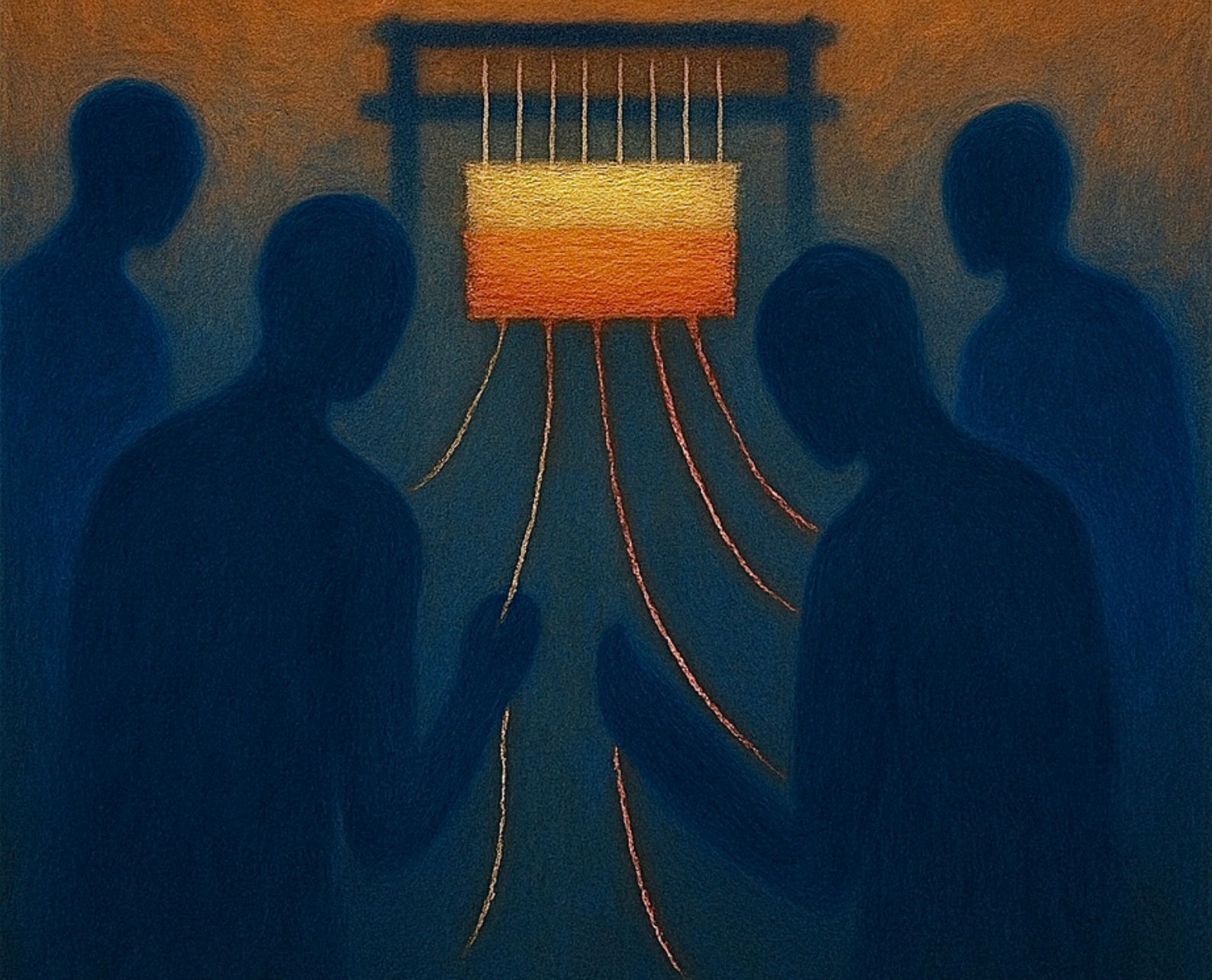


# TAPESTRY

COLLECTION OF MEMOIRS

II MA English 2023-25



PG & Research Department of English  
Government Arts and Science College, Kondotty



# TAPESTRY

## COLLECTION OF MEMOIRS

Tapestry is an evocative collection of youthful memories and reflective essays woven from the true stories and past contexts of the II MA English students (2023–25 batch). It is a timeless anthology of personal experiences, some delicate, and others raw, blunt, and visceral, that demonstrate the most formative moments of their identity and their character. Each memoir is a one-of-a-kind thread in a vast tapestry of human existence, encapsulating each moment's regrets and successes. Along with their mentor and budding artists, the collection provides a not just a glimpse into student life, but also a deeply personal journey through love, loss, laughter, and lessons learned throughout.

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# TAPESTRY

*A collection of memoirs*



**II MA English (2023-25 Batch)**

**Edited by Dr. Abdul Latheef V**

**PG & Research Department of English**  
**Government Arts and Science College, Kondotty**

## Preface

A memoir is a non-fiction narrative writing based on the author's personal memories. Unlike a full autobiography, which typically covers an author's entire life in chronological order, a memoir focuses on a specific period, event, or theme within the author's life.

Within these pages, you'll discover a collection of intimate reflections, each a unique window into the formative experiences of II MA English language and Literature students (2023-25 batch). These memoirs, penned with honesty and heartfelt emotion, capture the moments—both grand and subtle—that have left an indelible mark on their young lives.

From the quiet sting of a childhood misunderstanding to the unexpected revelation of a lifelong passion, these stories explore themes universal to the human experience: innocence lost and lessons learned, the complexities of family bonds, the sting of regret, and the resilience of the spirit. They are testaments to the power of memory, showing how single events can shape our perceptions, influence our choices, and ultimately guide us toward who we become.

As the teacher who guided their creative writing abilities and helped them prune those skills to some extent, I am grateful to them for their dedication to sit for writing, many for the first time. The powerful illustrations are also done by the promising artists in the class.

As you read, we invite you to step into the worlds of these young writers. Share in their joys, empathize with their struggles, and perhaps, find echoes of your own journey reflected in their words. This collection is a celebration of personal growth, a reminder that every experience, no matter how small, contributes to the rich tapestry of our lives.

I invite you, dear reader, to walk with these young writers—to pause, to listen, and perhaps, to find echoes of your own memories stitched into their words.

Dr. Abdul Latheef Vennakkadan  
Associate Professor of English

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Shamna C K

### A scorching hot day

**I**t's ironic, isn't it? We're told to forget the past and live in the moment, yet all we can do is dwell on past mistakes and regrets. I used to tell my friend I didn't over think, but when certain memories resurface, my heart and head clash, leaving me feeling like the worst person in the world.

One of those memories is from a scorching hot day. The sun beat down relentlessly, forcing everyone, even the birds and beasts, to gasp for air and seek water. I was walking home from college, my bottle refilled with cold water from the filter.

Along the footpath, I spotted a tiny puppy, just days old, desperately licking the moist ground. My immediate instinct was to share my water, but I froze. What would people think? Would they see me as a "virtue tree," just trying to show off? The fear of judgment paralyzed me, and I walked away.

Disappointment and shame washed over me. My heart tried to rationalize it, but I couldn't justify ignoring that helpless creature. I wanted to go back, but I couldn't, and even now, I don't know why.

How could I ignore a thirsty puppy? What if those few drops of water could have saved its life? What if I were in its place, ignored by others? Hundreds of questions plagued me, filled with regret. I had the means to help, yet I failed that little soul. The incident haunted me for days, weeks, and months.

But now, I've come to accept that sometimes, it's okay to regret the past. Because of that day, I know I will never again ignore a living thing in need, whether it's an animal or even a plant. I'll never let the fear of others' opinions stop me from lending a hand. And I'll never truly forget the past if it has taught me something, shaped my character, and made me a better person.



Dilshana

### **The Price of Innocence**

**W**hen I was in fifth grade, my family and relatives embarked on a pilgrimage. The journey held a special significance, as it was decided that my younger sister would receive her first solid food there, a ceremony believed to bestow blessings. We set off with joyous anticipation, and I spent the long journey gazing out the window, mesmerized by the changing views. I envisioned a truly memorable trip, little knowing my happiness was soon to fade.

Upon arrival, we completed our prayers. I stepped out into the courtyard, where people were scattered, each lost in their pleas to God. I found myself alone, holding a bag for a relative who was still deep in prayer. Among the crowd were a few people with disabilities. One of them extended his hand towards me. As an innocent child, unable to overthink the situation, I reached into the bag, pulled out some money, and gave it to him.

My only thought was to help. I believed it was my responsibility to assist someone in need, especially since I had the means. He accepted the money, mumbled something, and



left. Moments later, after her prayer, my relative returned and immediately asked about the money. I explained what had happened, and her expression changed. It was then that I learned the money was not just any money; it was specifically set aside for offerings to fulfill their wish.

My mother, upon hearing this, asked me to retrieve the money, explaining that I had inadvertently disrupted their intention. We then went to nearby shops, filled with interesting things—food, sweets—but my joy had vanished. My mind felt blank, and I couldn't enjoy the trip or the treats. We soon headed home.

Later, my relative suggested I had been swayed by the man's words, perhaps believing his blessings would make me a bright, smart, and intelligent girl. But that wasn't it. I had simply wanted to help. I admit that a hundred rupees was not a trivial amount, yet the weight of the moment wasn't about the money.

The sweets tasted bitter, and a deep regret settled within me. It's a difficult and painful feeling to act with good intentions only to be blamed and realize your actions were misguided. For a child, it was particularly hard to bear.

In the end, my relative's wish was fulfilled anyway. Perhaps, I thought, God intended that money for His servant, not for the shrine. Nothing truly to worry about, yet the sting of that day remained.



Aparna J S

### The Spark

It was a summer vacation, and I arrived at my tuition class, panting slightly from having run to be on time. It was a biology lesson, and everyone had already started writing. Outside, it was a summer rainy day. I looked through the window, watching the raindrops fall, one after another, like shimmering silver threads adorning nature, quenching its thirst. I was more captivated by this exquisite view than by the class. Suddenly, a voice broke my reverie: "Aparna, please come to the office." It was my physics teacher, the owner of the institution, and I felt vexed; he had ruined my peaceful moment.

In the office, the physics teacher sat opposite me, alongside another staff member. Abruptly, he asked, "You haven't paid the complete tuition fee. When will you pay it?" I replied instantly, "I'll pay next week." It was only my second day at the tuition center. With a smirk, he retorted, "Why did you join without money? If you didn't have money, you should never have studied." His words were an unexpected blow, like a sharp knife



piercing my heart, breaking and wounding it. Blood flowed from that wound, invisible but potent, its salty taste stinging my eyes as tears welled up and fell. *How can a teacher behave like this? Is money truly everything?* I stood frozen for a moment before leaving the office. That day marked the beginning of my loathing for all teachers and was my last day at that tuition class.

Years later, another summer vacation arrived. I was drawing in my room when someone called me from the dining hall. A small child, perhaps in third standard, stood behind his mother. I knew them. A cold hand, belonging to his exhausted mother, gently took mine. "Can you teach my son? He's weak in some subjects," she asked. "Sure," I replied with a smile.

As I looked at the innocent face and shining eyes of the boy, his mother asked, "How much is your tuition fee?" Suddenly, my own mother stepped in, her voice warm, a wide smile on her face. "No, she doesn't charge tuition fees," she said. A mother truly understands her child better than anyone. The boy's mom smiled, a visible relief in her expression, knowing their current financial struggles. Those shining eyes looked at me again. Looking at his innocent face, I saw a reflection of my younger self, hiding somewhere in those bright eyes. I gently held the boy's small hand. Some painful wounds, I realized, sometimes give us the spark we need to move forward.



Murshida Banu

### **Innocent Mischief**

**I**t was a rain-soaked evening, the water droplets clinging to the leaves, creating a beautiful spectacle. A cold breeze whispered through the air. At precisely 4 PM, I felt an irresistible urge to venture outside without my mother's knowledge. I knew it wasn't the right thing to do, but Mom would never allow it. So, after a quick glance around to ensure no one saw me, I sprinted as fast as I could towards my best friend's house. Yes, I had escaped!

This story takes us back to when I was just eight years old. Every spare moment, I'd gravitate towards my best friend's house—which was precisely why my mother often forbade it. I was a bit lazy with homework, always preferring to play. When I arrived at my friend's house, she was already waiting, and we immediately launched into our games. During our play, we noticed the lady from the house next door walking on the road, seemingly engrossed in a mobile phone conversation.

We approached her for a chat, but she remained absorbed in her phone, clearly uninterested in us. Feeling ignored, we decided to visit her home instead, where we found



only her mother—a very old, kind woman who seemed to do all the household chores alone.

"Are you not tired, Grandma? Can we help you?" we asked.

She responded with a warm smile, "Oh, my children, I'm happy to see you. No, thank you, the work is already done. I'm just about to take a bath."

With nothing else to do, we wandered around her beautiful garden, surrounded by lush bushes. Suddenly, an idea sparked between us.

My friend whispered, "What if we played a prank on her?"

"What prank should we do?" I replied, intrigued.

We hatched a plan: to prank Grandma using leaves from the bushes instead of henna leaves. To set the stage, we approached her again: "Grandma, would you like some henna? We can collect it for you." From her bathroom, she replied, "Yes, I love henna very much. If you could, please bring it to me." We were thrilled! We dashed to her garden and plucked leaves from the bushes. A flicker of doubt crossed my mind, *This feels wrong. She's already so tired from cleaning the whole house.*

"I'm sure Grandma will scold us," I worried aloud.

My friend, ever the instigator, reassured me, "Don't worry, it's just a prank."

We paused, caught in a moment of confusion between right and wrong, but ultimately decided to go ahead. We gathered the leaves, tiptoed to her bathroom, exchanged a mischievous smile, and then carefully scattered all the leaves on the steps Grandma had just cleaned. "Here is your henna!" we announced triumphantly.

When Grandma saw it, her face darkened with anger, and she muttered under her breath. We realized it was no longer safe to stay, so we fled.

Reflecting on that incident, it still pains me to think about how I disturbed her at such a young age. Regret became a silent companion, a shadow trailing my every step.



Fathima Najiya

### **The Day My Wish Came True**

**L**ife is filled with countless memorable days, but one stands out vividly: the day I first held a microphone. It was a momentous occasion for me, as speaking into a microphone before an audience had been a powerful desire since I was in first standard. I knew I could sing beautifully, but I never received an opportunity to showcase my ability in school classes. Even after seventeen years of schooling, that chance never materialized.

However, just a few days ago, an opportunity arose. It wasn't for singing, but my beloved Allah granted me the chance to speak my words before a group of people and, at long last, to hold a microphone. My long-held desire was finally fulfilled. That day became my most unforgettable and cherished memory. I will never forget it.





Arya Girishkumar

### A Costly Outing

**I**t was a bright and sunny day, and I woke with a surge of excitement. Today, I was meeting my best friend. I practically leaped out of bed and quickly finished my morning routine. Back then, I was working as a tutor at an institution. I called my sir and asked for leave, which he readily granted. But the truth was, my parents were unaware of my plans. They believed I was heading to the tuition center as usual. I was, in essence, deceiving them.

At precisely 10:30 AM, I arrived at our agreed meeting spot. We talked endlessly, laughing and taking countless photos. We were overjoyed. But the "evil side of us," as I

now think of it, seemed intent on disrupting our joyful moment, planting the idea of an even grander adventure: a trip to Calicut.

I was torn, utterly confused about whether to go or not. I argued with myself, but in that moment, something inside me snapped. I was consumed by the desire to spend more time with her. And so, I made a decision that would haunt me for years to come. I decided to go.

When we reached Calicut, everything was delightful. We savored every sight: children playing, ice cream carts, vendors selling salted mangoes and pineapples—all making our mouths water. I was completely elated, oblivious to the trouble brewing. As we walked along the roadside, a person known to my father approached us and questioned us. My heart sank; I was certain he would inform my father. The rest of the day, I walked with the heavy weight of regret on my shoulders. I knew I had done something terrible, and there was no undoing it.

When I finally reached home, my father was there. He didn't utter a single word to me, a silence that felt like a decree that he would never speak to me again. I was overwhelmed with guilt.

That day changed me forever. I realized that my actions have consequences, and sometimes even the smallest choice can have the biggest impact. I will always regret that day and the choice I made. Though no one in my house ever spoke of the matter again, I still feel a deep pang of sadness whenever I recall how I betrayed the trust of my parents, who believed in me more than anyone.



Ameena Gilsha

### **A Drop of Innocence**

**I**t was a rainy day outside, and somewhere inside me too. The sky had cleared, but my eyes were still full of tears. It was my first day of school. I was only four years old. I didn't know then that this day would become a turning point in my life a quiet end to a part of my childhood that I had never thought would leave me so soon.

I still remember standing at the school gate, holding my brother's hand. He was my only support in that moment. Everything around me looked so new and unfamiliar children in uniforms, parents saying goodbye, teachers calling out names. I didn't understand what was happening. I only knew that I didn't want to go in.



My teacher came and gently held my hand. I still remember the feel of her touch. She probably said something kind, but I was too scared to listen. I was shaking inside. My tiny heart couldn't handle the fear of being separated from my family, of entering a place where nothing felt safe. And then it happened, I hit her face. It wasn't out of anger. It wasn't planned. It just happened. A sudden, helpless reaction from a small, frightened child. I didn't know what I had done. I only remember the silence that followed and the tears that wouldn't stop.

Today, when I think back, I feel a strong regret. Not because I committed a big mistake, but because I was too innocent to understand anything then, and she was just doing her job, trying to help me. I wish I could see her again, not to confess, because I know I didn't mean to hurt her, but just to look at her once more. To silently say that I remember her. That I carry that small moment even now, all these years later.

I barely remember her face. But that one incident has stayed with me. It was a drop of innocence, one small moment that taught me about regret, kindness, and how even the smallest actions can remain in the heart forever



Nikhila N A

### Finding BTS

**A**midst life's chaos, I stumbled upon a group that changed my world forever. It was a time when uncertainty hung heavy in the air, and I was desperately searching for something to lift my spirits. That's when I found BTS in 2020, seven years after their debut in the K-pop industry.

Their music became the melody of my life, a beautiful escape from reality. The first time I heard their voices, it was as if they were speaking directly to my soul. Their melodies carried me through my darkest times and made me smile during my happiest moments.

But it wasn't just their music that connected me; it was their profound message of self-love. As I delved deeper into their lyrics, I discovered a powerful connection. BTS reminded me that it's okay to be imperfect, to stumble and fall, and to embrace myself completely.

The timing couldn't have been more perfect. BTS entered my life precisely when I needed them most. Their messages of hope, love, and unity guided me through personal challenges. I found solace in their songs, knowing that I wasn't alone in my struggles.

As I immersed myself in their world, I made friends who shared my passion for BTS. Together, we celebrated their achievements and created lasting memories. The BTS ARMY, as we call ourselves, became a vibrant support system, a family, and a true friendship circle.

I often wonder, "What would I be doing if I hadn't found them during the darkest phase of my life?"

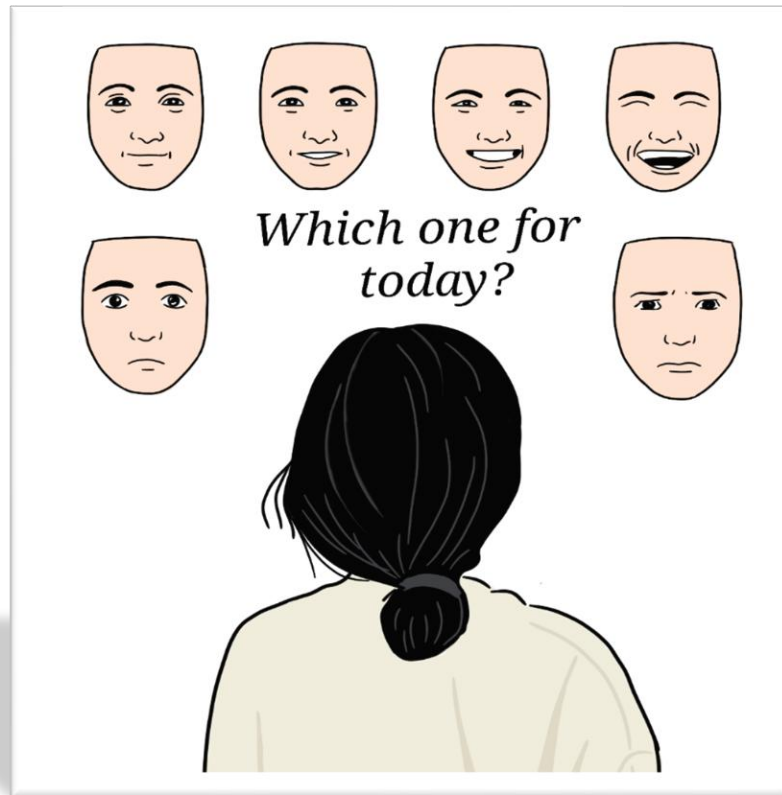
"Would I be bundled up in my bed, lost and unsure of what to do?"

"Would I still be that hollow shell of myself that I lost during the pandemic?"

All these questions flood my mind when I think of myself in 2020. The darkest days of my life were spent watching their content, laughing with them, and enjoying their music, which acted as a balm to my broken mind. BTS taught me that it's never too late to dream and that with hard work and dedication, I could achieve my goals.

BTS became my guiding light, my source of strength, and a constant reminder that sometimes, the right people find you at the perfect time in your life, transforming the ordinary into something truly extraordinary.





Nikhila K

### **Nothing Erases the Past**

**E**very second becomes the past for all beings, and we cannot recreate it. Likewise, we cannot alter what we have done, whether consciously or unconsciously, nor can we truly re-experience or properly approach it.

Mistakes are common to all; we are, after all, human beings. Yet, striving to avoid mistakes and misunderstandings is significant and meaningful. I, too, am a part of this journey of realization. It was during my B.Ed fourth-semester examination that my classmate, Mrs. Saranya from the Mathematics option, took her exams in a separate classroom. We inquired about the reason for this separation, and she explained that she suffered from back and joint pain, among other issues. At the time, we discussed the matter among ourselves and arrived at our own dismissive conclusion: "There's no need

for such separation; it's merely an act of partiality, and she doesn't have any significant problem." Sometimes, I even thought she was a bit overconfident in her abilities and feigning her struggles.

On July 12th, we completed our fourth-semester examinations. The very next day, July 13th, we had our send-off party. It was a gloomy day, knowing our B.Ed life, filled with colorful memories, was coming to an end. Then, at 9:30 PM that same evening, we received a shocking announcement from our class representative: "Our Saranya Chechi is no more."

I froze. All the incidents, all the words we had spoken about her, flooded my mind and stood against me. She had been suffering from Leukemia since the age of eight and was only twenty-nine. In that moment, I felt a profound pity for myself. That was the first funeral I attended, and I honestly say sorry from the bottom of my heart. It remains one of the moments I regret most in my life. I am reminded of the quote from George Eliot's novel, *The Mill on the Floss*: "Don't judge a book by its cover." Saranya carried so much pain every day, yet she always engaged actively in all co-curricular activities. She possessed a reputation for self-confidence and a remarkable grace. We truly should not judge someone or something based only on what we perceive without knowing the full situation.



Sona M P

### Sibling Discovery

**I**t was the happiest day in our home, filled with the palpable excitement of an upcoming celebration: my sister's wedding day. Relatives streamed in from every direction, cousins donned their finest attire, and the younger ones playfully squabbled over fragrant *mullapoo* flowers. Yet, the happiest person in our home wasn't the bride or even our mother; it was me, her younger sibling.

My happiness stemmed from the imagined freedom and relaxation I would gain after her wedding. She had always been the studious one, never indulging in any playful activities. I, on the other hand, was perpetually the target of her strictness, making us, in essence, enemies within our own home. She often forbade me from getting what I desired, and her scoldings had become an irritating part of my daily life. I couldn't escape her rigid rules, and my anger towards her festered with each passing day.



The marriage ceremony concluded, and the time came for her to bid farewell to our family and relatives. I watched her with teary eyes. In that moment, she looked at me and said, "I am leaving, but whenever you need me, don't hesitate to call. I'm here for you."

Her words brought me to tears. In that instant, I realized the profound depth of her love and affection, which I had so wrongly mistaken for hate. Many years have passed since then, and now I know that she is the best support system I could ever hope for. I wish I could turn back time, return to our childhood, and be gentler and kinder towards her.



Shifana AP

### **The Power of a Simple "Can't"**

**I**t was a quiet morning. The sun gently peeked through my window, and the comforting aroma of my mother's special chutney filled the air. That day, I felt something distinct, as if destiny was waiting to unfold. My mother stood in the doorway, her voice soft and vulnerable, as she suddenly asked me for a favor. Even though it was a simple request, I hesitated. Suffering from morning sickness, I couldn't imagine going out. So, I simply said, "I can't." At that moment, I had no idea about the regret I was about to carry through my life.

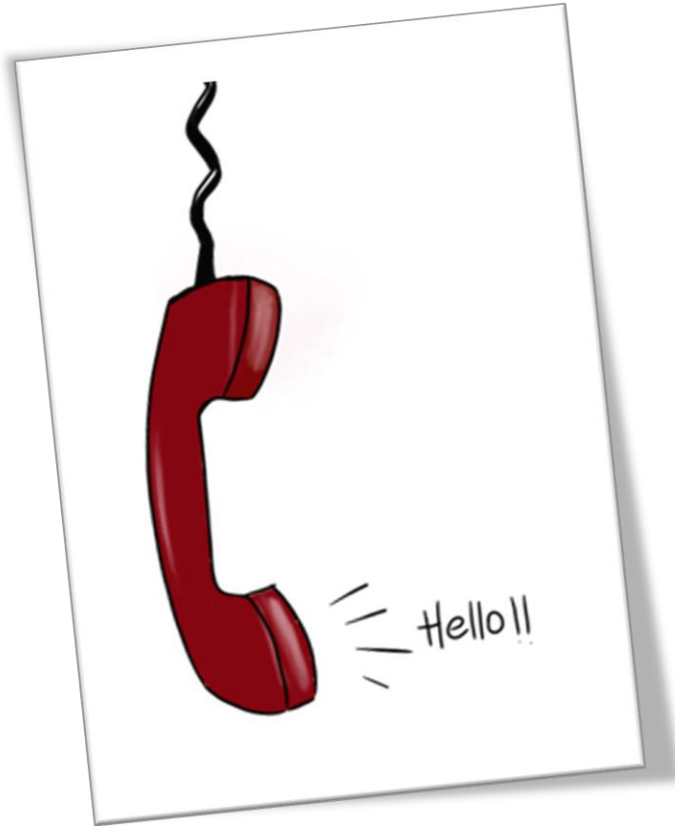
Her eyes welled up with tears. "I have never spoken such a word to my mother in my entire life," she said, her voice trembling. "And I never will." Then, she quietly added, "Why am I raising you with so many struggles?" She went on to do the task herself. I soon forgot the incident, but someday it began to haunt my memory. I don't even recall the specific favor she asked, but the echo of her words and the sight of her tears still bring me pain.

As days turned into years, I couldn't shake the guilt, even after fifteen years. It wasn't about the favor itself, but about missing a chance to show my love. Somehow, after all

those years, one day I finally spoke to her about my regret and apologized. She simply smiled and hugged me, saying, "A mother can't stay angry with her child." She didn't even remember the incident. But I remember everything, even now. The regret I felt that day.

That was the day that taught me the power of our words and actions. A simple favor can hold so much love. And our relationship, I realized, can survive disagreements and challenges, even through lingering regrets.





Athulya

### **A Painful Phone Call**

**W**hen we speak of our mothers, we often find it impossible to put our feelings into words. A mother is an emotion in herself. I am someone who is deeply emotionally invested in a mother's love. It was a heartbreaking experience for me, one that made me curse that day in my life after I truly understood my mother's boundless love.

My grandmother is elderly and has been suffering from age-related illnesses. My mother used to visit her frequently. During the Corona pandemic, we were advised to stay home, which meant my mother couldn't visit my grandmother. In those days, my mother was constantly tense and gloomy. I didn't pay much attention, as we all felt helpless given the circumstances. One day, my mother asked me for my phone to call Grandma. At that moment, I was engrossed in my phone and didn't let her use it. She was helpless because her own phone was damaged. She kept asking for my phone, and her persistence made me angry. I lost control and couldn't hold my tongue. Some of my words deeply saddened her.

A couple of months later, while I was staying at my aunt's home, I received upsetting news: my mother wasn't well, and it would be best if I came home the next day. I was in a place with poor internet connection and couldn't reach my mom, which made the tension almost unbearable. That night, I was incredibly tense, my mind consumed by thoughts of my mother. In that moment, I felt suffocated by her absence. It was then that I truly understood how much my mother must have suffered when she couldn't even hear her own mother's voice. I cursed myself and silently confessed my fault to both Mom and Grandma.

The next day, I arrived home and took great care of my mother. I punished myself by doing all the domestic chores, not letting my mother do anything. I know that such punishment isn't enough for what I did, but I performed these tasks as a way to alleviate my regret. Whenever I receive a call from Grandma, that incident still fills my heart with guilt.



Neethu

### **The Regretful Moment**

**I**n life, we all have many things we regret, just as we do many good and bad things. I, too, have made many mistakes that I deeply regret. I often find myself careless in my decisions, which sometimes leaves me feeling very sad.

Life is short, and no one can live without some form of regret. Time is also incredibly valuable; as the saying goes, "Lost time is never found again," and this is a profound truth. I used to have a bad habit: I wasted a lot of time. I spent far too many hours in front of the television and on my mobile phone.

It was an unhappy day for me when I was sixteen, during my higher secondary studies. The biggest problem then was my lack of concentration on academics. I wasted so much time, engaging in other activities and completely neglecting my studies. I was constantly

scrolling through my mobile phone. My mother would always advise me, saying, "Time is very valuable, and you should focus on your studies."

Unfortunately, I often got angry with her for this. But when exam time arrived, I realized I hadn't completed my portions, and it was incredibly difficult. I couldn't answer the questions thoroughly. When the results were published, I was shocked. I hadn't achieved full marks.

At that moment, I thought, "If I had studied very well, I could have gotten full marks." Another thought followed: "If I had listened to my mother, I would have passed the exam with full marks." I punished myself, understanding that no one else was to blame for my mistake. After that incident, I began to listen to my mother and utilized every moment effectively. Our mothers truly show us the right path. Now, I fully realize that time is a valuable thing. So, don't waste your time.





Sreelakshmi

### **An Unforgettable Regret**

**M**y life has been marked by many crises, and even more by regrets. I've often felt profound sadness about them, frequently piercing my heart like a stabbing pain. What I've come to believe is the foundation of regret or guilt is the beautiful pain that follows, a pain that gnaws at us daily.

It was an unhappy day for me. In the morning, as usual, coolie workers were heading to their jobs through the paddy fields, and some beautiful ladies were engaged in their routines—bathing their children and preparing food. The air was calm, and the sweet scent of the breeze played with the dark, gloomy clouds. *Why were the clouds gloomy? Were they waiting for someone?* These questions came to my mind when I saw the dark

clouds. It was shortly before my tenth birthday, and I was excited for another year of joy. But then, my grandma fell ill.

My grandmother became sick when I was in fifth standard. Everyone spoke of her condition as serious, and they were all worried. But I didn't take it seriously; instead, I continued playing with friends, eating, and sleeping. My mother told me Grandma wanted to see me and talk a few times. I didn't grasp the gravity of the situation. My mind kept telling me, "You're just a child, don't worry, nothing will happen." And so, I didn't go near my grandma; I rejected her wish. Two days later, my mother informed me that Grandma was no more. I was shocked and started screaming. I felt truly ashamed and angry with myself when I thought about what I had done.

My body shivered when I heard the shocking news, and I felt as if I were dying mentally. The calm nature around me seemed to turn dull. The dark clouds began to cry, their tears covering my house. My mind battled my heart, constantly blaming me. I couldn't find comfort for my soul. Even after eleven years, I still feel discomfort when I think about that incident. That was the mistake that led me to lose my grandma, and I couldn't fulfill her wish. Now, I long to go back to my past and correct the huge mistake I made. I know it's too late, but I am now sure that I won't repeat the same mistake. I wish there was some way I could bring her back into my life, meet her, and talk with her more often.



Afra Farhan

### Unforgotten Memory

**I**t was a joyous day for us. We were all gathered in our living room, filled with laughter and shared memories, both happy and sad. It had been a long time since my family members had all come together. That's when an incident from my past crossed my mind.

I was in ninth grade, an age when small matters often ignite big fights with siblings. I had an argument with my sister, who is five years younger than me, for some unknown reason. I was fuming. I took the sketch colors from the cupboard. She adored drawing in books and on walls, though she had stopped drawing on walls due to Mom's frequent yelling. It was then that an idea lit up my mind, and I was overjoyed by its mischievous potential.

That night, when my mom came home, I heard her yelling, "Who drew on the walls?!" I walked cautiously and peeked from upstairs. I could see the flames of anger in her eyes. "Whoever did it, come clean now, or you will be punished!" Mom declared. To seek my revenge, I put all the blame on my innocent sister. I watched as tears welled up in her eyes while my mother scolded her. At that moment, I felt a twisted sense of contentment.

Years later, that memory haunts me like a ghost. My heart confesses the sin, but my words have never been able to apologize to either my sister or my mother. It still appears in my dreams and will forever remain hidden in my heart. Returning to reality, I smiled gently and spent some quality time with them, reminiscing about other childhood events.



Sivakami

### **Stranded in Manali**

**T**here will probably never be another day in my life where I have been so utterly scared. It was during the final year trip of my degree, and we were off to Manali—a long, ten-day journey. I can still vividly recall those days as some of the most enjoyable of my life. One day, in particular, stands out. After a lot of deliberation, the decision to go to Manali was made. Those ten days were ours, free from all tensions and worries. I enjoyed myself immensely, and the trip truly brought about some changes in my life. Yet, one of those days still sends a shiver down my spine when I think about it. Imagine being stranded in a place where you don't even know the language. How terrifying must that be? I had a similar experience.



We were returning after visiting the Manali market. There was a local function happening, and the area was swarming with people. We had been told to visit the market and be back at the hotel by 11:30 PM. We were quite late because of the event. I had gone alone, navigating my way through the dense crowd. I found myself unable to move forward, completely stuck. My friends, assuming I was right behind them, walked ahead. I stood there, utterly lost and unsure of what to do next. I didn't have my phone with me; we had left our phones at the hotel, fearing theft. I couldn't ask anyone for help because I didn't even know their language. All around me were the local people of Manali. In that desperate situation, with nothing to do, someone approached me and asked, "What's wrong?" It was a Malayali! That single question fueled the burning panic inside me. I explained everything to him. He had been doing business there for five years, and his name was Siraj, from Kannur. He helped me without hesitation. The Manali market was two kilometers from our hotel. He walked with me and helped me navigate out of the crowded market. My friends, by then, were terrified, having realized I was missing. He kept me safe and reunited me with them. We can never truly know who will be there to help us in an emergency. A complete stranger, whose good heart guided me back to my friends, proved this. In this way, we cannot predict who will come to our aid in unexpected situations.



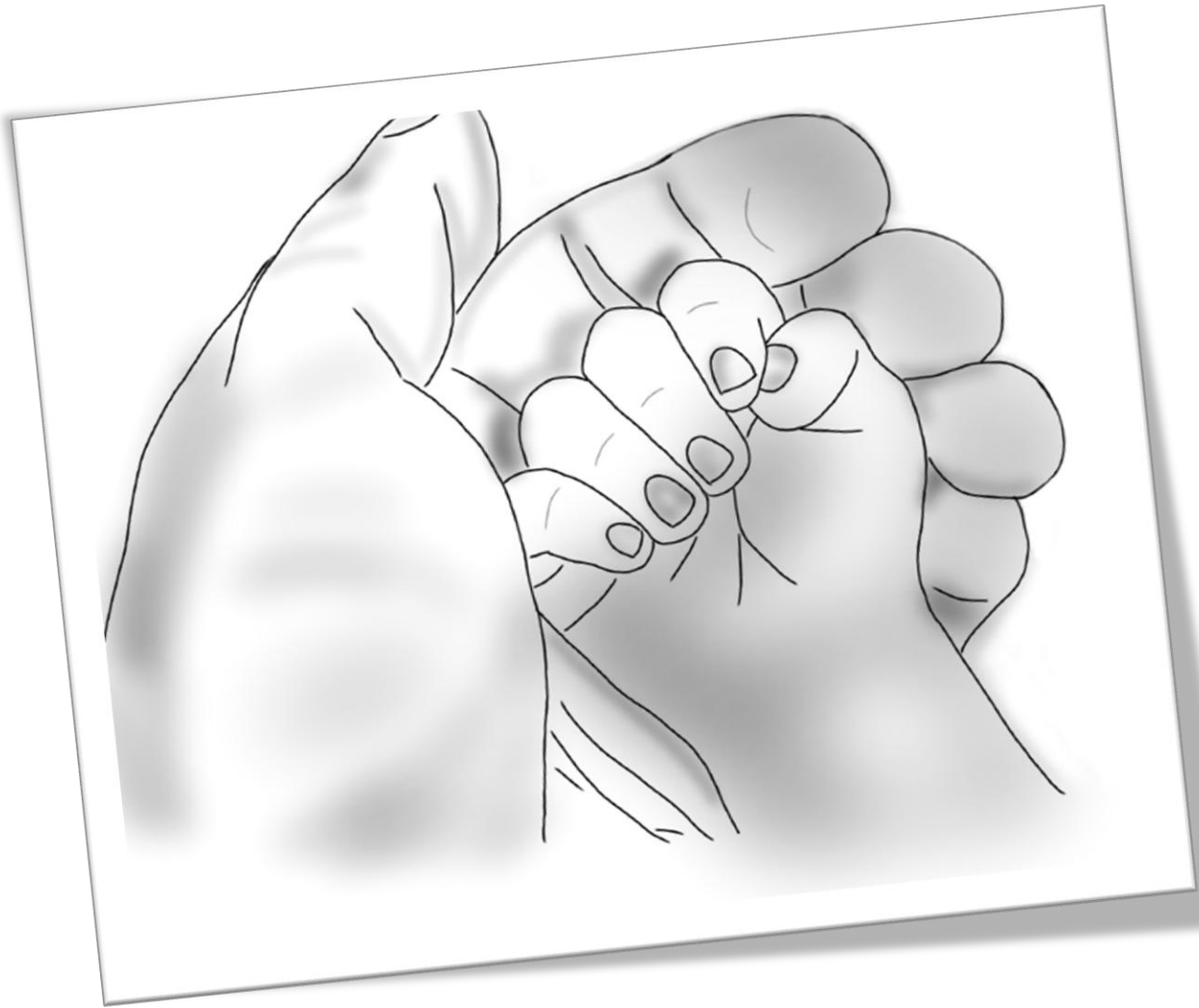
Nahla Muhammad

### **The Last Kiss**

**F**amiliar and unfamiliar faces streamed through the door. In a shared silence, they gazed at the body, covered in white, before turning to leave. Suddenly, I remembered. I had forgotten to give one last kiss to the body I had cared for during its final days, before it surrendered to death.

My feet stumbled as I tried to walk towards the body for that last kiss. The overwhelming silence in the house of death transported me back to the cherished memories of my childhood—a time that was inseparable from the face of my grandmother, who was now gone. She was a strong woman. Her dedication as a mother was truly remarkable; she devoted her entire life to her family, without even considering her own likes and dislikes. The taste of the food she prepared could never be replaced by any other. These memories reminded me of her boundless love, and the tender caress of her hands made me feel touched once more.

When I emerged from my thoughts, I realized it was too late. People were already lifting the body to take it for burial. The profound pain of losing a loved one had stolen my greatest desire: to give one last kiss to the face that had symbolized love and care for me. Yet, in my thoughts, I continue to believe that I did kiss her for the last time, or else it would have haunted me always.



Sreebishna

### **The Day My World Shifted**

**M**y niece's birth was a surprise, arriving weeks before her due date on December 10th. The day before, while I was away for a college exam, my sister started feeling pains at home. My mother, having just made my sister's favorite "chakka upperi," dismissed it as simple gas trouble. After all, she was still in her eighth month.

Yet, my sister endured the escalating pain until evening with a small, unwavering smile on her face. When I returned home, that quiet strength was the first thing I noticed. It wasn't until the next day, after she had been born, that I truly understood the power it took for her to smile through it all.

The call from my father announcing her birth brought a wave of relief so immense that I forgot to even ask if they were both okay. I had to call him right back, my heart pounding until he confirmed they were fine. In that moment, I knew she was a treasure—the most precious gift my sister could ever give me. When we finally saw her in the hospital, a tiny form with a dusting of hair, my world shifted. I felt a fierce, motherly protectiveness, torn between a college trip with friends and staying with her. She became my priority.

At first, she wouldn't come to me, and I'd fight back tears of disappointment. But now, she searches for me the moment she hears my voice. Whenever she makes a sound like "mma," my mother, father, sister, brother, and I all feel like she is calling for us. She is not just a treasure to me; she is the gem of our entire family.





Anaina Prakash

### **The Hot Water Bag**

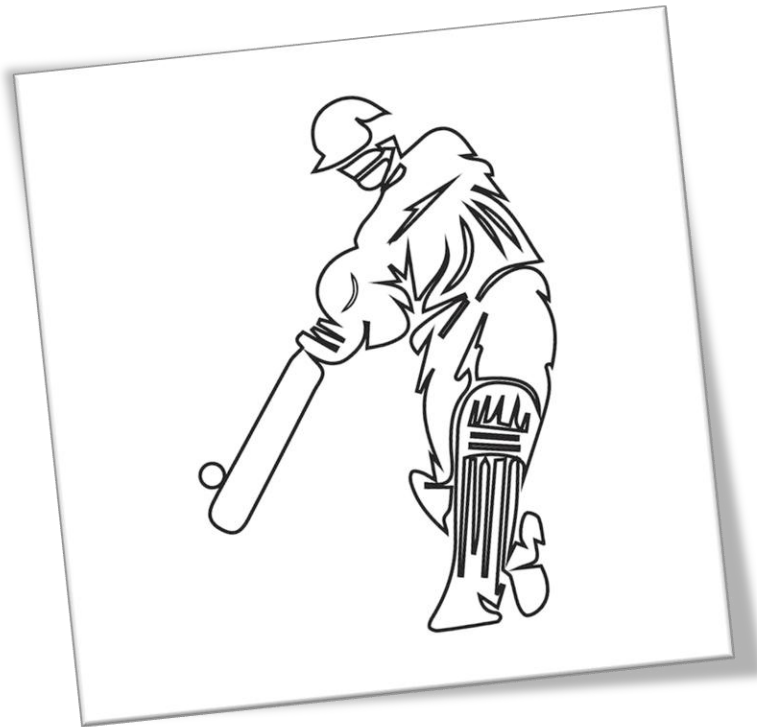
**M**y first period arrived on a dark, rainy Sunday, waking me with a violent churn. My father, with a clumsy joke about piles, couldn't grasp my agony. Desperate, I recalled my sister's remedies: first, a hot water bag. My mother's presence, quiet and unassuming, became an irritating obstacle as I clumsily sought relief.

When the hot water bag failed, a new hope sparked: fenugreek water. The kitchen became my battlefield as I brewed the ancient remedy. But upon my return, the glass was empty. "Amma... did you drink my fenugreek water?" I demanded, holding a glass of hot water, my voice tight with disbelief. My mother, holding her head high, calmly admitted, "Yes, I drank it. It was left uncovered, I thought no one needed it."

Her casual admission ignited something in me. Before I could think, the hot water in my hand splashed, drenching her face. Shock immobilized me. But then, she was there, embracing me, her wetness a mix of water and tears, seeping into my own. "Don't be afraid," she murmured, "I understand. It was worse for me too." She offered to make more fenugreek water, a gesture of boundless compassion.

I slept, the pain overshadowed by the weight of my actions. Later, consumed by guilt, I sought her out, grasping her leg, murmuring apologies. Feigning misunderstanding, she placed her foot in my lap. "If you're rubbing my legs well," she said gently, "please do both. They are very painful." My childhood momentarily faded as I quietly obeyed. The

memory of that wet embrace, the raw emotion of the moment, remains a persistent echo—a sharp lesson etched into my heart.



Ilthija T

### **The Rain-Soaked Happiness**

**A**s a devoted cricket enthusiast, M.S. Dhoni isn't just my favorite player; his presence on the field is pure joy. The yearning to see him play has always been a deep part of me.

November 5th, 2017, a Tuesday, felt like a dream. My 7 AM alarm ushered in a day I'd spent months anticipating. Twelve hours later, I'd finally witness my hero.

Trivandrum was buzzing. Stepping into the stadium, the roar of the crowd, the vibrant banners, and the blinding lights made me question if it was real. But then, Mother Nature intervened. Heavy rain descended, revealing its cruel side. The game was delayed. Each time the pitch was cleared, the rain returned, relentless. This cycle of hope and disappointment lasted four grueling hours, testing every fan's patience. Yet, my hope never wavered.

Finally, pre-match preparations began. The teams and captains appeared for the toss, then lined up for the national anthem. As the Indian players emerged, my heart leaped. There he was – the face I'd only seen on screen. A boy nearby screamed, "Here comes the Thala!" My wish to see him in blue was finally real. India batted first, and Dhoni, ever

the finisher, came in for the fifth-wicket partnership, closing out the innings perfectly. India won by eight runs.

Leaving the stadium, I was on cloud nine. To have witnessed the entire Indian team, and especially Captain Cool was a moment any true cricket fans dream of.