoe  
The Sisterhood of the Nice Girls' Loo  
The adventures of the Hoopoe Butt  
Angle and momos in Chinese Hut

The story so far is an incomplete one  
Though being in it was a lot of fun  
But where do I put in the bits about  
Posters, French fluids and Blozo's gout?

Try as we might, we will always fail  
To tell the never-ending tale.

## DEBATABLE

2004 saw one of South Asia's newest and most exciting university-level debating competitions get bigger and better! The 3rd Annual National Law School Debate 2004, saw 24 teams from the finest universities across Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and India match skills in the unique style of competitive extempore parliamentary-style debating. Following 7 gruelling rounds of top-notch debating, last year's quarterfinalists University College, Lahore from Pakistan put it across surprise finalists RV College of Engineering, Bangalore, who in the semi-finals had pulled off the tournament's biggest upset by knocking out defending champions Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi.

Having carved out a name for itself in South Asia's debating circuit, the 4th Annual National Law School Debate 2005 in November, 2005 promises to be the cynosure of many eyes. For innovative associations and collaborations, contact [debate@nls.ac.in](mailto:debate@nls.ac.in).



## Strawberries in Winter

Strawberry Fields is National Law School's three-day music festival that forms a part of the college festival, Legala. It is also India's biggest college rock-show with over forty bands from across the country taking part in it. Strawberry Fields is a dream come true – a festival of joy of its own kind with no parallel and no substitute.

Initially christened 'Lawcommotion', Strawberry Fields, over the last eight years has grown from being a small concert at the 'La College' at Nagarbhavi to becoming Bangalore's pride and India's biggest college rock-show. With its new venue at the musically significant Palace Grounds, Bangalore - Strawberry Fields has become a part and parcel of Bangalore's music culture; and people from various walks of life have come to love it in their own way and with their own devoted passion. Every November, Strawberry

Fields is one big extended family –a camaraderie created over three days of undiluted music and musical revelry.

The student organizers of Strawberry Fields encounter a wide range of unique organizational challenges each year: this could range from negotiating with insensitive corporate bigwigs over sponsorship details to coordination and management of a huge posse of cops to sensitively handling security arrangements inside the grounds (read handling drunk and otherwise intoxicated people) to a host of other complicated problems.

In fact, sometimes it feels like a miracle that Strawberry Fields is actually staged. More significantly, it seems like a miracle that the quality of the music at Strawberry Fields is

never compromised upon. Sponsorship hassles, publicity woes, missing bands, comatose bands, lights and sound, non- negotiable free entry....the list goes on and each Strawberry Fields calls for careful attention to a hundred different factors.

At the end of the day, there is almost a sense of magic in simply being at Strawberry Fields and feeling the beauty and majesty of a show dedicated solely to quality music. Everything, with all the madness, seems worth the effort.

Perhaps it is this sense of magic that makes Strawberry Fields what it is. Strawberry Fields 2005 seeks positive sponsorship collaborations. Contact [strawberryfields@nls.ac.in](mailto:strawberryfields@nls.ac.in)

## MY EXPERIENCE

DORIAN PERSAUD

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. As the taxi approached the main gate of the National Law School of India University, Perv announced 'this is law school'. 'Cool' I thought. The place seemed smaller than I imagined but nice. The school was surrounded by such dense vegetation and certainly evoked an exotic feel. Having backpacked around north India on a budget, the university seemed like a nice place to live for a little while. Then I went inside. When I had finally located my cubicle I stared in disbelief. Like Bilbo Baggins standing unannounced in Gollum's cave, I stood in the glow of the afternoon light filtering through the cloudy window. On the desk and bed frame was a layer of dirt and inch thick. There were cob webs hanging from the ceiling. Through the dirt it appeared as if the walls were painted beige. The closet was just as filthy having been unused for a few months. There was nothing to do but take out a rag and start scrubbing. The whole time I was whistling Paul Simon's Homeward Bound. When I entered the washroom I definitely wished I was homeward bound. The concrete floor and chipped yellow tiles were uninspiring. However, it was the mildew covered walls of the shower stalls and the squat toilets that really made me reconsider my decision to come on exchange. How could I possibly study at a place where I don't feel comfortable taking a crap or a bath? God of Small Things I need you now... I had to remind myself of some of the reasons I came to India. This was supposed to be a wonderful opportunity to have a

cross-cultural experience, see the country of my ancestors, do some interesting volunteer work with an NGO and maybe even meet a wife. (I wasn't serious about the last one but my friends seemed to think that I would come home married. If the girl with the dancing eyes hadn't turned me down I probably would have.) Looking back, I adjusted to many of the things that had so irritated me at the beginning of my trimester. I adjusted to the squat toilets and the showers. I never quite got over the concept of mandatory attendance but I did get used to the constant chorus of "yes maam's" and "present sir's" that would be sung at the beginning of each period. And then there were the rules. These rules are of course enforced, in large part, by the security staff and students. I think the security guards are supposed to be like Athena looking out for the protection of law schoolites; but they're not as comforting. They seem to be more interested protecting students from themselves than from outsiders. They look lazy but if you approach the girls hostel I found out that they can get quite lively.

How the rules are enforced by Student Discipline and General Management I'll never understand. SDGM truly completes the Big Brother effect described by George Orwell. Whatever you do, somebody is watching. Somebody is watching and waiting to fine you. It's a wonder there isn't a siren in the rooms that go off when someone masturbates. Were it feasible, it might have already been there. For all the Che Guevara t-shirts, I haven't detected the

hint of any revolutionary zeal at NLSIU. There is a culture of complicity at the law school that I have yet to comprehend. For a community that hasn't mastered forming a line in the cafeteria it has mastered falling into line with respect to the rules. Fucked but fascinating.

I suppose the only thing lacking on my exchange was the romance and sexual encounters that are usually part of the American and European university experience. In A Picture of Dorian Grey, Oscar Wilde wrote that the way to a woman's heart is through her ears. I agree. I was told that foreign guys pick up a lot of girls based on their 'exoticness' and the fact that they have an accent.

Well, mine didn't seem to do me much good at law school so I'm not sure what's to be said of the 'accent theory'. Mind you, it probably didn't help that I looked like the male version of Medusa with my wild hair. That alone may have been enough to turn some hearts to stone.

My law school experience is now a tale of two cities - experiences forever linked in time and space. I've found that law schools and law students are very similar no matter where you go. We are some of the most creative, detail oriented, ambitious people on the planet. Very likely some of the most miserable as well.

Dorian Persaud is an exchange student from Osgoode Hall, Canada.



## Tennis Exploits

AMOGH BASAVARAJ

Tennis has held many attractions for me: the excellent combination of grace and athleticism, the elegant movements of the players as balls sally forth with that smacking sound, the bated breath just before the ball falls a little short of your favourite player, the gasps from the spectators as seemingly everlasting rallies ensue between competing Wimbledon champs, the thunderous applause as a champ holds aloft his trophy, the wonderful charm associated the sport itself.

When I came to Law School, the tennis court looked inviting. Anyway, it held significantly greater attractions for

### Gate Zero



me than the moot court hall, which paled in comparison. I was also looking for a better source of physical fitness than pushing the pedals of a bicycle which went nowhere. I decided that tennis, being graceful yet invigorating, was what would occupy my beautiful evenings.

I brought a racquet and a few balls, but to my surprise there were not many who shared my interest in actually playing tennis. I realised that it takes two not just to tango or for the salsa but for a game of tennis as well. I needed someone to hit balls back at me and every evening I convinced someone or the other of the virtues of the game, and took him along to the court. Finding a second player was usually difficult, but the third player, unfortunately, was always at hand. This 'third player' would invariably appear from the shadows and ask for "two shots" or "two minutes", disrupting our game. Like a hooded algebraic expression, he was of varying shape and size, but always difficult to get rid of.

"Three's a crowd" describes this situation aptly, but more often than not it was not just one person but a twosome which walked in. The tennis court is located just next to the path leading to Gate Zero, and is an irresistible attraction for those guys walking by with girls at their side. On catching the sight of someone playing, most guys choose to give the go-bye to quiet enjoyment in Nagarbhavi and try their hand at tennis instead. They attempt either to show-off their

strength and skills or, in some cases, to make their girls laugh at their clumsiness. Accordingly, the guys are bestowed with varying reactions from their girls be it a giggle, some applause or just a bored look, depending on the fluctuating mood of that evening.

Of course, this inevitable sequence of events meant an impatient but polite wait by the sidelines for me, until the couples felt that they had had their share of fun, which on quite a few occasions prolonged till darkness crept in. To get round this nuisance, I struck upon the plan that if I engaged in long rallies, played well enough and appeared sufficiently serious, onlookers may desist from interrupting the 'pro'. This called for a substantial improvement in my game which was still scratchy, and I buckled down to play a few competitive but enjoyable sets over the next few days. My plan was successful to some extent as the visitors became fewer and fewer in number. It seemed that this plan was twice blessed as I moved from deuce to advantage in another way. I had now reached a point where I could at least flatter myself that my game was showing signs of slow but steady improvement.

But this state of affairs didn't last long and was too short to be sweet. It came to an abrupt halt when my room-mate for some mysterious reason decided to remove the lace from one of my old faithful pair of tennis shoes and fled the country with it. Subsequent investigation revealed that he needed it as a substitute for the string across his spectacles so that he could dangle it from the back of his neck. Though this ridiculous motive behind the crime was discovered, that priceless jewel, my lace, was irretrievably lost, my room-mate having left it somewhere across the seven seas. In hindsight, with only one shoe that would firmly stay on the foot, it would have been wise on my part if I had hung up the boots at this juncture.

Disregarding the signs and shrugging off the missing lace as a minor setback, I resumed play on borrowed shoes. This time around, I was determined to get into the groove and be a winner. But Pete Sampras was destined never to do well at the French Open. One thing or the other continued to let me down.

My tennis partner who had steadily been hitting balls back at me discovered a love interest. He now seemed more involved in pursuing other courting interests. He went off for long walks breaking his promises of a good session. On other occasions it was worse: he stayed on court but stayed tuned to his cell phone as well. As his loyalties fluctuated between tennis racquet and cell phone, I hoping to have hit that perfect winner or a big ace down the line, noted to my consternation, that the ball was in his court, but he was missing. He would then appear on the sidelines sporting not a tennis racquet in his hand, but a cell-phone to his ear and a grin stretching from one ear to the other.

Obviously unnerved by these unforeseen events, my form

yelling out 'fore!!', signalling a 'six' with hands raised skyward, or doubled up in mirth. I frequently had to descend to the basement of the training centre building and sometimes move to the road leading to Nagarbhavi to retrieve the balls. My keenness for the game was rapidly diminishing by these strange interruptions.

The truly bizarre, though, was yet to happen. A dog-on-campus decided to take interest in tennis and dropped in on us. While we were content to let it go about its business and not venture to breach the code against cruelty against animals, this nice feeling wasn't reciprocated. The ugly cur seizing, not just the moment when we were caught napping, but also a new tennis ball, made off without stopping to say thank you. My valiant friend, the tennis partner, was not one to let grass grow under his feet. Probably spurred by his recent successes both on the court and off it, he was off in a flash after the thieving dog.

Possibly under the delusion that I could help him in cornering the ungainly but speedy dog, I ran after both of them. However, a few paces into my sprint, my right ankle unable to bear the sudden strain which an adrenalin rush had unwittingly inflicted on it, gave way. Meanwhile, my friend, the tennis partner, returned with the ball, obviously happy that he had stood up for the right of possession of the ball which was vested in him since he had bought it that afternoon. Somehow, he had wrested the booty from man's best friend's mouth after the duo had disappeared from my sight somewhere near the gym. When he returned to proudly display the spoils of the contest, his celebrations were somewhat spoiled when he saw me sprawled on the ground with a sprained ankle. As I lay there, unable to get up on my own, I felt disillusioned. Where was the grace and elegance I had associated with the game?

As I hobbled away from the scene, early that evening, I saw the vanquished dog again, this time slinking away quietly. I understood what it must have felt like. For, at that moment, it seemed to me that the game which I had thought of appreciatively as 'invigorating yet graceful' had gotten the better of me.

Back in my room, I decided it was high time my projects took-off. Though, they eventually landed in the exam-department half-an-hour after the ultimate dead-line, the delay was definitely not because of any tennis sessions I had had in the meantime. In fact, my earlier enthusiasm for 'a set or two everyday' has almost disappeared, though my ankle has recovered from the sprain. I watched Maria Sharapova win another WTA title and a movie called Wimbledon. But neither of these has remotely sufficed to inspire me to return to the tennis court. Maybe I will try my luck at the Moot Court Hall instead.

## COMMUNITY

Abhayraj Naik

Smoking rooms, studying rooms, music rooms, sleeping rooms.

The Ganga's muddied waters can claim no such clear compartmentalization

4 corridors, 1 quad, myriad rooms with myriader peeps. Is my quasi home.

17 visitors before breakfast today.

10 wake-up angels, 3 toothpaste buddies, 2 random chillers and a white bitch.

Warhol's parties had thinner attendance.

# 110's Led Zepellin merging with # 104's Beethoven and a score of other music in different decibels sold.

Toothpaste, tatti ka saboon, towels, mugs

Mummy warned you never to share!

Well Mummy like Aitya traded school for home daily

Mummy's diktat is clear blown!

Classes beckon, reveille sounds – your project is a pauper!

The pink register opens.

Brushing teeth with six more brushers  
silent, sleep-blurred, surreal Last Supper?

The strident telephone suddenly bursts its box

and everyone's in unspoken communion

Let it be my Mummy NOT

For International Criminal Law classes I've missed already eleven.

And the condemned man's name is sounded

once, TWICE, THRICE –

remember Prince Jayachandra?

And with the solemn desperation of a spermatozoa sworn

Brusher No. 5 is off running!

The shades, the views, the life, the hues – they change.

Every Janus' other face homeward bound oft

Food, bed, loo, privacy – "didn't they teach uz they waz fundamental rights or what?"

Student police visited last night

SADGAM SADGAM SADGAM SADGAM.

SADGAM SADGAM SADGAM SADGAM.

In search of drugs, butts, and blowup dolls.

Nay, and Johnny's fan slow can't be left twirling

to cool empty room in summer burning

cause electricity wastage is an offence see

Johnny agrees I think, but he's still sullen.

And finally, I must allude

to the empirical refutation of a pithy aphorism.

'Familiarity breeds contempt' – Crock!

Familiarity breeds a mood buffet, aye.

For one has Paris' luxury of choice

In stony anger, to bar your manger.

In mood mellow to seek musical light yellow

To contemplate Hamas and Likud and kamikaze

and then take a break with Sharma's hentai.

Of midnight food raids from north to south

Himalaya to Cauvery – nothing will be left out!

Projects, submissions, law et al

collaborative, individual, fictionalised, borrowed

your poison depends on your gall.

Movies, music, networks trading

with wanton license.

Natural shaming of all that pseudo-theoretical-

highstrung-public-domain-nonsense

So, while want you may be to be studying history there

DO BE DO BE DOO BEE DOOBIE

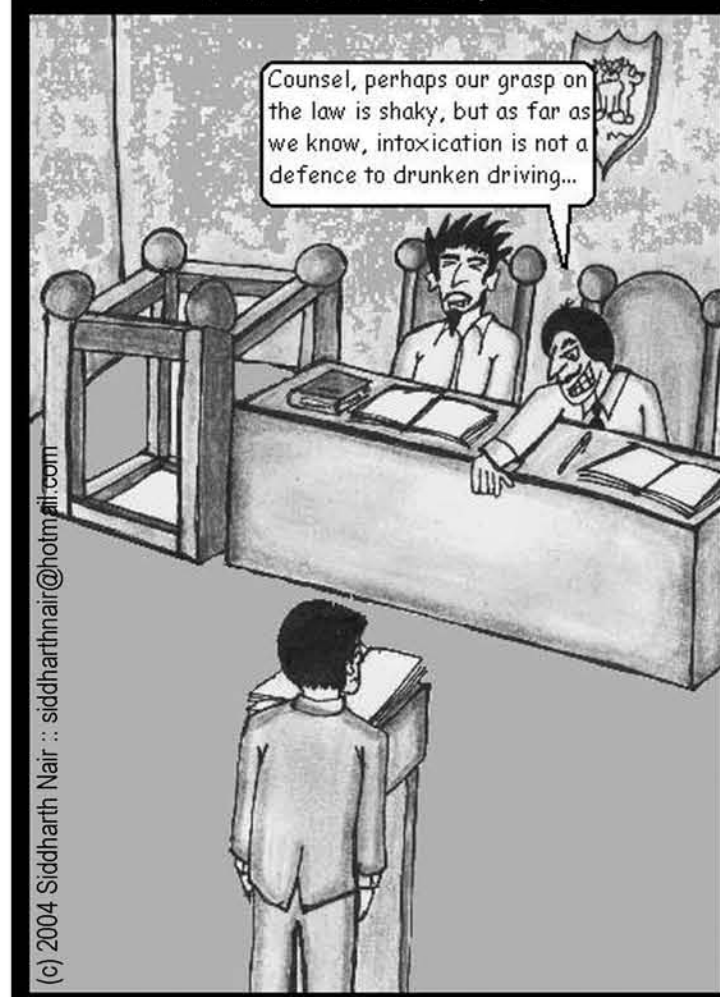
With home, with space, with mere and pere.

since you're here don't shun agnostic

this easy community

Yes, this easy community.

## NAIRSIDE



The Second *Quirk* Edition

MARCH 2005

Featured Theme:

**The Indifferent College Student.**

Write in to [quirk@nls.ac.in](mailto:quirk@nls.ac.in) before March 18, 2005.

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Quirk, C/O Media Baron Baliga, National Law School of India University, Nagarbhavi, Bangalore, 560 072

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