

सुरभि

कला साहित्य पत्रिका

भारतीय अंतरिक्ष विज्ञान एवं प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान की अर्धवार्षिक पत्रिका

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Journal of Arts and Literature

The Bi-annual Journal of Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology

Vol.18 No. 1
(June 2023)



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Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology

वलियमला, तिरुवनंतपुरम Valiamala, Thiruvananthapuram

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Department of Space

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From the Editor's Desk



Dear Friends,

This issue of Surabhi brings before you a rangoli of literary articles ranging from a report on aero club to an incredible painting of Akkulam Lake. We have an interview of a culinary artist, a memoir and poem on death and the mortality of man. Along with this we have paintings as well as the breathless pictures captured by the active members of the photography club at IIST. We have a poem on how the technology takes inspiration from nature. This issue also carries an exceptional technical narrative on the mind control and a science fiction short story on friendship, death and AI. Thank you dear readers for your support, creative suggestions, and contributions.

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Rajat Gupta

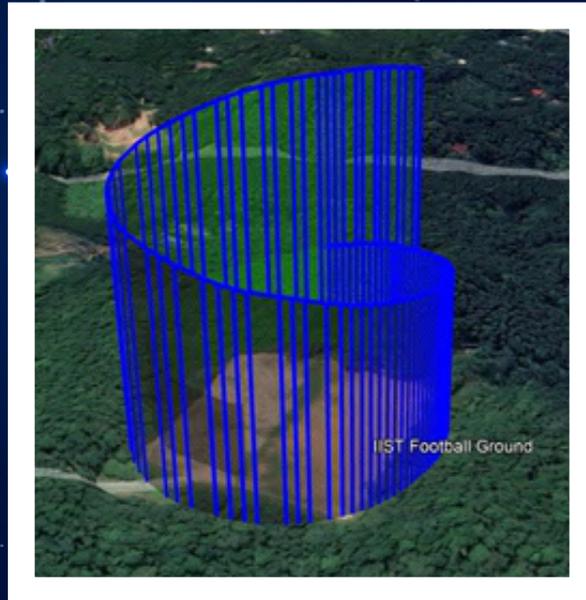
SC21B047 / B.Tech Aerospace
IIST, Valiamala, Thiruvananthapuram

Aeroclub of Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology: A Year of Thrilling Adventures and Inspiring Innovations

The Aeroclub of the Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology (IIST) had an eventful year filled with exhilarating activities and inspiring accomplishments, from starting the year with the induction of the 2021 batch to the remarkable farewell to our Aeroclub coordinator Sanjay, who has been a guiding force for all of us in the Aeroclub. As our coordinator, he has always been there for us, encouraging and motivating us to pursue our dreams and helping us overcome any challenges that came our way. Let's take a journey through the highlights of the past year in the Aeroclub.

Activities of the year began with the induction of the 2021 batch. This marked the beginning of a thrilling journey for the new members, who were eager to contribute their passion and expertise to the club's activities. The 2021 batch took up the challenge of building remote-controlled (RC) planes and successfully completed two projects: "Chintu" and "F22 Raptor". After finishing the building of the aircraft, the senior batch of 2020 organised a memorable flying session for Albatross, an RC plane built by the 2020 batch. The event also includes flying the two new RC aircraft created by the 2021 batch, enriching the experience for all the members. In November, Aeroclub played an active role in organising events during Conscientia 2022- IIST's Annual Technical Fest, such as Techglide, RC Car, RC Plane and Water Rocket.

Continuing the tradition, the Aeroclub welcomed the talented members of the 2022 batch. This induction marked the beginning of another exciting chapter, as fresh minds joined the club to explore the world of aviation and contribute to its activities. To encourage active participation, the club organised "Aeroglide," a glider-making competition that allowed juniors to showcase their creativity and engineering skills. Throughout the year, Aeroclub organised various workshops to enhance members' knowledge and skills, including a notable workshop on OPEN.VSP, conducted by an MTech senior. Additionally, workshops were even conducted jointly by the Aeroclub and IEEE on UAV Design for TKMCE college, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and knowledge exchange. Recognising the need for virtual engagement, the Aeroclub launched an initiative called "Aerotrivia". This online Aeroclub quiz, held fortnightly, provided members with a platform to test their knowledge and engage in healthy discussions. We also set up an aircraft called "Grey Wind" which was built by a former Aeroclub member. It was capable of completely autonomous flight, waypoint missions, auto take-off, loiter etc. We used it for flying in a specific path for an MTech project.



As the academic year drew to a close, the 2021 batch of the Aeroclub collaborated with Jivyantra, the robotics club of IIST. This collaboration resulted in the inception of some of the project ideas of the 2022 batch. From the induction of new members to the successful completion of RC plane projects, from organising events during Conscientia 2022 to fostering collaborations with Jivyantra, the club has consistently pushed the boundaries of aerospace exploration and innovation. With each passing year, Aeroclub continues to inspire and nurture the next generation of enthusiasts.



Shutter Space

The Photography Club @ IIST



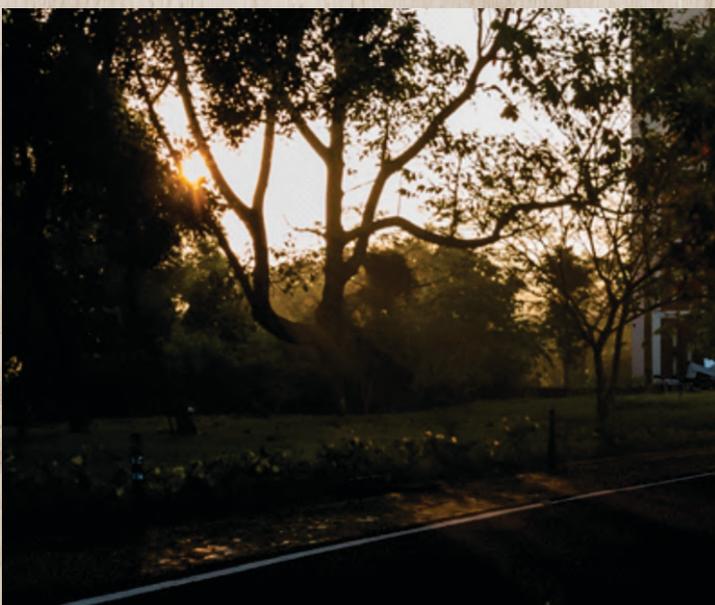
Aditya Talande

SC21B143/ Engg Physics
IIST, Valiamala, Thiruvananthapuram

While on a normal stroll during an early afternoon, I was taking pictures of the surroundings around me; of sunlight coming through the leaves of trees and close-up shots of colorful flowers. A little kitten with greyish silver fur and a wonderful shade of golden-brown eyes made its way over to me. Naturally, I welcomed its presence and tried to take its picture- which proved to be quite difficult given the kitten's surprise in my company. It ran away towards the remains of an abandoned house nearby and settled itself near the broken windowsill, peering outside



with innate curiosity. Capturing a decent picture of it with appropriate lighting was quite tedious. Nevertheless, I persevered and was then rewarded with this shot.



Karthik Mishra

SC20B030/ Aerospace Engg
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Emerging for a morning jog, I was greeted by the gentle embrace of dawn's first light. The sun, a hazy orb on the horizon, cast its radiant beams across the landscape, transforming ordinary objects into striking silhouettes. Mesmerized by this ethereal sight,

I reached for my phone and managed to capture a snapshot of nature's intricate play between light and shadow, a memory of that serene moment etched in time.



Sahil Sonawane
SC21B061/ Aerospace Engg
IIST, Valiamala, Thiruvananthapuram



As the airplane soared amidst the cotton-like clouds, a gentle warmth embraced the passengers, casting golden rays through the windowpanes, filling the cabin with a luminous glow. The sun's radiant touch upon their faces awakened dreams and whispered promises, reminding them that even in the vast expanse of the sky, every journey can deliver a moment of pure bliss.

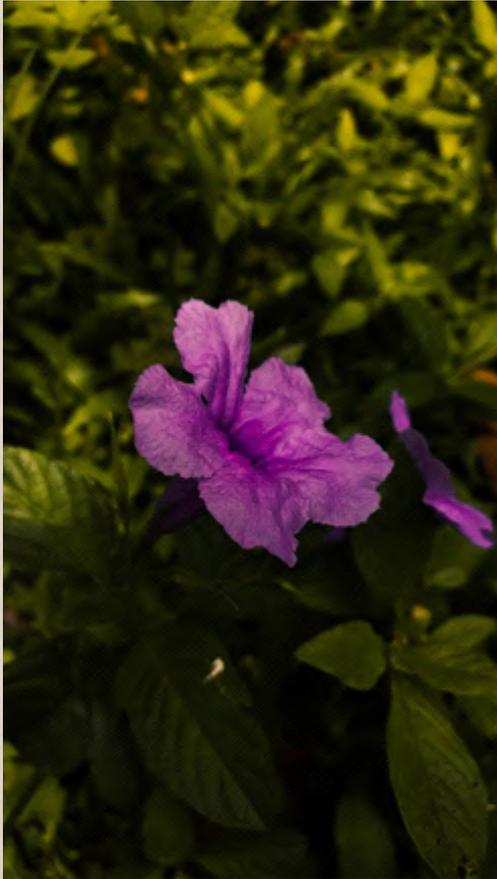


Tejwill Vidyagar
SC22B191/ Engg Physics
IIST, Valiamala, Thiruvananthapuram

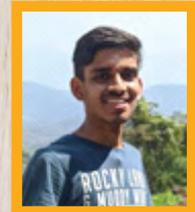
It was a warm evening. The wind was gentle and the sun was setting. It felt like the sun wanted to take a last glimpse of the tricolour Indian flag on this auspicious day. The birds were chirping melodiously. It was the perfect evening! Slowly the wind picked the pace. With the shining rays and mild winds, the flag waved with all its pride-and I am proud to have captured that moment.



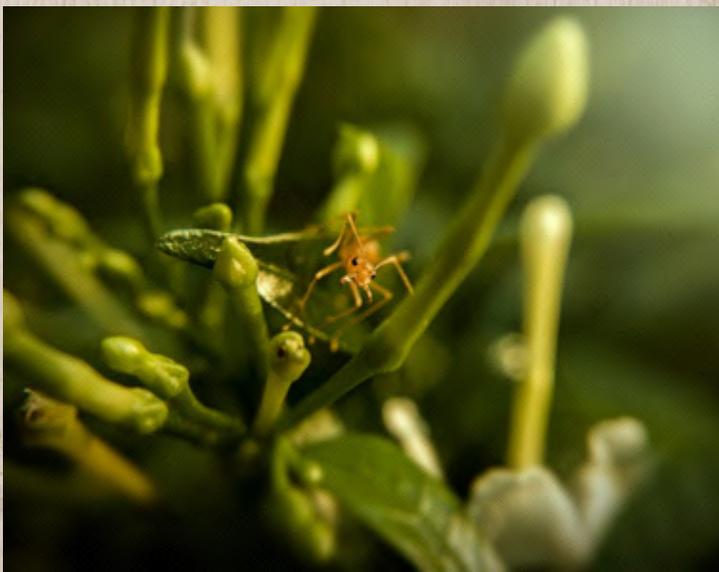
Sourya Ranjan Das
SC21B158/ Engg Physics
IIST, Valiamala, Thiruvananthapuram



Nature's Brushstrokes: A delicate moment frozen in time. This close-up captures the intricate details of a vibrant pink flower, its petals painted with the soft hues of dawn. Found near the campus washing stand, it reminds us to pause and admire the beauty that surrounds us, even in the most unexpected corners.



Gnaneshwaran A S
SC21B151/ Engg Physics
IIST, Valiamala, Thiruvananthapuram



It was a beautiful evening; I was walking in the campus and spotted these beautiful little creatures among the bushes. I took out the macro lens and started trying to click their photo. It was hard, they were always moving fast in the bush. And then I found this ant which was interested in what I was trying to do. It looked up to the camera, intrigued and I was lucky to get this beautiful frame from the infinite continuum.

Understanding Locus of Control



Dr. Nikhil Eyeror
Library Officer - C
IIST, Valiamala, Thiruvananthapuram

I walk to the bus stop every morning to board the institution bus. The daily walk improved not only my core strength but also public relations. As a person from north Kerala settled in Trivandrum, I took it as an opportunity to mingle with the people within the radius of my residential area. A small group of employees and students will join the daily walk team. We used to gather for a few minutes until our concerned buses reached the stop. Vinu, a young man, was among the group with whom I developed a great camaraderie in a short time. Initially, he talked less, just smiled, and acknowledged my presence.

However, gradually we become good friends. We used to discuss so many subjects in the available time; social issues, politics, cinema, religion, and whatnot. His outstanding command of the English language impressed me a lot. However, to my surprise, his skill sets and knowledge did not match his current work. I curiously asked him why he was not seeking better jobs matching his skills. With an expression of sadness in his eyes, he replied, "Brother, this is my fate; I have been trying for better placements immediately after my graduation. All my efforts become vain". I could read the grief in his eyes. After that, I tactfully incorporated the success stories of many people into our conversation. In spite of my efforts to motivate him, he stuck to his "destiny theory". According to his version, life is predestined, and we mortals cannot change it. I tried to motivate him at every opportunity, but he was like a rock in his convictions.

One day, out of the blue, he disclosed a glad news to me, "Brother, I am leaving Trivandrum." I could see the happiness in his bright eyes. He continued, "I got a job in Bangalore; I am leaving within a week." I was delighted when my young friend got a better placement. Within a week, he left Trivandrum. He promised to keep in touch once he takes a new mobile connection from Bangalore. However, he did not contact me for months, and his old number was inactive.

After a year, on New Year's Eve, I got a surprise call from Vinu. He apologized to me for the long communication gap happened. He talked to me a lot about things that happened after he left Trivandrum. His current job was also not satisfactory to him. He does not get along

with his boss, the salary package is not up to the mark, and his list of displeasure continues. With the same old expression, he told me, "Brother, this is my destiny."

I used all motivational tools from my quiver. I brought forth the motivational quote from the books of Dale Carnegie, Stephen Covey, Norman Vincent Peale, Oprah Winfrey, Robin Sharma, and Shiv Khera to bring him up. All fell in vain. He always thought that an external agency controlled his life. At last, before concluding the call, I told him the Malayalam proverb "Than Pathi, Daivam Pathi" – it means "Do the half yourself; God shall take care of the rest". He did not reply. He promised to stay in touch with me and ended the call. I also became sad about my young friend's plight. After the call, I recollected an article that I read from my dad's collection of psychology books. It was about locus of control. A person's reaction to life's happenings and their drive to change them are affected by their sense of locus of control. When we realize that we are the one who controls our destiny, we will be more motivated to make the necessary changes. On the other side, if we believe that our life is predetermined, we may be less motivated to take action. Fear and doubt can form a negative image of ourselves.

The term "Locus of Control" refers to one's sense of agency in shaping one's life. The mental habit of internal locus of control is inbuilt when we assert our authority over ourselves. Those with an internal locus of control take personal accountability for their acts and feel they can influence their environment.

An external locus of control describes a person who attributes their circumstances to forces beyond their control. A person with an external locus of control places the blame on external factors in their failures and often attributes success to luck or chance. However, there is no such thing as a person who has a completely internal or external locus of control. Most people fall somewhere in the middle. It cannot be assumed that the internal locus of control is always good and the external locus of control is always bad. Failure in life will be considered as pre-written or destiny by a person with an external locus of control. It would be easy for them to cope with a disaster. At the same time, those with a strong internal locus of control will take responsibility for failure; for a few, it might damage their self-confidence. However, the locus of control is not permanently set; fluctuation can be there throughout a person's life.

Locus of control will be external for infants since they are not cognitively or physically capable of influencing much of their lives. During the basic development of human beings from childhood to adulthood, natural maturing processes move their Locus of Control more internally. Most people have their preferred locus of control when they are in the early stages.

Benefits of internal locus of control

- People readily take responsibility for the action.
- Confidence in their abilities.
- Tendency to become self-reliant and independent.
- Learn from their mistakes and avoid repeating them.
- Be less influenced by the opinions of others.

The drawback of internal locus of control

- Often misunderstood as arrogant.
- Less inclined to teamwork.
- Over Perfectionist.

Reluctant to seek help from others.
Over-exert themselves.

Benefits of external locus of control

Good team player.
Humble and agreeable.
Taking little credit for successes or failures.
Low expectations make them happy and stress-free.
Do not have the habit of proving their worth.

The drawback of external locus of control

Fear about unforeseen circumstances.
Believe in luck instead of hard work.
Lower levels of self-motivation.
Tend to blame destiny for their faults.
Feel like they are a victim.
Give credit to fate in success.

The feelings of helplessness and despair we experience when confronted with a challenge are common to our lives, but it takes conscious effort to overcome them. In the absence of hard work, we will float along. Action separates the hero from the coward. A hero strives to accomplish his goals, while a coward stays stagnant. Living a fulfilling life requires life skills to minimize suffering and maximize opportunities. The locus of control can significantly impact our lives, from how we handle stress and unpleasant events to how motivated we are to take care of our life. Instead of being a passive spectator in the flow of life, try to achieve success in life through thoughtful action.



ശ്രാവം



Dr. Jinesh K. B.
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IIST, Valiamala, Thiruvananthapuram

എള്ളും കറുകയും ചന്ദനത്തുള്ളിയും
ശുദ്ധോദകം ചേർത്തുരുട്ടുന്ന വേളയിൽ
ഉണ്ണി അടുത്തെത്തിയാരാഞ്ഞു അച്ഛനെ-
ന്തിങ്ങനെ ചെയ്യുന്നു, നമ്മൾ കഴിക്കുമോ
പൈക്കളെപ്പോലെ, പലതായുരുട്ടിയ
പുല്ലും കളഭവും ചേർത്ത വെറും വറ്റ്!

കാലം കഴികെ എനിക്കുവേണ്ടി പിങ്ക്ഡ-
ദാനം നടത്താനിരിക്കുന്ന കൈകളെ
നെഞ്ചോടു ചേർത്തു നിശ്ശബ്ദം വിതുന്മാരെ
അങ്ങനെയാണു പിതൃക്കൾ കഴിക്കുന്ന-
തെന്നു മാത്രം ചൊല്ലി മാറിയിരുന്നു ഞാൻ.

എങ്ങനെ ഉണ്ണിയ്ക്കറിയും, ആണ്ടിലൊ-
രിക്കൽ മാത്രം വന്നു പോകും പിതൃക്കളെ?
കിണ്ടിവാലിൽക്കൂടൊഴുകുന്ന ഗംഗയെ,
തോർത്തു നൂലിൽക്കരിച്ച പൊക്കിൾക്കൊടി-
ത്തണ്ടിനെ, അച്ഛന്റെ കൈകളിൽ അർത്ഥമറിയാത്ത
മുദ്രകളിൽ കണ്ട സപ്തലോകങ്ങളെ?

എങ്ങനെയുണ്ണിക്കറിയും പിതൃവ്യമാ-
മന്ധകാരങ്ങളെ? എണ്ണിയാൽ തീരാത്ത
ജന്മാന്തരങ്ങളാൽ ബന്ധിച്ച ജീവനെ?
എല്ലാമൊരിക്കൽ തിരിയുമ്പൊഴേക്കു നീ-
യച്ഛനാകും, ഞാനടർന്നു മറഞ്ഞിടും.

തെക്കു മരക്കൊമ്പിലാകെ വിശന്നെന്നെ
നോക്കിയിരിക്കുന്നു ദൂരെ, പിതൃലോക-
വാതായനങ്ങൾ തുറന്നു തൻ മക്കളെ
കാണുവാനായ് പറന്നെത്തിയ കാക്കകൾ.



IIST's Food-Carver Extraordinaire: Culinary Creativity Meets Edible Art



Jorlin Jose

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Meet Mr. Anil, the canteen supervisor at IIST, who's no ordinary guy. We affectionately call him Anilettan, and let me tell you, he's got some serious skills that'll leave you amazed! This guy can turn melons into swans, carrots into roses, and even pumpkins into human faces! It's like he's got a magical touch with his trusty knife, and he can whip up sculptures out of fruits and veggies like it's no big deal.



Anilettan's journey to becoming a food carver is quite a tale. After graduating in Hotel Management from Kerala University in 1997, he worked in various resorts and hotels before landing at IIST in 2009. But how did he stumble upon this cool food-carving thing? Well, it was all by chance. One day, he happened to meet a friend of a friend who happened to be a food carver. Seeing the creativity and culinary magic involved in this edible art form sparked something within him. Anilettan decided to dive right in, fuelled by his love for sketching and drawing since he was a kid. Armed with a shiny new knife and some fresh fruits and veggies as his canvas, he started shaping his skills, and he did create wonders!



At first, he started with simple flower models carved out of different fruits and vegetables. But soon enough, he upped his game and began experimenting with more intricate designs. The real turning point was when he carved a stunning Ganapathi sculpture for a marriage ceremony. The awe and praise from the crowd fuelled his passion even more.



Now, you might think Anilettan went through rigorous training with fancy carving tools and a seasoned guru, right? Nah! He never used any fancy tools apart from his trusty carving knife, and you know what? Social media became his virtual tutor, guiding him and inspiring him along the way.



One of his most incredible projects was carving a face sculpture of none other than Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam from a pumpkin! It took him over three hours of hard work, and his eyes were screaming for mercy, but it was all worth it when people instantly recognized the Missile Man's face in his artwork. In another instance, even Sri. A.S. Kiran Kumar, the former Chairman of ISRO, gave him a big shout-out and took a picture with Anilettan to show his appreciation for the artistic genius.

But let's not forget that food carving isn't all sunshine and rainbows. Anilettan faces some challenges too. One big hurdle is picking the right ingredients. Not all fruits and vegetables are cut out for carving, and sometimes the ones he gets aren't exactly perfect for his designs. But you know what? He's got this problem-solving mojo too! Once, he got a disfigured pumpkin that wasn't suitable for his plans. Instead of giving up, he turned it into the face of an old man, complete with leafy vines as hair and voilà! It turned out to be a huge hit!

Now, you might be thinking, "Wait, isn't food carving kind of wasteful?" Well, yes, you've got a point there. It does result in some edible parts getting discarded. But Anilettan's got an eco-friendly twist to it. He makes sure to cut the fruits and vegetables so that almost everything can be reused as eatables. He's doing his part to be socially and environmentally responsible, contributing to a more sustainable future.

But there's a bittersweet side to food carving. You see, these beautiful creations have a short lifespan. They start to wither away just a few hours after being crafted. Anilettan feels a pang of sadness, seeing his art decay as he forms a connection with each piece. But, he's learned to embrace the fleeting nature of his work and finds beauty in its transience.

In today's foodie world, presentation matters just as much as taste. Food festivals are on the rise, celebrating culinary diversity like never before. And amidst all this, food carving is also evolving and adapting to the changing times.

Anilettan has become an integral part of IIST's grand feasts and events. Whenever there's a grand feast, you can bet there'll be a table showcasing his incredible vegetable carvings. It's like an edible art exhibition, and we eagerly await these feasts to feast our eyes on his masterpieces.

So, the fascinating world of Anilettan and his extraordinary food-carving talent is a treat for the taste buds and a feast for the eyes. Cheers to Anilettan for crafting true visual delights!



Dr. Jayanthi

Associate Professor Dept of physics
IIST, Valiamala, Thiruvananthapuram

Painting





Mini Kumari R G
Senior Project Assistant,
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Sree Buddha

Acrylic



Madhubani tree

Acrylic



Parrot

colour pencil



Morning woods

Acrylic





Dr. Vikram Khaire

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The Endless Trail

The cool breeze swept over me, lifting my spirits. My stomach lurched and a sense of lightness washed over me, filled with pure bliss. The wind became strong and loud, like a wild force moving from my toes to my head. It swirled around me, rustling my clothes and hair, sending a shiver down my spine. The wind felt invigorating, almost hypnotic. I wanted to stay here, with my arms outstretched, forever, lost in its mesmerizing embrace. I closed my eyes, letting the wind caress my face, and knew, at that moment, that I was exactly where I belonged.

I wander in the mountains and valleys, lost in their splendor. I am one with the wild, a hermit in nature's grandeur.

I can walk for hours, consumed by the beauty of the land, forgetting even the most basic of needs such as food. Even now, I am hiking the slopes of the majestic Fort of Harishchandra, a place of great beauty and seclusion nestled within the Sahyadri mountain range. This fort holds a special place in my heart, as I have returned to it countless times, each time discovering its secrets through a new path - be it the treacherous canal trail, the winding path from Pachanai, or the dense forest route from Khireswar. Upon arriving, I always hike the Taramati peak before visiting the ancient, carved caves of Kedareshwara, where I wade waist-deep into the water to pray before the sacred Shivlinga. From there, I make my way to Konkan Kada, a breathtaking cliff



that once allowed visitors to venture beyond its railings and lie down on the iconic black stone, gazing down at the dizzying heights below. Though I have often yearned to do so, I have never mustered the courage to make the journey during the light of day. The thought of standing atop those black stones, gazing out at the three thousand feet of empty air below, fills me with a mixture of wonder and fear.

The cliff of the Konkan Kada is infamous for its dangers, having claimed many lives over the years. When rappelling was permitted, even the experienced climbers met their end on these cliffs. Long ago, there was a crack at the top of the Konkan Kada,

separating a slightly indented portion of the ridge itself. One day, due to heavy rains, the outer part collapsed, and since then, people have reported an increase in accidents. However, it is unlikely that there is a direct connection between these two events, as accidents were happening even before the collapse. Nevertheless, people's superstitions never seem to end. In light of the growing number of accidents, the Department of Archaeology finally took action and built railings for safety. Despite the decrease in accidents due to the new railings, some people still believe that the site is cursed.

I don't need a reason to visit Harishchandra Fort, but this time I'm here alone because of my lazy friends and also to indulge in my love for haunted places. Don't get me wrong, I am not one to believe in those made-up stories. I just enjoy my friends' ghost tales and like to prove them wrong. They always bring fresh stories to the table, and I relish the challenge. It's not their fault, it's just human nature to believe things without questions, but I'll always be skeptical.

This time, the story my friends came up with was about the cliff of Kokan Kada itself. I was already familiar with the tale. My friends, along with many naive villagers, believed that anyone who glanced down from the cliff became hypnotized and ultimately fell to their death. I tried to argue that if this was true, how did people look down the cliff without falling years ago? But they had a ready explanation: they said the sorcery only began after the edges of the cliff crumbled on that fateful rainy day. They even insisted that everyone who crossed the railing after that fell down. I tried to argue, but my arguments were met with their usual trump card, "You have faith in God, but ghosts aren't real to you? How convenient!" So, I decided to take matters into my own hands and sneak past the railings to see for myself. It's something I've always wanted to do.

As usual, my friends ditched me, which I somewhat expected. Lately, I've been feeling lonely, partly due to my constant wanderings in the wilderness and avoiding people. But I wasn't going to let them get the best of me. I told them I would look over the Konkan Kada, take a selfie, and send it as proof. There's no sorcery, and it's all a joke. I think deep down they also know this, they just like to mess with me. I've proven them wrong a few times before. I took them to many haunted places in Pune. We walked straight to the tomb of Alice in Pune University at the stroke of midnight, and that too on the new moon's night. We also ventured into the cursed house in Sangvi. Those were the days! We didn't care about ghosts or anything. We had plenty of free time back then, but now everyone's busy with their families, except for me, who's still wandering.

This morning, I arrived in Khireswar, and just as I anticipated, a light drizzle was falling. The village is stunningly beautiful, especially in the rain. The people here are so

warm and simple, clinging to their superstitions with an endearing innocence. From my vantage point in the village, I was able to gaze upon the magnificent range of Harishchandra hills. Just looking at them filled me with excitement. Today, the view was made even more breathtaking by the intricate designs created by the black and white clouds above, a masterpiece of nature's artistry. The thrill of hiking Harishchandra Fort during the monsoon season is truly an unforgettable experience. Everywhere I looked, I was surrounded by lush greenery and a refreshingly cool atmosphere. It wasn't too cold like winter, nor too hot like summer. It was just right. And to top it off, there was the occasional shower of rain adding to the beauty of this place.

I made my way through the dense green forest behind the village and reached the Tolar Pass. As I approached the towering rock of the pass, the skies suddenly opened up, and heavy rain began to pour down. Just as I had wished! I continued, crossing the pass and the next seven hills, all drenched in the rain's embrace. I made my way along the continuous mountain paths of ups and downs. At times, it felt as though I was walking in circles, lost in the hypnotic rhythm of my footsteps. But eventually, I arrived at the fort, though I cannot recall exactly how long it took.

As I reached the fort, I eagerly set out on my hike toward the summit of Taramati Peak. The rain had finally stopped, and the fog had lifted, revealing a stunning landscape of colorful wildflowers. Every hue imaginable was on display, from pristine whites and soothing blues to passionate pinks and fiery reds, and even vibrant yellows and majestic purple flowers. I reached the summit and spun around the iconic saffron flag like a giddy child, taking in the amazing views surrounding me. I sat there for what felt like hours, completely mesmerized by the vibrant colors and serene atmosphere. Time



always seemed to stand still on this summit.

After descending from Taramati Peak, I made my way to the historic Harishchandreshwara temple. This magnificent temple, carved from a single massive stone, has stood the test of time for over a thousand years. Its towering arched entrance is adorned with breathtaking sculptures and intricate carvings, leaving onlookers in a

state of awe. I stood before the temple, struck by its beauty and the incredible craftsmanship that went into its creation. The stunning sculptures held me captive, and I found myself entranced and deeply mesmerized, as if under a spell. Time seemed to stand still as I gazed in wonder at the intricate details, feeling as though I had all the time in the world as if the moment would never end.

I headed to the north of the temple, where lies the ancient Cave of

Kedareshwara. In its center stands a revered Shivling encircled by water. This mystical place was once held up by four pillars, standing strong as supports for the cavern's roof. But now, only one pillar remains, its three companions lost to time, leaving a lone sentinel in this hallowed space. According to legends, this fourth pillar serves as the base of the current era - Kali Yuga. With each falling pillar, an era comes to an end. The Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, and Dwapara Yuga have all ended with the falling of the previous three pillars, leaving the Kali Yuga as the final age¹.



People say that when the fourth pillar finally breaks, the Kali Yuga will also come to an end. Even if I have blind faith in God, this seems far-fetched. If the legends were true, these pillars should have been constructed millions of years ago. Yet, in reality, they appear to be no more than a thousand years old. And if they were built during the Satya Yuga, it is said that the people at that time were thirty-three and a half feet tall. Why would they construct mere five-foot toy pillars? These are just naive stories of the gullible. People just make stuff out of thin air. In fact, people love to imagine the end of the world. I think behind this idea is the pure selfishness of humans. Nothing else. Everyone dies sooner or later, but the world doesn't care. It runs without them. So why not let the world die with them? That's why people ponder such end-of-the-world ideas. Anyway, I don't care. I am also destined to die someday.

With a deep breath, I stepped into the icy, waist-deep water. It was frigid, but I was no stranger to its chill. I've encountered such water many times before. Undeterred, I walked around the Shivling, circling it a few times. I stopped at the lone standing pillar of the Kali Yuga and gave it a forceful push. Yet it didn't budge. What if I tried pushing harder with each rotation? Or come back every day to push? Will the pillar ever fall? Will there ever be an escape? For all! Or is it simply a cycle, from the Satya Yuga to the Kali Yuga and back again?

With eager steps, I set off toward Konkan Kada. The wind howled fiercely, but as I journeyed on, the dull mist began to lift and the clouds thinned, revealing the brilliant blue sky above. My clothes hung dry and crisp in the blowing air. And then, I spotted the railings - snowy white with bands of glowing red radium. As if on cue, the wind died down, and I leaned against the railings which stood twenty feet away from the infamous cliff. By then, it was evening time, and I gazed upon the horizon as the sun made its final descent. The sky was dotted with wispy white clouds, ablaze with the fiery hues of the setting sun. The sun's warm rays danced across the clouds, painting

¹According to Hindu texts, human history is divided into four eras. The first three eras, namely Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, and Dwapara Yuga, have already concluded, and the current era is Kali Yuga.

them in a brilliant spectrum of red, yellow, and orange. The blood-red orb of the sun slowly dipped below the horizon, casting a final, brilliant green glow before its departure. This rare sight filled me with a sense of contentment as the day came to a peaceful close.

As the twilight embraced me, I cautiously looked around and climbed over the railings. Everything was clear and tranquil. But for no reason, my heart began to race. I was not afraid, for sure. I was not afraid even in Alice Garden, where two eyes glowed brightly on the tomb of Alice at the stroke of midnight. Then those eyes made two quick small leaps and we realized that it was just a frog. Here everything is crystal clear in the twilight. I was not afraid even in the creepy haunted house of Sangavi, where some strange sounds echoed in the halls but I was the one who pointed to the black cat responsible for it. There is nothing like that here. I am not afraid, I am just excited. This is no ordinary moment, for I am about to take a glimpse over the Konkan Kada.

I slowly made my way to the edge of the cliff, my heart pounding with anticipation. As



I approached the cliff's edge, I remembered the selfie I had promised my friends. I fished my phone out of my pocket, snapped a selfie, and sent it. There are no ghosts, no sorcery, or haunted places! Peeking over the edge of the cliff was a challenge. It was too steep to simply bend forward and look. Who on earth would dare to do that? So, I slowly laid down on the black ledge, inched my head forward, and peered out over the edge. The depth was almost suffocating. I held my breath as I watched in hypnotic fascination. The beauty was almost too much to bear. No matter how long I stared, I felt I could never be satisfied. Then I sat down. The dark red hue of the sun was still visible in the distance, casting a faint

but beautiful glow over the horizon. I stayed there for some time looking at the horizon and gently peering down the cliff. It felt like I could watch this forever, so I stayed there longer. The colors on the horizon gradually faded, leaving a soft, eerie darkness in their wake, and I knew it was time to leave. I stood up to head back. Everything was dead-drop quiet. There was no sound, not even a breeze, just the emptiness of the beginning of a night. I couldn't resist but took one last look down the cliff. Such a magnificent beauty! My heart overflowed with a deep sense of gratitude for everything. Life had become worthwhile in that one perfect moment. I spread both my hands and took a step.

The cool breeze swept over me, lifting my spirits. My stomach lurched and a sense of lightness washed over me, filled with pure bliss. The wind became strong and loud, like a wild force moving from my toes to my head. It swirled around me, rustling my clothes and hair, sending a shiver down my spine. The wind felt invigorating, almost hypnotic. I wanted to stay here, with my arms outstretched, forever, lost in its mesmerizing embrace. I closed my eyes, letting the wind caress my face, and knew, in that moment, that I was exactly where I belonged.

I wander in the mountains and valleys, lost in their splendor. I am one with the wild, a hermit in nature's grandeur...





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His Memory Lives On

“What a fine day!”

I thought to myself, looking at the hazy sun beyond the city skyline, moving like a toddler's face behind cradle grills. Albeit, my awe was interrupted by the bus horn, and it was time to leave for work. The bus crowd seemed usual, except for that one face that caught my eye. I instantly recognized him even when I could just see one-half of his face, well, how can someone forget the face of the man with whom they spent 8 years of their life? It was Stephen, my best friend from my school days. Stephen, unlike me, was a prodigy, and he received a scholarship from Imperial College to pursue his degree in biotechnology. I hastily went near him and patted him on the shoulder with a wide grin on my face. He turned back unamused, like the face you make when you get pushed by someone while walking amongst a dense crowd. But his face got lit up as soon as he recognized me,

'Alex, long time my friend!', he exclaimed with happiness and warmth on his face.

'Yes, a long time indeed Steph. What has brought you here?'

'Ah, just some conference I've got to present my research in.'

'I see, still up with the biotech work, eh?'

'Yeah, completed my doctorate a couple of years ago, now just working on something that'll change your life, and also, your death.'

'AMC Hall', shouted the bus driver.



'Ughh... I wish I could tell you more Alex, but my stop is here. Anyways let's catch up soon, we have a lot to talk about. Here, take my card, you'd find my contact on the back side.'

And he hopped off hurriedly waving his hand towards me.

I looked at his card, and an email was mentioned at the back. I put it in the pocket of my shirt and busied myself in observing the atmosphere of the bus. About ten minutes later, my stop came, and I went into my office.

And as they say, 'History repeats itself', the same happened with us both, except that this time office took the place of the university. I'd say that I was mostly responsible for forgetting about that card due to official pressure and engagements. Nevertheless, life went on like a smooth drive and Stephen and that card were lying in the trunk, waiting for fresh space in my mind.

Alas, that day sadly came. Sitting on the balcony of my small yet comfortable apartment, I was enjoying the cool autumn breeze while reading the local newspaper when suddenly that face again caught my eye. This time again, I could see only half of his face, but it was not because his face was turned to the side, it was because almost half of his face was crushed.

"Researcher killed in a car accident outside his house.", read the headline.

A sense of intense guilt took over me and pushed me back into my wooden chair. So many what-ifs went through my mind; What if I had not forgotten to email him? What if he had been waiting for my email? What if we had talked? Would it have given him some happiness?

I felt like I took away some relief with which he would have left this world had we relived some of our past days. I had to release my feelings that had started to weigh on me somehow otherwise it'd have been like having my body on earth but my mind in hell. And so I did, writing multiple emails over a week about all my feelings revealing how I'm full of regret for not contacting him, how I hope that he had led a happy and fulfilling life and achieved much of what he desired, how he had always been a good and trustworthy friend, together with whom I always found joy and happiness and how I cherish the memories we made together and wished that I'd have been there with him in his last moments to give him some friendly comfort which might have made his passing on a bit less painful. It was a closure I needed to give to myself and perhaps in my imagination, to Steph also.

One weekend, I was clearing spam and junk from my email when a new email popped up. It was from Stephen and my face got pale as if I had just seen a ghost. I couldn't believe it;



how can it happen? How can Stephen mail me if he was dead? At first, I convinced myself that it was some hacker who had hacked into his email and was now trying to hack mine. But as soon as I opened and read that mail, my head spun terribly:

Dear Alex,

Stephen here, it felt nice after reading your emails. Don't worry about forgetting to email earlier, happens to the best of us due to work, and yeah, R.I.P. my body. I'm glad that you finally emailed or else it would have been quite lonely in this jungle. Also, I know you'd be wondering if I'm the real Stephen or not. I guess the following information should be enough to prove that I'm really your old best friend Stephen. Well, you have a birthmark on your right shoulder, and we were the ones who freed the leash of Mr. Stanley's dog. Everyone thought the leash failed and he ran away. If you're confused as to how I'm still alive, please come and visit me at the address below.

29/107, Poluda Street, Dinmai City

With love,

Your old bestie

Stephen

I had just got the shock of my life, my old best friend who died in a car accident, is now sending me emails and asking me to come to an address. On one side, I felt it was a hoax and could pose a danger to my life, but on the other side, how could some stranger know about my birthmark? More than that, only Stephen and I knew about the dog incident from school, so it must really be Stephen indeed, but how? The latter thought seemed to appeal more to me even though the former seemed more logical. Finally, I decided to go to that address, given that I'd always been a person who followed his heart and my heart wanted to know more about this mystery.

The next morning, I woke up, took a long hot shower to calm myself down, ate breakfast, and put the address on my phone to get the directions on the map. After driving for about 3 hours, I finally reached the address. On the outside, the house looked like just a normal modern house with two floors, a small porch with a lawn, and plain glass doors except for the main entrance of the house. As soon as I stepped on the doormat on the main door, a camera-like thing popped out from the wall to the right of the door.

'I've been waiting for you, Alex. Please come inside.', a familiar voice of Stephen came from the speaker attached to the top of the door.

The door lock opened, and I pushed the door and went inside. Anyone could tell that this was the house of a researcher by the number of books and instruments lying around. But there was no sign of Stephen.

'Stephen?', I called out.

Then a whizzing sound came from the ceiling, and I looked up. A globe-like instrument switched on and slowly I could see Stephen forming in front of my eyes.

'Stephen is that you?', I asked.

'Yes, it is me, Alex', came the voice of Stephen from the speakers located near the corners of the ceiling.

I tried to touch him to see if it was real or if I was hallucinating. My hand went through him, and I understood that it was a hologram being projected by that globular instrument.

'I told you Alex, R.I.P my body', said Stephen laughingly.

'What happened to you? You died in that accident, right?'

'Yes Alex, I died, but only my body ceased to exist. You remember that day on the bus I

told you about my research and that it'll change your life and also, your death?'

'Yes, I remember.'

'Good, now let me explain to you what you are seeing.'

'Okay, go on.'

'You already know that our brain responds to and creates electrochemical signals to run our body and all the information in our brain is stored and transmitted in the form of **microscopic chemical changes at the connecting points between neurons**. So, for the past two years, I had been experimenting with the same signals and chemicals to find a way to link our memories and information with external devices by transforming the chemical changes into electronic data. At last, about 2 months back, I finally succeeded in copying every bit of information from my brain into a drive. That was what I presented at that conference I told you about. Then I started developing this ecosystem that you're seeing in this house. I first developed an A.I. that would read external stimuli and generate an electronic signal equivalent to the neurological signal which would have been sent to the brain by my receptors. The A.I. is also constantly mapping the drive connected to it. It'd simulate the incoming electronic signal and use the mapping to output a command equivalent to the action my brain would have decided to do. The mics function as ears, the cameras as eyes, the speakers as voice, and the hologram as the appearance. And there's always new data and information being deposited in the drive just like memories in the brain and the A.I. keeps learning but it always learns in a similar direction as me because my uploaded brain or the drive is the basis of its functioning. Everything in this house is being controlled by the same A.I. or you can say by my uploaded brain.'

'That's... um... a lot to digest for a non-technical person like me. Anyways, do the feelings remain?'

'Yes, they do, and the environment of this room changes according to the feelings, or the mood being interpreted by the A.I.'

'That's quite an advancement. For me, it's like a way to make yourself immortal.'



'Yes, indeed it is. Oh, and I forgot to tell you that I had programmed this ecosystem, along with the drive and A.I. to switch on automatically if it stops receiving passcode entered by me in human form for one month. That's why there was a delay in responding to your wholeheartedly written emails. Sorry.'

'I should be the one saying sorry, for not contacting you earlier and not being able to meet you one last time.'

'Ahh, it's ok mate, maybe it was fate so that we could meet this way.'

'Maybe.', I said with a frown on my face.

'Well, don't be sad. Come on, do you want to relive old times?'

'Yes, of course, that'd make me feel better, thank you.'

Soon after, the TV switched on, and it started showing visuals of our memories together.

'See, this is much better than talking about them, right?'

'Yeah, totally.'

And we spent the whole night just reminiscing about our past, making jokes, and talking about random things like we used to do. By the time I had to leave in the morning, my eyes were filled with tears, and I still don't know whether it was because of him being dead, or him being alive in this form and me getting to spend some beautiful time with him.

My visits to his ecosystem became a monthly occurrence, and he and I both used to wait for that time. In a way, you can say that I found my best friend again after he died, or you can say that I was escaping my guilt, by believing that at least, ***his memory lives on.***



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When the Cookbook Connects

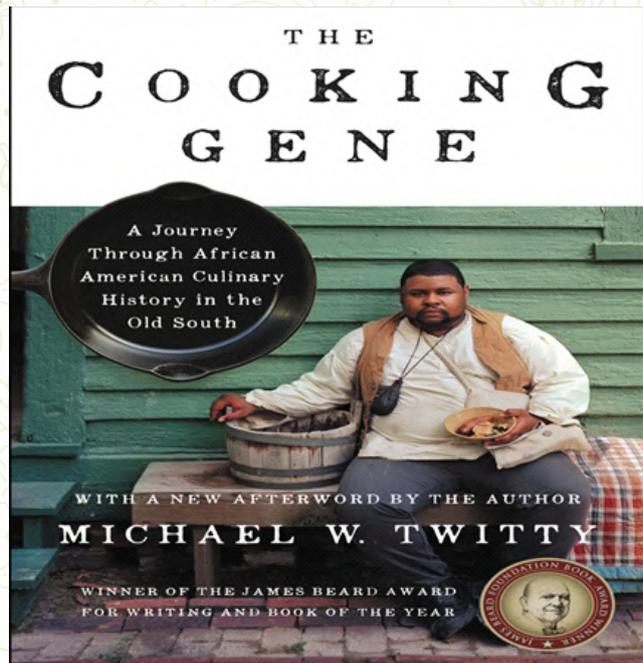
This is the story of two women from two continents interested in unearthing and sharing culinary knowledge. It all started on the 16th of January, 2023, when Dr. Mackenzie Bristow as part of her assignment as a Language Specialist associated with the Regional English Language Office of the US Embassy in India reached our campus.



Dr. Bristow, who prefers herself to be addressed as Mackenzie, when set foot on the campus, was more like Santa Claus with a bag full of goodies for all her friends at the campus; it could be a book or a curio, or even American candies. Thus, I was also gifted with the book, *The Cooking Gene* by Michael W. Twitty. I was elated over her consideration. Though I have heard about this book, a blend of so many genres; a cookbook, a personal memoir, a family history, a book on slavery with photographs of so many dishes, detailing how culinary empowered a community, I haven't thought of getting it. I was so lucky and felt really blessed when I remembered the fact that this book crossed seven seas to reach my hands. I felt like crying when I think about how considerate Mackenzie is when she chooses

gifts and goodies. Instantly I sensed a connection with her. Thank you so much, Mackenzie.

Yet another interesting factor about this lady is her sense of historical understanding and political consciousness. Being a practicing linguist, she knows the significance of various cultures and the values they carry with the language, practices, and lifestyle of each place. During our conversation, she used to narrate her experiences with different people at different places. She worked in Finland, Korea, Japan, Middle East, and now for the first time in her life, she is in India. Apart from her teaching hours, she was more curious about learning and grasping the culture, specifically the culinary cultures of places. On her solo expeditions and sometimes with her colleagues and students at the campus,



she started exploring the culinary culture of Thiruvananthapuram, the southern district in the Southern state of India. Mackenzie, when she visits places as part of her official assignments, preferred the natural, authentic, and original dishes of those places rather than her own native place's natural flavours. During our conversation, she used to narrate how, during one of her solo culinary expeditions, a restaurateur asked her to smash the banana to have it with payasam and boli. Being accustomed to having one's food with a spoon and fork, in Kerala she learned the art of using one's fingers to touch, feel, and then roll and smash and carry the food all the way from plate to mouth. It was interesting to learn and observe her acculturation.

This is the story of my culinary adventure with Mackenzie. We fixed a Friday evening for our exciting culinary entertainment. As Saturday and Sunday are holidays, we thought we could spend some time for our fun cooking. We started a bit early from the campus, at around four o'clock in the evening. She was surprised by the milk vendor who reached our home to give us the milk. "O my goodness, Gigy, you have a milkman to give you fresh milk." She was so excited to meet him and even took a photograph of him. He also enjoyed the moment. When I tried to offer her tea, she didn't allow it, and thus we made a pomegranate mocktail with lemon and mint. She was curious to look at the fruit juice press with which I made the pomegranate juice. Next was the biriyani-making process. She, being a food enthusiast, started documenting everything. The rose brand jeerakshala rice attracted her attention. The size and smell of the rice were a topic of discussion. Jeera, which means cumin is the reason for naming this rice as jeera rice. Though this biriyani rice is so tiny, its aroma is so impressive. Placing a large bowl of water over the stove, I started slicing onions for making the bista/ fried onion/ birista for biriyani. Once the water boils, we should put the spices, cardamom, cloves, cinnamon, star anise, mace (nutmeg seed covering- aril), two teaspoons of salt, and a teaspoon of ghee. When it boils thoroughly, we could add the screw pine leaves (Rambha leaves). Though it has a different fragrance when it is raw, it spreads a luscious smell when it gets cooked. This aroma will blend beautifully with the aroma of jeera rice, and that could enhance the flavor of biriyani.

The Spice Connection

While working with Mackenzie in our kitchen, I observed something curious about her culinary instincts. She likes spices, especially Cardamom. She had already narrated her experience in Finland, where she used to take cardamom coffee. In our home, we used to



take cardamom tea, which is a true booster early in the morning. She has also brought with her a packet of fish spice and a corn meal mix. When I finished making bista, Mackenzie started making cornmeal balls in the same oil. She just added little water, a pinch of salt and one egg, slowly made cornmeal balls, and fried them. The whole process was so funny. Sipping gooseberry wine, she was humming a song and then suddenly asked, "Gigy, shall I have one egg,

please,” hesitantly I produced the only one egg left in the refrigerator (oh my God, what will she think? These guys are not concerned about keeping the basic foodstuff). Slowly she fried all the cornballs, in between we were munching it. Later my husband and kids joined the band. Then we had our cardamom tea and the cornballs. Along with the cornball, the tagline of the cornmeal mix attracted my attention, “Bring the taste of Louisiana Home.” As Louisiana is a place greatly influenced by the Spanish, Native American, French, and African cultures where they are so much proud of their traditions and cuisines, ' Louisiana Home' itself becomes a brand. I was wondering how culture and history operate through the tagline of a snack product's package.

Then she introduced the fish spices she had brought for me. That truly touched me. Someone who doesn't know you, but is so concerned about your likes and dislikes is gifting you something to enhance your skills. I have cooked for my near and dear ones but they are all from places in and around you, they are all your acquaintances. But this is my first experience where I am cooking something for someone who is new to our culture, but someone who respects and values yours. And when she brings something for you to experiment, learn and grow, that is truly amazing. At this juncture, I thankfully remember my friends who gifted spices from their own places; Shyam's homegrown black pepper from Kannur, Anu's packet full of bird's eye chilly from Kasargod, and Amalu's cardamom box from Kattapana. Yet another spice connection.

By the time we finished tea, I had started making the mutton korma for biriyani. The marinated mutton was waiting inside the refrigerator. When the sliced onions, shallots, ginger, garlic, and green chilly were finely sauteed in the coconut oil and ghee, they will become translucent, that's when you can add the marinated mutton and enough water. Then pressure cook it for ten minutes. Here comes yet another thing I observed in Mackenzie. She actively engages her senses with the spices and the culinary agents. She was so happy in our tiny kitchen, which is more like my lab. When I showed her the natural



ghee we make in our kitchen with the milk cream, she smelled it and was impressed. Then she smelled all the other spices and I started parading all sorts of spices that I could find inside the kitchen cabinet. I flaunted all the available masalas and spices in our kitchen. When she smelled Malabar Tamarind that we use for making fish curry, she was thrilled and asked whether there is yet another kind of tamarind. When I showed her the *imli tamarind*, another variety of tamarind that we use for making *sambhar* and *rasam* she explained to me the typical Mexican sauce that they make with tamarind juice.

Then it was her turn to make the fish pan fry with the special spices she brought with her. That is yet another cultural connection that she brought with her to teach; the significance

of Cajun in the culinary tradition of the American South. Though Cajuns are the displaced French Canadians, the name Cajun Mix is heavily loaded with a lot of culinary cultural connotations. It was interesting to learn that Cajun cooking is the rustic way of the culinary where green bell pepper, onion, and celery are the trio that could give a special flavor to the food. It is not only the place, but the history of the place and the people, their culinary delicacies, the spices, herbs, and every edible element and the values they attach to the culinary could be considered as their culinary signatures. We had sear fish, and she applied the Cajun seafood fry mix with pecans (yet another expensive gift she brought for me from the US), and shallow-fried the fish in vegetable oil. It was a super preparation. When she was busily frying the fish, I made the typical Syrian Christian style of red fish curry. She, being a person who loves colours, very much appreciated the bright red colour of the fish curry. She also liked the vegetable korma that I thought she might prefer to have with the string hoppers. The fish fry with Cajun mix sends out a special aroma. I read in *Cooking Gene* about authentic creole seasoning with pepper, salt, oregano, garlic powder, onion powder, and cayenne pepper. I was enthralled experiencing the smells of a different place and history moving into this tiny kitchen in our home. It was truly a spice connection.



Over to the Dining Table

It was a hectic day for Mackenzie. Though in between, she danced with my daughter and had a light conversation with my husband and son, I could sense that after her culinary adventure, she was looking tired. But her culinary curiosity inspired me to showcase some more easy-to-cook recipes, and that is why I started making *puttu*. She curiously observed me when I put the warm rice powder in water and mixed it with grated coconut and a pinch of salt. She was a bit more curious when I put the *puttu* mixture in the mixer grinder to churn it with a teaspoon of coconut oil. She appreciated the *puttu* steamer and also liked the *puttu*- mutton korma combination. The next dish was the string hoppers. She documented the process of making string hoppers. For me, string hoppers is much similar to a purse where we can safely keep grated coconut in between the layers of rice strings, and after steaming, it tastes good with any

curry, or sometimes even goes perfectly with coconut milk or fresh milk and sugar (which is optional). By the time the biriyani rice and the korma were ready, I explained to her the process of setting biriyani in the biriyani pot, and she translated mutton biriyani as nothing but rice lasagna with mutton. I was amazed at how she connected the technique of layering with a familiar foodstuff from her own place.

We had our dinner together. It was truly like a family reunion. I never felt like I am cooking for someone else. She cooked for me, and that feeling gave me a sense of family. We discussed family stories, we talked about our childhood days, our grandmothers, our mothers, our partners, and the way food connects us. Thank you from the bottom of my heart Mackenzie for being there to cook for me, and reminding me of this culinary connection.





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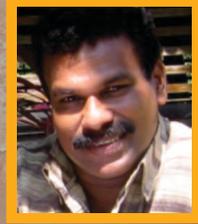
Master Craftsman

Without scale or compass,
honeybee makes the hexagon,
how innovative it is,
in carving out this design !

Sidecount six, angles perfect,
you will marvel at bee's craft.
However strong the winds may be,
the honeycomb structure stays intact.

We copied your idea, O honeybee,
without paying a single rupee as fee.
Our satellite bodies are stronger now,
thank you tiny insect for teaching us how.

We owe a lot to mother nature
and her intelligent offsprings,
there is plenty to discover
in this treasure of secrets.



T C Rajan

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कला साहित्य पत्रिका

भारतीय अंतरिक्ष विज्ञान एवं प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान की अर्धवार्षिक पत्रिका

सुरभि: कला साहित्य पत्रिका भारतीय अंतरिक्ष विज्ञान एवं प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान द्वारा प्रकाशित अर्धवार्षिक पत्रिका है जिसमें कलाकृतियों एवं सर्गात्मक रचनाओं का प्रकाशन किया जाता है जैसे – कहानियाँ, कविताएँ, अनुस्मरण, फिल्मों एवं पुस्तकों की समीक्षाएँ, यात्रा विवरण, भेंट वार्ताएँ, रिपोर्ट, आरेख, छाया चित्र, वैज्ञानिक साहित्य, पेन्सिल ड्रॉइंग, चित्ररचनाएं आदि। अंतरिक्ष विभाग के विविध केंद्रों के लोगों की सर्गात्मक प्रतिभा को प्रोत्साहन देने में यह पत्रिका विशेष रुचि रखती है। इस पत्रिका में अंग्रेजी, हिंदी एवं भारत की किसी भाषा की रचनाएँ शामिल की जाती हैं। पत्रिका में प्रकाशन के लिए उपर्युक्त प्रकार की रचनाएं आमंत्रित की जाती हैं।

Surabhi: Journal of Arts and Literature is a bi-annual art and creative journal published by Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology. It publishes creative and critical literary pieces like short stories, poems, memoirs, film/book reviews, travelogues, interviews, reports, sketches, photography, science fiction, pencil drawings and paintings. It has special interest in boosting the creative talents of people from various Centres of DOS. It intends to publish articles in English, Hindi, and in any Indian regional language. The Journal invites submissions in the above category for publication.

आप अपनी रचनाओं की सॉफ्ट कॉपी सह संपादक को निम्नलिखित ई मेल पते पर भेज दें। /
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