

Odia Raja Magazine

5th Edition



9th Odia Raja Festival - London 2016

Something to say

Hello All,

It's time again this year with loads of enthusiasm, we are proud to celebrate the most ever Raja festival for the 9th calendar year in London. This means a lot to us as Odia community living far from the Land of Temples, Odisha, a cultural state with a maximum number of festivals (In Odia we say "Bara Masa, Tera Parba").

The festival brings us together with full of dedication and great effort from the members of OCAL organising committee and extend their support with various works performed three months in advance. They are the pillars of the success for the Raja festival every year.

Our kids have always shown their enthusiasm for the event and participate in various activities to showcase their talent in the past years and they continue to do so. We really thankful to them for their time and effort.

This magazine is a celebration of the Raja festival which provides a communication platform to the Odia people living in United Kingdom. Most critically this also exposes our younger generation to Odia tradition and culture by facilitating an opportunity to demonstrate their writing talents and skills.

My sincere thanks to all contributors and the members of OCAL for making these celebrations a reality. We also thanks to the Odia friends and family who joins us every year for the Raja festival.

We hope you enjoy reading this magazine and continue to encourage us and our children to publish more and more in the years to come.

Lastly, I am really thankful to Sabitha for the dedication and effort to collate the magazine in very wonderful way and the support from the Sarthak and Vandana to help in designing the pages.

Wish you all a fun filled Raja festival celebration!!!

Jay Jagarnath,

Umakant Rout and Sabitha Sutrave Das

Odia Cultural Association London (OCAL)



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Raja

By Yanna Mishra – 9 years

Raja is a festival based mostly around girls
Unmarried women could adorn themselves with dresses and pearls.

On this day ladies do merrymaking
They eat podapitha and get a break from hard work and cooking.

People can play indoor and outdoor activities
This is a great day of festivities.

While girls play on swings tied to trees outside
Others decide to play cards and ludo inside.

Kabbadi games are organised for men
But that's not even half the fun to the women.

On the final day which is called Vasamuti Snan is when ladies bath the grinding stone
Raja is basically a girl's zone.

The grinding stone is a symbol of Mother Earth
This festival is definitely worth.

The first day is Pahilli, the third is called Basi and the second day is the actual Raja day
The girls like the festival so much that for this day they pray

Altogether this festival is great for a fun dance and sing
I hope you have a great Raja morning.

-ଚାରୋଟି କବିତା -

Dr Jayshree Nanda

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Value of Festivals

Anchal Mohanty

Once upon a time, in the capital city of India there were two twins called Maddie and Alyvia. They loved spending time together. But one thing was different about the twins that was Alyvia loved Festivals but in the other hand Madie hated festivals. That was odd but Madie had different problems and reasons. Firstly, she did not like to sit and worship the god for hours. Secondly, she did not like to travel for miles without watching television. So Madie thought Festivals were boring and she never tried it.

One day Alyvia and her parents were getting ready for a Festival. Madie said "have a nice time at the Festival mum, dad and Alyvia" "you too" said mum. Alyvia thought" poor Maddie .I wish I could make it up to her to realise how fun, exiting, wonderful and enjoyable Festivals are."Come on Alyvia Honey" dad said. Alyvia had a lot of fun in the Festival but she was still thinking about Madie and how she could enjoy different Festivals too.

So Alyvia decided to talk to Madie .Madie said "you know Alyvia; I hate festivals but I also hate living at home without my parents and my sister. For that, I think I will go and try the festivals however, I am not going to try again if I do not like it. Alyvia agreed and said "I am sure you will like it Maddie." "I hope so" said Maddie. "Don't worry Maddie there is another Festival in two weeks' time" said Alyvia.

Two weeks passed very soon." It is time for the Festival" shouted mum. Maddie was worried and nervous but she was glad that she could spend time with her own family. So was Alyvia because she had to show her sister the value of Festivals. "I am going to show Maddie how important Festivals are" said Alyvia to herself confidently.



My Riddles

By Mahan Das

Questions:

- I. Poor people have it. Rich people need it. What is it?
- II. What is the longest word in the dictionary?
- III. What kind of room has no doors or windows?
- IV. A man is cleaning windows on a skyscraper and slips and falls. Yet he is not hurt. How is this possible?
- V. A short man lives on the 25th floor. But he takes the lift to the 13th floor. Why?
- VI. In a one-storey house, there were pink walls, pink tables, pink beds, pink everything! What colour were the stairs?
- VII. The more you take of me, the more you leave behind. What am I?

Answers:

- I. Nothing.
- II. Smiles, because there is a mile between each 's'.
- III. A mushroom!
- IV. He was inside the skyscraper.
- V. He could not reach the 25th button.
- VI. There are no stairs in a one-storey



Rainbow

By Sanvi Samal

Once upon a time there lived a little girl named Mia. Mia was four years old. She lived in a little cottage with her mum and dad. One sunny morning Mia's daddy said "as it's a sunny day why don't we go out for a walk?" Mia's mummy said "what a good idea!" As they were walking, it began to rain. Luckily they brought their umbrella with them. Suddenly Mia spotted a rainbow. She asked her mummy what that colourful thing was. Her mummy said that it's a rainbow. Red as fire, orange as oranges, yellow as the sun, green as grass, blue as the sky. Mia asked her mummy that why rainbow doesn't appear in the sky always. Her mummy said "when the sun and rain come at the same time, then only a rainbow appears." Mia asked her parents if they could walk towards the rainbow. Her parents said "yes". While the family was marching towards the rainbow, the rainbow moved to the next hill.

Mia asked her daddy why the rainbow moved to the next hill. Mia's daddy said jokingly that at the end of a rainbow you will find a pot of gold and the rainbow doesn't want you to take the pot of gold away. Mia said "never mind, but the rainbow is as colourful as my lovely dress and it was a visual treat to me" Everyone laughed and they all lived happily ever after.

The End

Meet Robin, My Pet Servant

By Vidip Sahu

"Yes!" I shouted, when I finished making my robotic servant in my tree house, AKA 'The Lab'. I named him Robin and when the sunlight shone on him, his gold metal glimmered as if he was an angel. His square orange eyes look determined to serve me. He was just *perfect*! If I was hungry, I'd just type an item of food and hey presto! If you need anything, like a football, again just type the word and there you are, you've got your very own football. Every time he makes me happy or serves me well, I give him data chips; if he reaches over 100 data chips, he evolves, but he will only agree if he deserves it, in other words, I cannot give him data chips randomly. Robin has a certain evolving stage. He can evolve three times and then he can live his own life. We are best friends, that's for sure!

The Jabberwocky

Dishita Rout

Tw'as dark and the eerie forest,
Did whisper and rustle in the wind,
All gnarled were the trees,
And the creatures dashed away...

“Beware the Jabberwock my son,
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch,
Beware the Jubjub bird and shun,
The menacing Snatch Bander.”

He took his majestic sword in hand,
Long time the menacing foe he sought,
So he rested by the Willow Tree,
And stood awhile in thought.

And as in harmonic thought he stood,
The Jabberwock with eyes of flame,
Came barging through the gloomy woods,
And murmured as it came.

One, two! One, two! and through and through,
The majestic blade went snicker-snack,
He left it dead, with its head,
And went triumphantly back.

“And have you slain the Jabberwock,
Come to my arms my heroic boy,
Oh fabulous day. Hip hip hurray!
He chuckled in his joy.

Tw'as dark and the eerie forest,
Did whisper and rustle in the wind,
All gnarled were the trees,
And the creatures dashed away.





THE GIFT OF LOVE



By Anchal Mohanty

Once upon a time in the capital city of India - in the busy town - used to live a young man called Keshav. he was quite poor but he was more than happy with what he earned

Early in the morning when the sun rises in the horizon and the sing-song birds start to sing Keshav would start his long journey towards the woods hoping to find some nice and dry wood to sell in the busy market place as fire wood .

Every single day he continued the same process and earned six rupees (Indian money) a day two rupees for food two rupees for cloths and he saved two in a vessel.


A month passed and Keshav decided to check his vessel (early one morning) and was enormously surprised the amazing miracle. Suddenly the vessel was full !

Rather unusually , Keshav stared at the vessel (still amazed) . As much exited Keshav was he was confused at the same time . He was hugely proud of himself for saving up such amount of money but he had no idea how to use all this money. So he kept on thinking.

After quite a long time an idea popped to his head; if he could not use it for his needs why not use it for the kindest, noblest, loyalist, helpful women in the whole country. Such person deserves this kind of treat.

So he visited to the best jewellery maker in the land (Raj). There was nothing more a women would love than a beautiful little diamond bracelet.

Raj was very pleased to see Keshav but a little bit astonished. He wanted to ask Keshav quite a few questions about his arrival. But he let him settle down first; then he began...



"Dear Keshav, what is the reason for your early arrival?" Raj began calmly as his voice melted smoothly as he spoke.

"Raj my brother it will be wonderful if you will be able to make a dazzling little diamond bracelet for me." Said Keshav.

"Um...are you sure Keshav? It will cost quite a lot of money and may be a poor fellow like you would not be able to afford it." Muttered Raj.

Keshav thought for a moment and replied confidently. "Of course Raj, money is not a problem. I am quite sure I will be able to afford it." Keshav then handed the vessel to the jewellery maker.

Raj stared at the vessel (just the way Keshav had). Keshav gave a little giggle and spoke slowly. "don't be surprised Mr. Raj; it's only a day work."


"I am greatly sorry Keshav, I am quite disappointed on myself for not believing a truthful man like you." Raj pleaded sorrowfully. "Everybody makes mistakes. It's quite normal." Keshav said understanding his poor friend's mistake.

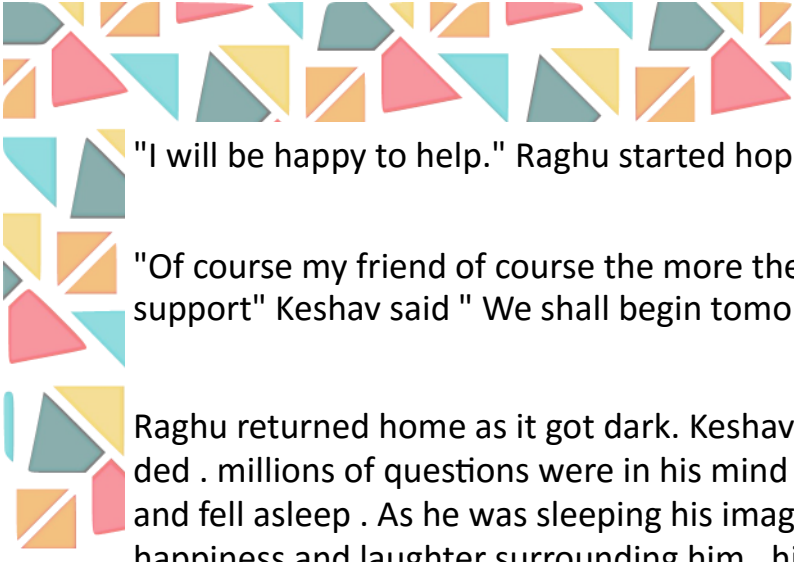
After an hour or two the beautiful diamond bracelet was complete and ready. So Keshav waved his friend goodbye and headed back to his little brown cottage. When he finally reached the cottage he carefully placed it on the table and wrapped it with some colourful wrap paper.

He knew the perfect man that could find the woman he was looking for. Raghu the young traveller. Raghu was a kind and friendly traveller who travelled all around the country (even the ones Keshav had never heard of before). He must know a variety of women who were similar to Keshav's thought.

So he visited Raghu and Raghu agreed delight to tell him who is the best woman who deserves this lovely gift. "There are quite a few women I have in my mind but my result is Queen Meghna, she is the best among all. I mostly visit her on Saturdays when I pass her palace to my father.

Keshav said as you know Queen Meghna so nicely I will be extremely pleased if you will be honoured to present this little gift right here to her. Keshav pleaded frantically. Raghu gave a little laugh and agreed "of course I will do it for my close friend Keshav. I will not miss this moment if I even could" Raghu laughed softly.





"I will be happy to help." Raghu started hopefully.

"Of course my friend of course the more the merrier and anyway I would like a lot of support" Keshav said " We shall begin tomorrow morning"

Raghu returned home as it got dark. Keshav fluttered his eyes , his anxious heart thudded . millions of questions were in his mind trying to be answered. He closed his eyes and fell asleep . As he was sleeping his imagination dragged him to the dream world happiness and laughter surrounding him , his heart was full of joy.

after the good night sleep Keshav woke up with a fresh start . Just as he was going to open the door to hear the birds sing when he heard a knock." who could it be so early" ka Keshav wondered. as he opened the door he saw a army of villagers standing in front of him with great big smiles in their faces. At the front of the heard was his dear friend Raghu with his wife Nina just next to him calming a sweet little girl in her arms (Tisa) .

Few months ago Nina was blessed with a the little girl. She **had a** joyful little soul just like her father (Raghu).


" dear Keshav I invited the whole village to help you decorate the little cottage for the queen and everybody agreed to lend you some of their valuable items to decorate " said Raghu.

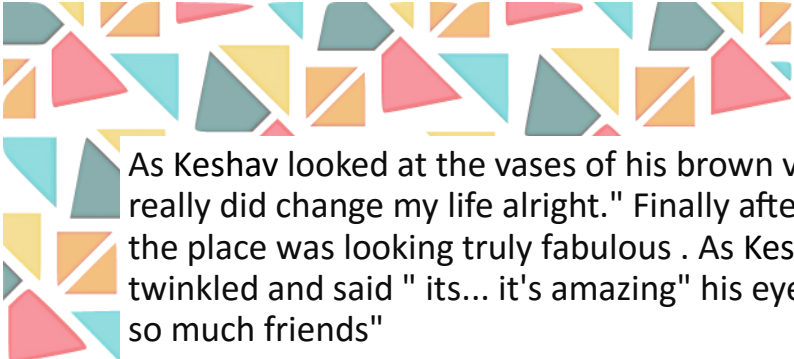
"oh my friend u really are the greatest friend anybody could ever have " Keshav replied

The next day Keshav saw Raghu running down to his cottage. "Oh my God! Oh my God!"Raghu patted. "Queen Meghna herself wants to see you and she said she adored the gift". "That's amazing news" Keshav began excitedly "I better decorate my cottage beautifully for her to settle in."

" so what are we waiting for let's begin the queen will arrive this evening at three " Keshav smiled and hugged his friend with pleasure.

Ever body began return to their homes to start bringing all of their decorations. As time passed the cottage soon started to look like a beautiful palace full of light but it was missing one thing its queen . every little inch of the cottage was truly magnificent and simply wonderful .The walls were painted light peach with golden stars sparkling. There were glittering lamps with little crystal diamonds hanging from the golden base and handmade paintings with a elegant touch. When you enter the cottage you could smell the fresh touch of lavender and some garden daisies in the side. There were also detailed vases with colourful designs .





As Keshav looked at the vases of his brown vessel and giggled softly " That vessel really did change my life alright." Finally after an hour of hard work and tiredness the place was looking truly fabulous . As Keshav stared at his cottage his eyes twinkled and said " its... it's amazing" his eyes teared " thank you... thank you so... so much friends"

"Now now it's no time to get sad and cry with happiness my friend the queen will come soon . The queen will come soon . You will not want her to see you cry or would you" joked Raghu.

Keshav laughed gently " of course I will not silly" everybody cheered . then suddenly there was a gentle knock outside .

" That must be the queen" Nina said excitedly.

Keshav opened the door his eyes met a beautiful young lady's face . " you must be Keshav I am queen Meghan " the beautiful queen said as her voice smoothed

" Yes my lady I would be Keshav " Keshav bowed . the queen giggled softly at Keshav's posh words .

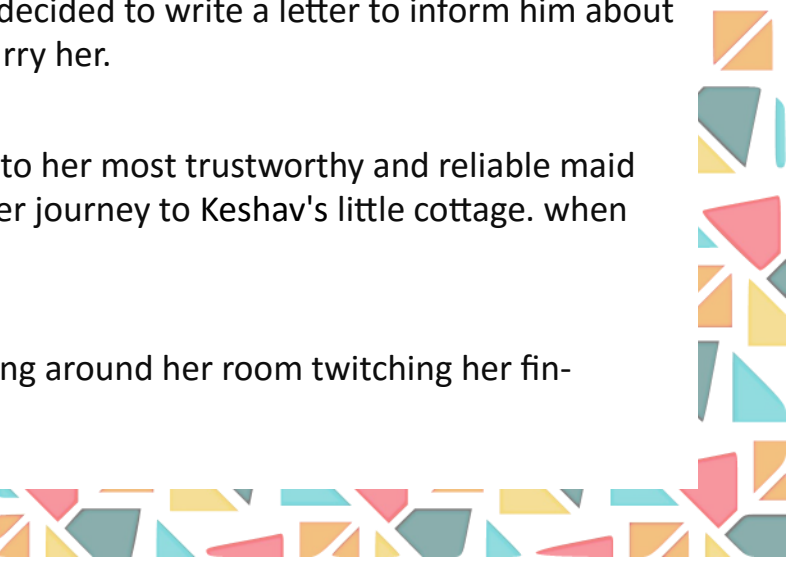
Keshav made the queen comfortable then they started chattering and gossiping about each other's lifestyle. It was a lovely evening but as night fell Keshav waved the queen good bye .

Somewhere hiding in Keshav 's heart was true love and care for queen Meghan but Keshav knew that the rich and beautiful queen like her will not want to marry a poor man like him so it will be extremely foolish of him to think he was capable of marrying the queen . But that thought did not stop Keshav from thinking about the queen all night long. At last his eyes teared as he sighed with sadness and decided to sleep.

The queen Meghna in the other hand was no different from poor old Keshav. She herself had fallen in love with the poor man so she decided to write a letter to inform him about her love for him and ask the kind man to marry her.

The next morning the queen gave the letter to her most trustworthy and reliable maid in her kingdom (Heera) . The maid started her journey to Keshav's little cottage. when Heera was gone the queen

was sweating hard with panic and was walking around her room twitching her finger and twisting her long black hair.



Keshav heard a knock when he was getting ready to the woods. When he opened the door in front of him (face-to-face) was standing queen Meghan's maid who was holding a light pink envelope with red hearts at the top.

The maid gently handed the envelope to Keshav and bowed lightly like a fairy made from light colourful feathers. Keshav bowed back , smiled and started opening the envelope . As he read the letter aloud he burst with happiness and joy and said to the maid to inform queen Meagan he was more than pleased to marry her.

" when the queen heard this news she hugged the maid tight and gave her his most precious necklace which she received by her father before his death. " we shall fix this marriage as soon as possible" queen Meagan began.

Few weeks later...

Raghu (Keshav's best friend) was standing in front of the marriage hall facing Keshav and queen Meghna and wishing happily married couple with his family.

From this day long queen Meghna and king Keshav ruled the land with justice, freedom and love.



Child labour – A Menace

By Gaurav Meher

Today in the world around 168 million children who are less than 18 years, are being forced to be labourers across over 190 countries. These poor children do not want to work, they should be in school learning new things so why do you businesses out there think that you can just employ any children you like, just because you don't have to pay them that much or nothing at all. Most of these cases happen throughout Asia-pacific and Africa. There have been cases like this with a lot of famous, as well as infamous companies/businesses and even normal adults. There was a case in India when a girl called Rashmi, a village girl who met Raju. Raju told her that she would get a very good education in the city so Rashmi accepted. Instead of this, Raju used her to do all the maid work in the house of a rich family and Raju gained all the money. Later on, a group of children came to know and saved her when Raju locked her in a closet as a punishment for informing the police. The children broke in while all their families had gone for a get together and Raju went as well. He then saw the children breaking in through security cameras, and he rushed and by the time he got there Rashmi had been rescued and the police had been called. Raju was then jailed for child labour. There was also another girl in Bangladesh who worked 8 hours a day, 6 days a week, processing 150 garments an hour. The worst thing was that she only earned 53

cents a day. She quoted that at work she felt, "very tired and exhausted." She even sometimes falls asleep while standing up. There is an extremely famous company known for making some of the best electronics on the market, which has also been found using child labour. Apple has been caught with using child labour numerous times in its supply chain. There was the Chinese chain caught with employing 74 children who were below 16 years of age. There is also a very young boy in Gaza who was 13 years old and was forced to work so that his family of four brothers and parents were fed. He himself has said, "I have to work, earn money to help support my four brothers and parents." This young teenager should have been in school learning things instead of being stuck with cars, repairing them. All of the things I have mentioned here can stop with some simple changes. Child labourers have fallen by only 40% for girls and a very disappointing 25% for boys. If the world continues with child labour, a lot of bad things can happen. This can result in the future generation being very unintelligent because of the lack of education that children got, just because they were forced to due to parents not earning enough or children being blackmailed.



Virtual Classroom

Project work Synopsys by Sarthak Das

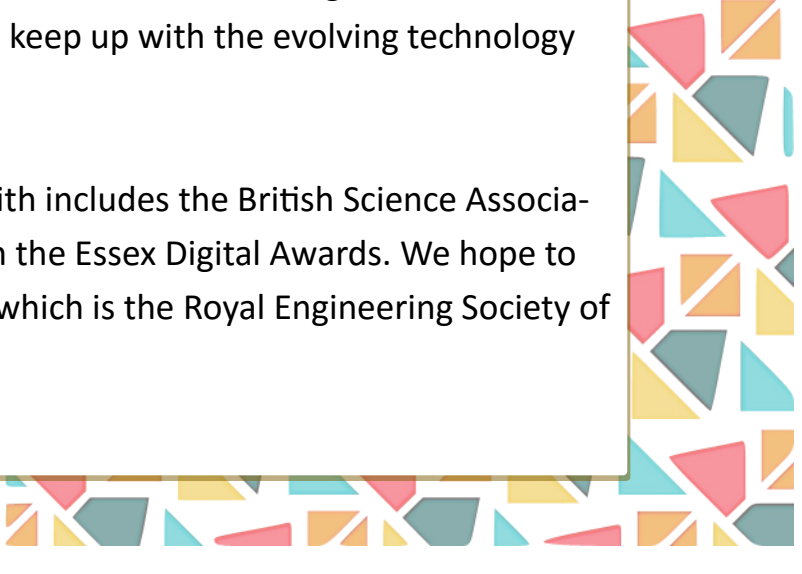
After seeing many articles and websites claiming to be unique and easy to run Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) systems, we realised many of them are far from reality. So we attempted to make one of our own and fix the missing connect between teacher, student, parents and school.

There are many problems that we face in school and in school office but what if one simple website could fix it all? The Virtual Classroom is a software developed over six months by Sarthak Das and Ben Bave. It aims to fix communication gap between teacher, student, parents and school administration.

The website contains many useful features as a cloud drive which allows files to be accessed from anywhere and can be used to share files with teachers and students. A calendar mode allows students to keep track of when homework is due, as I'm sure many current and past students have found this a major difficulty. Furthermore a online word processor will be available so students can work on homework if they do not have a word processor at home. Not only this but many schools use e-mails which is vastly outdated compared to the current ever evolving technology we introduced a forum section similar to text messaging which is much more familiar to the millennial generation. An On-Demand report system is also being implemented that allows parents to carefully track their son/daughters progress in their respective subjects.

Our payment system is based on a pay-as-you-go system, so the more storage space you need the more you pay. We also hope to open this to developers that allow 3rd party apps to be used this would attract a wider range of costumers and make the software ever changing to keep up with the evolving technology and needs.

Our projects has already won 2 prizes with includes the British Science Association Silver award and Second position in the Essex Digital Awards. We hope to win another competition in July the 1st which is the Royal Engineering Society of Essex.





Shadow

By Dishita Rout

This was one of the most terrifying nightmares I have ever had in my life. Here is what happened.....

One night at midnight, the moon was shining brightly, waking me up from my deep sleep and making me think that it was morning. However, during that time i heard a weird and unexpected sound by my window. It was the same one that was played all the time, which sounded a little like a flute. When I opened my eyes, I saw the silhouette of a clown on my bedroom wall, as if it was lurking on the streets of London. The look of it was very creepy. I closed my eyes and thought to myself, “Am I in a dream or is this absolutely real?” I looked to my right and saw exactly what the object was.

It had a bald head with bits of hair on the sides, and dagger-teeth that were as sharp as needles. Freaky, illuminated-green eyes looked straight towards me, to find where to aim it’s bloodstained knife. I lay still, neither moving an inch, nor breathing the slightest bit. I did not know what to do, until the knife dropped into my heart. It’s tip was facing right towards me. I did not like the feeling of this.

“Arghhhhhhhh!” I screamed my life out, until it stopped. Blood was all over me. I was lying there hopeless and unconscious, and beside me was a note saying, “IT’S TOO LATE NOW”.

I then woke up, but properly this time, and guess what I saw there .

..



The Deserted House

By Atmaja

The house glared at me as I walked passed it; the dirty, mossy thing hadn't been owned until a few weeks ago. People gave dirty looks to whoever came near the house- they gave me more intense ones as I was eager to stay by it on my way to school. At first, everyone would give me a lecture about how I shouldn't go there as it wasn't occupied in years. In fact, there were a few myths and rumours roaming about. Apparently, the last person who lived there was a young healthy man who had suddenly died, by tripping down a flight of stairs. However many people begged to differ; they were the nearby neighbours who had moved else where after the incident. They told me that there was screaming every night! The shrill shriek was enough to put anyone off, they heard peculiar sounds which seemed to squirm into words like " It's out to get me, help me please, before it comes to get you." As I continued passing the house, I was busy telling everyone who the owner of this house was.

Me

Only for a few weeks anyway. My parents were both business people, therefore were busy attending meetings and would be back next month. I was going to move there on Saturday.

Saturday:

The day's flew away and became shorter and shorter, I was dreading this day, yet I was anxious to see whether the people were lying or if this myth was really real. I was finally going to set foot in the this house! As I walked in, I instantly covered my face as if something was about to pop up out at me. Opening my eyes slowly, I realised that this was a mansion, my excitement slowly withered away. Why hadn't people bought this place, it was like a dream house, although the outside needed a little bit of work, the inside was nothing like you would expect. Or did the rumours just scare them away? I enjoyed the day and as night drew closer, the rumour said that whatever terrible acts were going to happen, they would occur now...

I walked up the creaking stairs, I could have sworn that they weren't like this in the morning. I ran up them. Every step I took, there was something, which abruptly disappeared after a fraction of a second. I walked across the long corridor, ready to face the dangers in my room. Coincidentally, it was the one opposite the 'haunted' one. Closing my eyes I stepped into the room and BOOM, there was something right in front to me, not even leaving a centimetre between us but in that instant it was gone! The room was dark and messy as if someone had been tortured and beaten, instantly I thought that I should run away and go to the neighbours. There was furniture turned round and a patch of carpet was stained a crimson red. I lit a few candles and with the moonlight shining through the window-I felt comfortable however there was one corner which no light could reach, I called at the scary corner. My emotions couldn't be hidden, I felt scared, very scared. I decided to hide under the blanket but I soon as I did something with moving I could feel its presence shifting ominous. The phrase 'please help me' was running through my mind. I felt the room get darker, the candles were going out. The blanket was torn away from me and I could see the face in more detail, I saw a bloody, gory face with black soot blanketing its eyes. I tried running out of the room and urgently tried to open the door. I had to get out of here. It was compulsory to stay to live yet as soon as I turned around – it was the last time I ever saw anything.

The final words I heard were: "I died years ago, the ghost legacy will always continue. I have just found my freedom and now it's your turn." I have spent a few years of hiding in a little corner where there is no light and it is the perfect place where I can strike, so I can find my freedom. I am writing this as a ghost and as of now you are reading this in the very room I am in. Don't run you can't escape...

Conflicted Mind

By Aishu

The big group of girls scuttles along the brightly lit path in their clicking heels, leading up to the extensive mansion stood scarily in front of me. I stand still, watching, waiting for it to attack. All I can hear is the booming music from inside the house, the squeals of girls and the low cheers of boys as they brush past me, eager to have the time of their lives, but I just stand still, watching, waiting.

I take a huge breath in- and out. Following the lights, I drift slowly across the path into the daunting house. The first thing I see when I step through the large, wooden doorway is a huge family portrait of the owners of the house. They look seemingly like the perfect family; the man staring proudly, the wife sitting prettily; the youngest boy with a cheeky glint in his eyes. In the portrait there is also a teenage boy, probably my age, dolled up handsomely but clearly not wanting to be part of the family 'fun'. I glance around the interior, peeking down corridors, wondering where I could find my so called friends in this maze of a home.

Finally, I find the girls perched around the lounge with some other friends they'd rounded up. It's no surprise that I don't know who half of them are, I mean, I am the 'tag-along'. At least that's the term I heard them use a couple of days ago. We're all sitting round the room in a disfigured circular shape, most of the girls and boys are holding their plastic cups with, no doubt, alcoholic drinks filling them. I sit amongst them with my own cup, reluctantly sipping at the bitter drink, cringing every time I feel it slide down my burning throat. Lost in my own little world, ignoring the topics that are generating the giggles, chuckles and occasional roars of laughter, I try not to dampen the cheerful mood. I pay no attention until I pick up the scent of cigarette smoke. My head slowly turns to see the source being a guy in a relaxed, recumbent position with an expression of non-chalance written across the entirety of his body. Trying not to immediately repine and show my discomfort at his hortatory behaviour towards everyone, I succeed, that is until the encouraging behaviour is directed towards me. At first, I seriously consider simply trying the cigarette to prevent engendering a fuss. However, I promptly rise up and exit the room using the excuse of needing to use the toilet.

I stare at myself dead on in the mirror, thinking, "How did I let myself fall into this trap?" It's time to make a decision, a good decision, to choose the correct path, for myself and my happiness. This popularity that I believed would make me joyous has only given me grief. I've been forced to commit to things that don't represent my person. I've disappointed and betrayed many who love me and worse, I've disappointed myself. All for what? All for this? I step out of the toilet suddenly feeling lost all over again, but quickly, I find myself. Looking down the corridor to my right I see the dimly lit ceiling lights leading to the even duller lounge. To gaze through the open front door, I turn my head the other way, back at the brightly lit path, to the place I want to be. Pivoting rapidly to that direction, I swiftly walk out, paying no attention to the beckoning calls behind me because I know I'm doing right by myself and nothing would make me more content.



Payback

By Vandana Sahoo

8:30pm

It was late evening and you were chopping up basil and tarragon, crushing garlic, grating ginger. The television was flickering – the backdrop to the unfolding domestic scene. The air was heavy with the mingling scents of spices, clinging to the walls of your apartment as a miasma. There was an audible sizzling and popping from the heated pan, and you were softly humming some indecipherable tune, as usual.

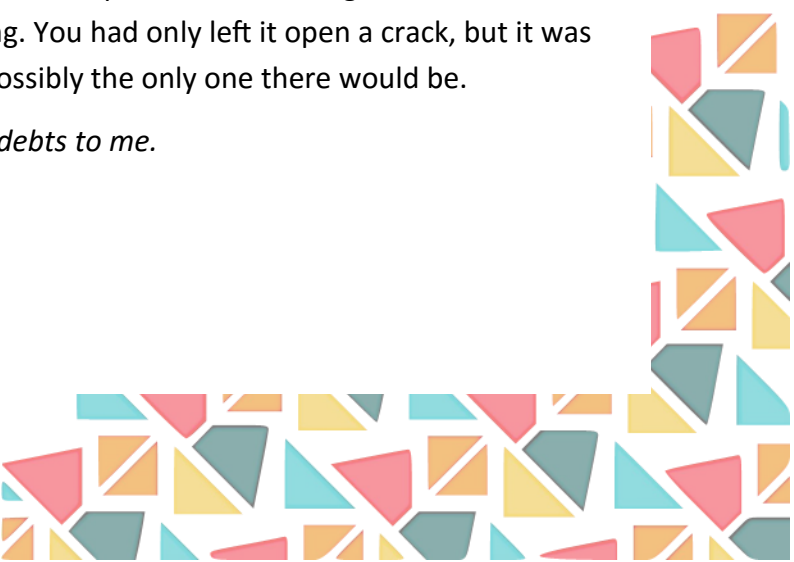
9:00pm

The television was no longer flickering and was instead set on a comedy show. You were curled up on the couch, half-hidden amongst the huge plush pillows and fuzzy blankets, eating your dinner alone. It had become apparent, over the weeks, that you were someone who was not afraid of being alone, but rather someone who relished the prospect.

8:30pm

It was late, and having brushed your teeth in a mildly aggressive manner, you had finally retired to your bed, phone in hand. The room was entirely shrouded in darkness (you couldn't sleep otherwise), except for the artificial glow of your phone screen, illuminating the lower portion of your face. The curtains were open, but no stars could be seen, which was to be expected from such a big city. The only remarkable aspect to differentiate between this night and the countless others that I had tirelessly observed was that you had left the window open. It was drawing closer and closer to the summer solstice and temperatures were soaring. You had only left it open a crack, but it was enough. This was my much awaited opportunity, possibly the only one there would be.

The time has finally come for you to pay back your debts to me.

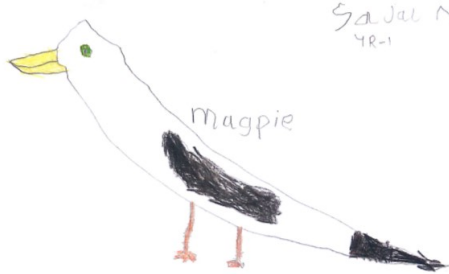




Neha



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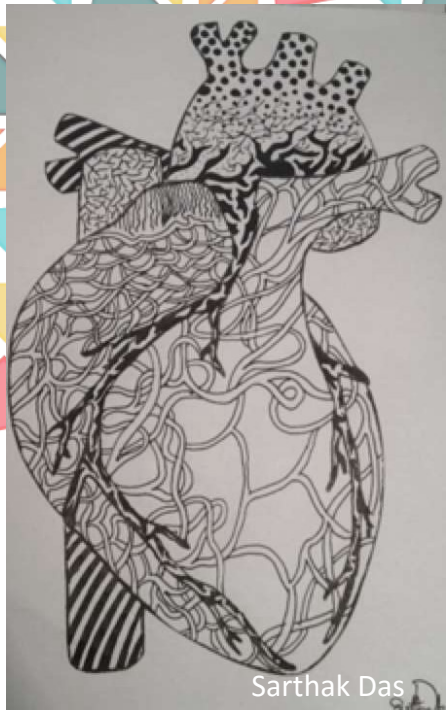


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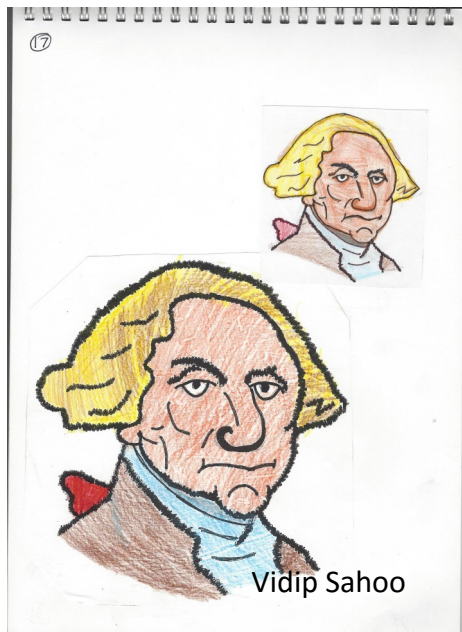


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Shaan

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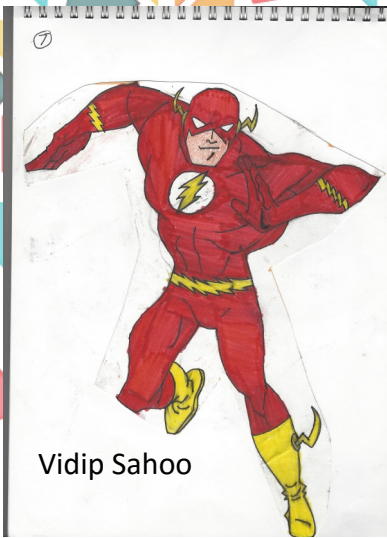
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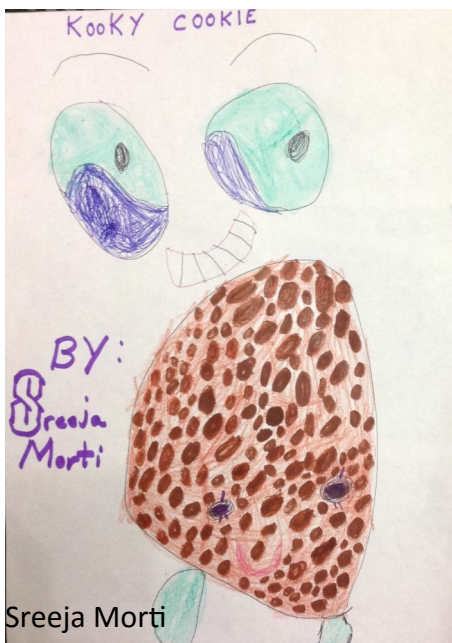
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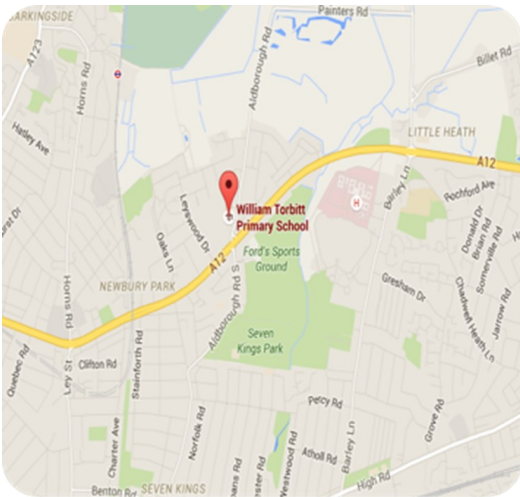
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