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Romance

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FROM THE DESK OF EDITOR IN CHIEF

Centuries ago, the immortal Rumi wrote of the ecstasy of the love.

You dance/Inside my chest/Where no one sees you.

About 175 years ago, Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote the immortal lines that celebrate the joy of love:

'Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.

'Love is so short, forgetting is so long', said Pablo Neruda. His heart-tugging ode: *I loved her, and sometimes she loved me too.*

And redefined unrequited love, *"...So I wait for you like a lonely house/Till you will see me again and live in me/Till then my windows ache."*

So many shades of love. So many volumes written about it for centuries, in every language, and yet love, forever a chimera for artists of all hues, is never captured. It can only be felt in the depths of our hearts, our souls.

Our poets and contributors have tried to capture and bring to you the fragrance of love through their creations. Some celebrate the exuberance of love. Some whisper it, like Neruda. *"I love you as certain dark things are to be loved, in secret, between the shadow and the soul."* Some sing it. Some dance the joy of love.

As you turn the pages, be mesmerized. For this is love— that for which souls yearn to come to earth. That which angels celebrate. Read on. Enjoy the tugs of love.

Affan Yesvi

Affan Yesvi



FROM THE EXECUTIVE EDITOR'S DESK



DR. SONIKA SETHI

Romance is the glamour which turns the dust of everyday life into a golden haze. (Elinor Glyn)

For centuries, tales of romance have warmed the cockles of our heart and lent warmth to many a cold night. We've crooned the lyrics and danced to the romantic numbers. We rejoiced in the happy union and shed tears on the struggles of the unfortunate couples. Romance is like the pixie dust that adds sparkle to our mundane lives.

The etymology of the word 'romance' can be traced to the word 'Roman' and was initially used to indicate a story translated into French from Latin (the language of the old Rome). The story would invariably involve the 'amorous adventures of chivalrous knights' full of heroic deeds and marvellous incidents. The usage witnessed evolution with the transition of the language from Middle to Modern English, when it was used more or less to express love between two individuals.

A romantic at heart, however, is not necessarily a person in love with another. One can always romance nature- trees, clouds, mountains, rivers, rain, birds, animals and even stones. Selenophiles romance the moon and follow its phases, its waning and waxing like a besotted lover watching the moods of his whimsical beloved.

Also, the best type of romance that one can engage in is- romance with books. A bibliophile will neither be heartbroken nor betrayed. He/ she will never be censured for giving up on one and picking another. Romancing books will forever keep you young and anxious for you never know what secrets your beloved will unfold. A bibliophile always basks in the joy of anticipation.

So what are you waiting for? Romance life or romance books. Choose whatever you may but don't not miss your chance to romance.

In our February issue we bring you swoon worthy verses and tales to make your Valentine's Day extra special.

Happy Reading! Happy Romancing! Happy Valentine's Day!

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Impossible Longing

*Two lone stars
roaming the universe
looking for a galaxy
to call it home*

*We meet through coral silver dust
and shared stories of
how we mapped our atlas
some of these tales became mountains
some became the snow
some more became the rivers
flowing into the future
and then some more... but they remained in the space*

*Like fusing words, jelying promises,
Coagulating into comets
Circling like diamonds*

*Waiting for their turn to become stars.
There was one stroke of a painted tale
Fled the atlas and flung into the parallel universe
They say a star fell into that river that flows
into a bottomless black hole
They say another star is still waiting.*

I found it crossing the sky on that one night of impossible longing



ANURADHA GROVER TEJPAL

is a writer, poetess and theatre enthusiast from Canada. Anuradha is the founder of Kahaani Collective and The Art of Content

As the sun rays gingerly streamed through gaps between the thick curtains in his bedroom, Marcus floated in and out of intense dreams. The clinking of cutlery intruded his already disturbed sleep and he awoke to see Sophie sipping her morning tea. “Good morning sweetie”, said Marcus groggily.

Sophie continued drinking her tea in silence, staring sullenly at the chaise lounge by the window. The look in her eyes was at once fervid and empty as though reacting to an unpleasant scene. Marcus rubbed his eyes and followed her gaze to the window.

Together they stared at the chirping birds on the wide windowsill framed against the waving branches of a young maple tree. After a few minutes, Marcus turned to Sophie who seemed lost in a trance and gently touched her arm. With a sigh, Sophie turned her gaze to him and seemed to speak, her words lost in a dream like daze. Her voice sounded like music from the snow globe which he had gifted Sophie on the anniversary of their first date. He was very thoughtful and more than anything else, it was this trait of his that made falling in love with him inevitable.

Marcus sat up leaving the warmth of their handmade quilt and leant closer to Sophie. She continued to sip her tea without so much as a nod, let alone return his gesture. There was a sudden gush of wind and the windows rattled.

Suddenly everything in the room seemed to be shaking and clattering. The wind was inside the room now and it seemed to Marcus like he was in the eye of a storm. He sat still. Sophie sat still. Everything around them was flying about, caught

up in an airy whirlpool. The room was dark, bereft of the sunlight that greeted him earlier.

Marcus watched as Sophie set down her cup and walked over to the window. She was strangely calm in the midst of a tempest. The windows were open. Marcus felt his heart thumping wildly, his thoughts tumultuous and he was hyperventilating. There was a strange knot in the pit of his stomach.

He heard Sophie’s voice saying, “That is love my darling.” Her words trailed off as she leaned over the windowsill and

in a moment she was gone. “SOPHIE!!! NO!!!”, cried Marcus rushing across the room.

“Quick, get the doctor, his body is twitching. Check his phone to see if there’s a Sophie in the contact list. Call his brother and let him know that the patient is waking up.”

Marcus heard these and a racket of many other words stumbling upon each other as he slowly opened his eyes. Staring down at him, simultaneously patting, prodding and poking him were nurses and doctors. He flinched from the bright white hospital light and the cacophonous milieu around him. As the myriad medical equipment beeped notes of life, Marcus felt a knot tightening in his stomach and yearned to hear Sophie’s voice once more.

Daybreak



ASHA P.
is a poet,
literary and
performing artist
from Canada.

A Fleeting Romance...

*Taken up in gusto
To create a haven in abode,
Plants were hurriedly acquired
To lull COVID's horrid ode.*

*Florae of conceivable hues,
Plants outdoors, brought indoors too,
To usher hope into life fragile,
Left in disarray through and through.*

*The loving bond was bred
Hung on passion's tiny thread
Shortly saw it the flag red
Corona its path once had tread.*

*Corona-tide receded;
Drowning man-lover's mushy song,
Plant paramour turned, but for once,
Being human, could not sustain long.*



**DR RENUKA
DHYANI**

is Associate Professor
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Panchkula.

THE DOWNPOUR

As she looked up from the laptop, her face smeared with tears, it began to pour outside. The words of the character played by Madhuri Dixit in *Saajan* movie crossed her mind– ‘Aaj mausam ne bhi khoob saath diya hai tumhara’.

Back during those unforgettable childhood days, the sound of rain would play some invisible musical chords inside her and she would rush to frolic about in the downpour. Her mother would admonish her, “You’ll get sick, Nita! Then I am the only one who will have to run around serving and taking care of you!” Nita would then give one of her devilish smiles.

Memories started flooding, adding to the intensity of rain...

Ghevar, motichoor laddoo and the evergreen home-made mango pickle; her mother had packed everything for her. Everything, that Nita knew, would be rejected at the airport. How to explain this to mothers, she thought to herself.

Two years had passed doing MBA in Europe, and as expected, matrimonial suggestions started pouring in. Nita did not mind them, but didn’t enjoy them either.

The bald guy with a pot-belly sitting on his bike with his hands fondling his moustache had her in squeals of laughter though. Thankfully, mother also emailed her some laughing emoticons regarding his pic. “Thank God for a level-headed friend like mother”, the protagonist had smiled to herself.

And then, Rakesh happened. They met at a dating website. It was not an instant bonding, but fun, as he made time fly away. There were roses, movie nights and personal jokes. Slowly, it seemed to be

developing though into a hit. Happy warm days.

Then suddenly, mother was ill, diagnosed with Tuberculosis. Nita was worried. “I should be near her”, became a persistent thought. Tickets to India were booked and office leave applied for.

“But sweetheart, I don’t believe in long-distance relationships”, he had argued. Rakesh’s dejected face had haunted her throughout the journey. As she began tending to her mother back home, the tone of his emails changed from mild unsupportive ‘come back soon’ to ‘you ignore me 24/7’ to ‘why pay for her hospital?’. Last one became the last straw. Dejected, she stopped responding.

Meanwhile, mum got better.

‘Dear Nita,

It’s been a long time I heard from you. Indicates that it’s not meant to be. Sorry, I never intended to open (perhaps my last) email to you this way. But I had seen an Indian girl in you who had the ability to leave behind her family and join her in-law’s family pure-heartedly. The day you decided to book return tickets to India, that image was shattered. Unfortunately, you

failed to come up to my expectations, in most regards. Hence, it would be best to wind up.

Nice memories though.

Rakesh’

The passing reference about dual-faced personalities in optional Psychology class came to her mind. Much more prominently, came to her the definition of ‘pure hearted’ as often described by her mother– ‘honest and sincere intentions’.

That is when they started to flow– tears of grief yet tears of relief.



REEMA BANSAL
is an Assistant
Professor of
Psychology in
Haryana.

Charmin' Carmen

*You slipped into my soul
Upon a sliver of moonshine
Ever so gentle, delicately drunk,
I felt your heat, your smile so sweet,
And your honeyed breath upon my cheek.
It was a night to remember,
To savor and relish,
The moments were warm
The wine was thick
With remembrance and forgetting,
The years have not dimmed your fire,
Or benumbed the passion of your heart,
You who walk with Angels
And fight demons in the dark.*



**SANJAY
BALACHANDRAN**

is a published author, academic, poet and musician residing in Kolkata. He is a Psychological Counsellor and Wellbeing Consultant.

Messenger of Love

*Mountains sliced
by swirling mist
Carrying missives
of love eternal*

From the Yaksha of Meghdoot**
to his bride Yakshini*

*Their bitter-sweet love cries
of long painful separation
Ah! when shall the parted meet...*

*The clouds have drunk
too much wistful hope
Tumbling down the mountain slope
They dissolve in silent tears
In the flowing eyes of Yakshini*

** Yaksha - a benevolent spirit who is a caretaker of natural treasures
hidden in the earth and tree roots*

*** Meghdoot - cloud messenger, an epic poem written by Kalidas*



NEENA SINGH

is a banker turned poet. She has published two books of poetry—*Whispers of the Soul: the Journey Within* and *One Breath Poetry: a Journal of Haiku, Senryu & Tanka*

The Girl in The Red Cardigan

It was a sunny February morning. The chill coalesced around everything like a railway engine, shrouded in its smoke. It was a lazy Sunday and Milind had got up late to make some tea for himself, on his newly bought shiny gas stove. As he observed the ringlets of steam, he realized that three months had passed since he had treated Shabnam to a cup of his Sunday tea.

That Sunday three months back, Milind had been shaving in front of his broken *verandah* mirror, pondering over his long overdue lunch at the *Haldirams*, when the peal of the doorbell broke his peace. Wiping the foam off his chin Milind had opened the door to find a girl standing forlorn in front of the door. She wore faded slacks and ragged sandals. A shabby bag hung on her red cardigan. It was a nasty November morning and the wind was howling. The girl quietly held out a form for Milind, “Sir, our company is launching a new promotional scheme. Would you like to help?”

Milind looked at the faded slacks and the innocent eyes of the girl. Wisps of hair escaped from the blue scarf she had tied around her head. Something tugged at his heart. He almost drowned in the eyes of the petite girl. Happily, he invited her into his house.

He brought his freshly made cup of tea, in his only coffee mug and handed it to the girl who now sat on a chair in his living room. A shaft of light fell on the girl, sitting on his newly bought settee, making her appear radiant and bright. Milind patted himself on being such a kind soul. Smiling, he looked at the sales girl.

“Sir my name is Shabnam, and my company has come up with a new scheme. If you deposit Rs 5000 with us, every month you will receive an item of household utility for an entire



year. I would be coming personally to deliver it.”

How cruel the world was, thought Milind. This frail girl, with gazelle eyes filled him with a warmth hitherto unknown to him. He looked into Shabnam’s scared eyes and pressed the money into her palm. Shabnam promised that she would be coming every month with a new household appliance.

Smiling with her full set of teeth showing, she enquired, “Sir what do you think of my marketing skills?”

“First class” said Milind, future encounters with Shabnam pressing like a vine of colourful begonias on his mind.

“THANK YOU SIR!” said the sales girl beaming with joy.

Three months had passed and no Shabnam was in sight. Nor was there any intimation from the company whose form he had filled. Milind cursed himself. How many times his grandfather had told him, “Beware of a woman’s smile. It’s the most dangerous thing in the world. Even the great seers of yore had fallen prey to it.”

And yet those precious words had clearly skipped his mind. He looked at his scruffy jeans. Today he would have to wash them. The money that he had set apart for the new *Levis* had been given to the con-woman. From the bottom of his heart Milind wished somebody would spill ink on her red cardigan.



LIPPI PARIDA

is an author, painter, photographer, flautist, sand & rock artist, talk show host, motivational speaker & columnist.

She’s the recipient of 2018 MAKE IN INDIA National award for Excellence in the creative field

On the way to Bath

*On the road called M4
Off we go to see the most loved resident
Of Bath, it's Jane Austen, should I say;
Crossing and traversing trucks and cars;
woods and trees
Feasting my eyes on rolling hills and sandwalls;
horses and sheep,
Chugging the beauty of the area
of outstanding natural Beauty,
It occurs in my mind why would
everyone not become
Shakespeare, Wordsworth or Coleridge.
What a sheer bolt of luck in my life that I have
To witness, visit and preserve this gift for eternity.
Could there anything more filled with romance
To feel the Romantics in their demesne*



SUPRIYA ARORA

is a Canada based poet, a cook, a baker, globe trotter and a painter. Her recent book is *Memoirs of a Homemaker*.

Déjà Vu

*A feeling, a chimera,
A strange surety, a knowing,
I have seen it once,
Felt it flowing under my skin,
Burrow in my bones.*

*A scent, a touch, a word
That won't show,
Remains unplaced, unknown,
Darting silkily away,
Just as my mind finds purchase.*

*And when it comes-
A recognition,
A lightning bolt,
That forgotten feeling, a realisation,
This is how it felt,
When we first met.*



DR. HARSHALI SINGH

is an Author, Poet and academician. Her Novels 'A Window to her Dreams', 'The Anatomy of Choice' and 'A Paradox of Dreams' form part of a nine book 'Haveli Series'.

*Be
Disciplined
Be Sincere
Dedicated to
your art*

For those of us who grew up in the nineties, will never be able to forget the dusky beauty from down South, **Shanthi Priya**, who danced her way through our hearts and mesmerised us with her scintillating performances as Shakuntala in TV serial Vishwamitra and as Chand in her first Bollywood film Saugandh opposite Akshay Kumar. Shanthi Priya is now back with a bang with her MX PLAYER series produced by ZEE Studio, Dharavi Bank. In an exclusive interview with our Executive Editor, **Dr. Sonika Sethi**, she talks in detail about her journey through movies, TV serials and OTT.



SS: *Let's talk about your journey from down South to Bollywood. Wasn't it difficult to transition between Hindi movies and South Indian movies while simultaneously working on television and giving dance performances on stage?*

SP: What exactly happened is that I had begun my career in South Indian films in 1987 and was already an established actress in both Telugu and Tamil film industry. In 1989, I was offered the role of Shakuntala in the TV serial Vishwamitra by Dasari Narayan Rao, the producer and director of the show. By the time I was offered my first Hindi film, Saugandh, I had done more than two dozen films in the south. I was super excited by the fact that Raj Sippy was the director of the movie. I was cast opposite Akshay Kumar, who was debuting with this movie. Once I started working in Hindi movies, then of course there was no time for TV series. All in all, it was like a roller coaster ride for me with super excitement at every new turn.

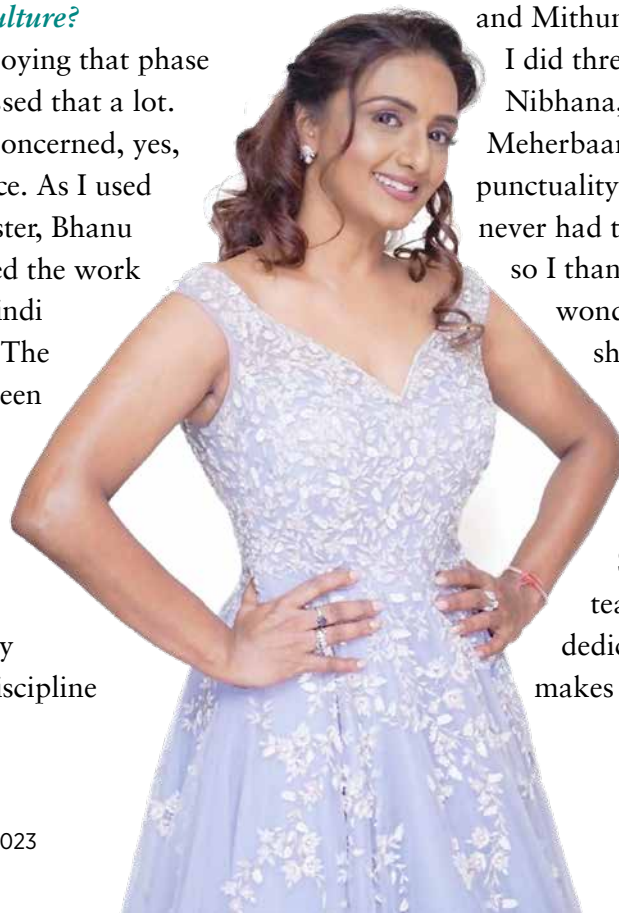
SS: *You were simultaneously working in Telugu, Tamil and Hindi movies. Wasn't it difficult for you to switch over? How were the two industries different vis-à-vis work culture?*

SP: I was absolutely enjoying that phase of my career and have missed that a lot. As far as work culture is concerned, yes, there was a lot of difference. As I used to accompany my elder sister, Bhanu Priya to her sets, I observed the work culture was different in Hindi and South Indian movies. The heroes would shuffle between 4-5 shifts and it was difficult. But, fortunately for me, the producers and directors that I worked with were highly co-operative and extremely professional. There was discipline

and punctuality on the sets, so it was convenient for me. The only difference was the glide from one language to another, but professionalism was similar.

SS: *You seem to have a great rapport with all your co-stars be it your on-screen father Mukesh Khanna or your heroes Akshay Kumar and Mithun Chakraborty. Do you consider yourself lucky on that aspect?*

SP: Absolutely. I consider myself extremely fortunate that all my co-stars were not only co-operating but also highly professional in their approach. In fact, in the TV serial Vishwamitra, Mukesh Khanna ji played the titular role and I played his daughter, Shakuntala. After that, two years later I was approached for the movie Saugandh which I accepted readily as the character I was supposed to play, Chand was a formidable role, one I could not let go. When I reached the sets of the film, it was then I came to know that here again, Mukesh ji was to play the role of my father, Chaudhary Sarang. I thanked my stars for this co-incidence. Again with my heroes, both Akshay with whom I did two movies- Saugandh and Ikke pe Ikka, and Mithun Chakraborty with whom I did three films- Mere Sajana Saath Nibhana, Phool aur Angaar and Meherbaan, were known for their punctuality and professionalism. I never had to wait on their behalf and so I thank God for giving me such wonderful co-stars with whom I shared a good rapport. Even now, when I'm working in Dharavi Bank, I'm fortunate that all my co-stars including Suniel Shetty and the production team are all punctual and dedicated to their craft which makes working enjoyable.





SS: *Tell us something about your latest ventures. We know you are currently working in Dharavi Bank. What else is on the cards for your viewers?*

SP: Well, apart from Dharavi Bank, I'm also working on the biopic of Sarojini Naidu, the first Lady Governor of India. This will be a pan-India theatrical release in four different languages- Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Hindi. I will be dubbing in all the four languages. We have already finished two schedules of the production and the last schedule we plan to shoot in UP as Sarojini Naidu was the Governor of Uttar Pradesh. I have worked really hard for this project, trying to capture the mannerisms of the character that I'm playing as also putting on about 10 kg of weight for the appearance. Also, talks are in for two more upcoming web series but those are yet to be finalized.

SS: *Would you agree to the fact that OTT has given wonderful and plentiful opportunities to actors who were not getting meaningful roles in the commercial films as well as to actors who were struggling to get a foothold in the industry?*

SP: I cannot comment about the newcomers getting a foothold but all of us who have worked in the 90s are finding OTT as a wonderful opportunity to display our acting skills. You see, female actors in the 90s were cast in stereotypical roles of Bhabhi, mother, sister or lover. As a result, we all were reduced to our shells. OTT is giving a chance to all of us to come out of those shells and rock the world by proving our acting skills. Another significant thing about OTT is that, here the story or the

content is the 'hero' and we all are characters and actors. In movies, the story revolves around the hero whereas here, the hero is also a 'character' and only the content matters. With the advent of Web series, the mindset of the actors as well as the viewers has also undergone change. Now we no longer see how much 'footage' one is getting in the series, what is seen is how powerful the role is. Even a few minutes are enough to cast a lasting impression on the minds of the audience. This is the most satisfying feeling for an actor. So, basically, this is an age of experimentation.

SS: *You've been dancing from a very tender age and you've given some powerful performances on stage. What's the latest on the dance front? Can we expect some more performances from Shanthi Priya?*

SP: Since I'm a classical dancer, I love to give performances. I'm back to my dance classes and practicing both Bharatnatyam and Kuchipudi. In fact, Kuchipudi is my forte. So, I'll be back with more performances very soon. But these days I'm also learning Latin Ball Room dancing from Sandeep Soparkar as well as Salsa, Rumba, samba and Tango, all different forms of Latin dancing which are not only invigorating but also require much concentration and practice. One thing I've learnt is that we underestimate the Western dance forms. We feel that only classical dances require patience and practice and are difficult to learn. But I would like to tell you that despite being a classical dancer, I find Latin dances very difficult. Though I'm enjoying learning them, they are hard to master and given a chance I would love to do a fusion between the two.



SS: *We all are aware of the personal loss you encountered in the form of your husband's untimely death. How did you cope up with this loss and come out of it? How did you regain your strength to take life head-on?*

SP: Yes. The loss was unbearable and a huge one. Fortunately, I had a wonderful family in the form of my mother, my sister, my brother and of course two precious sons who supported me throughout my low tide. They are the ones who made me sail through these tough times. Although, I did reel through some distressing and depressing times but every time I found strength in seeing my mother who was also a single mother and had to raise three children. When I looked at her, I thought that she was uneducated, still never cowered under pressure whereas I had everything. My children were only 10 and 4 years old, so in order to give them a better life, I became their support pillar and did not even for a second let them miss anything, including their dad.

SS: *A few words of advice on life and art for our readers.*

SP: So this is my message to all those who aspire to be actors. This is one profession, acting, you get paid well, you will be treated like a king or a queen, you will get name and fame, you will be treated with awards and rewards. But this profession requires your hundred percent- be disciplined, be sincere and dedicated to your art. This is the only way to succeed in this industry. Wish you all a Happy Valentine's Day!

For What

*His eyes, my corridors,
his frill verses drizzle
honeydew over arid dunes
of my pains, I wonder at
his faint smile when he gazes
narrating couplets of love.*

*He is a bard
he holds my hands at the crossroads
then quickly wishes to leave
shy of the onlookers, we move on-
he pours words
oblivious of the crowd, his love for me
of unknown causes, scared,
he finds a sudden pause
and smiles in delight, abruptly and asks
if I had heard
my denial is his peace
he says he will say it
if we have the time
I wonder, for what...*



ARTI RAI

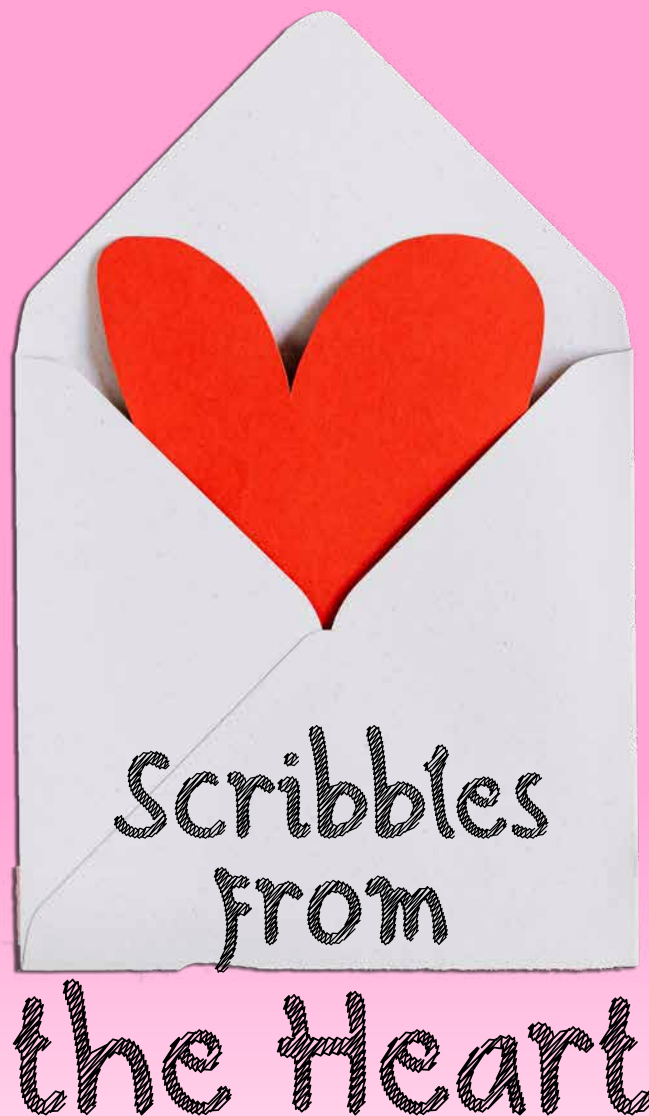
is an educator by profession from Jaipur. She is the author of one novel *The Aravalli Princess*, and two poetry collections *Flares of Love* and *Crossway Bloom*.

Pouring Rain, Steaming Coffee

*Tip, tap drops or pours the rain,
Onto the roofs of houses and train!
The people rushing for their work have very early their oats.
It's a dazzling morning, it had just stopped raining,
The sun suddenly smiles, spreading its golden tresses!
A whistling wind occasionally reminds one
of the thunderous pouring days!
Sitting on the verandah feeding birds and a squirrel;
My eyes scan the nearby hillocks
Covered in green mattresses!
The frogs chatter unrhythmically in the night!
The couples and children, old and young
cuddle themselves warm and tight!
Sipping aromatic, hot filter coffee,
Penning lines to my darling,
Who has been sailing the seas since ninety days!
Early morning a large bouquet of orange tulips
arrived with my darling's note!
"Crossing choppy oceans near Corsica, missing you!"
The Tulips carry my sense of longing,
For it is this yearning that they denote!
Tulips, our favourite flowers,
Because of two lips and orange-
a colour Both of us revel in;
It exudes exuberance!
The showers, after the summer have
surely cooled our smouldering brains!
Yet we await, Autumn to dry our wet brains!*



KUMUDINI VED
is an author and poet
based out of Mumbai.



Love, an exquisite emotion of human passion, explicates itself as appreciation, longing and desire; a sacred bond between two individuals exists since the times humanity has come into existence.

L'Amour est art de vivre- love is the art of life.

Surviving edge of time, flipping through pages of history, this art is apparent as engraved in stone, painted on canvas, through roses hidden inside pages of books and in hand written love notes.

Ah! Hand written Love notes.

Love exchanged through words, intimate meaningful personalized silent conversations between lovers was most ethereal yet simple way to nurture the pious bond.



*"Very simple love that believes in words
Since I cannot do what I want to do
Can neither hug nor kiss you
My pleasure lies in my words
And when I can I speak to you of love"
(Anonymous)*

Nothing feels better than a handwritten letter scribed by the one who holds your heart. Today the immediacy of emails and texts has superseded the warmth of the tradition. Imagine how wonderful it would have been to unfold a beautiful piece of paper and feel the warmth of heartbeats arranged in syllables. Imagine keeping them inside a box and reading them again years later, to reminisce the bond and feel the warmth of words with fondness.

Mark Twain has written in his autobiography that the frankest and freest product of human mind and heart is a love letter. It can never go out of style.

History of earliest love letters dates back to 5000 years, probably as old as letter writing itself. The Song of Solomon, found in the Hebrew Bible and the Old Testament, is the voice of two lovers praising each other.

*Behold, you are beautiful, my love;
behold, you are beautiful;
your eyes are doves.*

Since when love letters became associated with Valentine's Day is not known but a myth suggests St. Valentine who had defied Emperor Claudius II by arranging the marriage of young soldiers in secret was condemned to death. It's believed he had sent a passionate greeting to the jailor's daughter and signed it 'from your Valentine'.

English poet Geoffrey Chaucer was first to record St. Valentine's Day as a romantic celebration. Valentine greetings were popular since Middle ages yet the oldest known in existence till today come from a poem written in 1415 by Charles, Duke of Orleans to his wife during imprisonment.

*My very gentle Valentine
Since for me you were born too soon
And for you I was born too late
God forgives him who has estranged
Me from you for the whole year
I am already sick of love
Me very gentle valentine.*

Another reference to this tradition of writing is found in Indian mythology dated about 5000 years ago. As mentioned in Bhagavata Puran, Book 10 Chapter 52, it was written by Princess Rukmini to Lord Krishna.

The picture in reference is a stamp issued by Government of India in 1963 to commemorate Kalidasa, most celebrated Sanskrit poet and captures



a scene from his play *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* based on the epic Mahabharata that depicts Shakuntala writing a love letter to King Dushayanta.

With Valentine's day around the corner, romantic outpourings of lovers will be sent in the form of cards worldwide and approximately one million exchange of cards will take place. Let's see whether this old tradition of passionate avowal can still exist. Let's spread love through handwritten letters.

Vivre L'Amour- May love live forever!



**DR. RASHMI
CHOWDHARY**

is a dentist by profession.
Loves to ink prose and
poetry.

Magic

*Magic of the hills
Enhanced during Monsoon
Nature washed green
World created anew
The veil of mist
over majestic mountains
Looks magnificent
Looks desirable
Soon the mist deepens
into a dense fog
Walking on a narrow pathway
I shiver
I contemplate
Mystery of the nature
A bear hug envelopes me
You appear from behind
Suddenly the sun peeps out
Togetherness becomes
Ethereal
Elevated
Divine
Romance is togetherness
With the nature
With the man I love
It's all magical*



ALKA KANSRA

is retired Professor and HoD, Chemistry from MCMDAV College, Chandigarh. She has two poetry collections to her credit- *Peedhiyon ke Kshitij* and *Zindagi Kavita ho Gayi*.

Self-Love

The Life Long Romance

Love is a strong emotion. Having a look at two people in love, anybody with an average EQ can easily gauge that there is some special bond between the two. Love emits radiation, hence can never go unnoticed. We all love being in love and even witnessing the stories of love charm us. The '100 crore club' Bollywood movies, the evergreen Mills & Boon are testimony to its aura.

Besides love between two people, self-love is the supreme form of romance. The aura of self-love is like a halo around a divine soul, it radiates positivity and peace. It is not vanity or narcissism. According to Tony Robbins,

"The quality of your life is the quality of your relationships. And that includes your relationship with yourself too. Learning to fall in love with yourself is essential to your own happiness. When you love yourself, you receive more love in return. When you exude confidence and joy, you will attract others with same zest of living."

To fall in love with yourself is the beginning of a lifelong romance. So here's some basic prescription to cultivate self-love:

- Respect yourself and accept yourself.
- Feel good about your virtues and forgive yourself for mistakes.
- Raise your bar by learning from your past mistakes and take corrective measures for self-improvement.
- Do not be a self-critic. Being a self-critic is like suffering from auto immune disorder. Replace negative self-talk with positive words and develop an abundance mindset.

- Practice Gratitude.
- Have a funny side. Let go your bloopers and just laugh. Be care free more often.
- Don't sweat over people's opinions especially of the ones who really don't matter in your life.
- Don't compare yourself with others. Remind yourself every morning that you are God's special creation.
- Be happy for others, clap for their achievements.
- Raise the bar of morality.



DR. PRATIBHA

is a Dental Surgeon, author of book *Dear Zindagi*, Blogger, Motivational Speaker, Yoga and Naturopathy enthusiast.

- Love your body in whatever shape, whatever condition it is. If it bothers you, just work for it, work upon it without being sad and critical.
- Dress up your best way. Carry it with a positive attitude and never forget to wrap it with a bright smile.
- Get rid of toxic people and toxic relationships. This is the biggest help you can do to yourself.
- Overcome your hesitation and fears. Cross your comfort zone frequently and be brave.
- Laze around once in a while. All the time being on toes and working like a super human is not going to fetch you an Oscar or a Nobel Prize.
- Sing in shower. Play your favorite music.
- Write a love letter to yourself.
- Find your ikigai and keep your passions alive.

And most important, wish yourself a Happy Valentine's day this February!



Behold You are Romance

*A mesmerizing spectacle, an up-lifter of soul,
An invisible thread that ushers two selves into transient oblivion
Merges them in waking reverie to become one,
An oenamel memory of a demi-god in the heart of a beloved,
An invocation for Poets, Bards and Artists
Sublimity accompanies you to translate the unsaid,
A repository of charm, bewilderment and fanciful dreams,
A panacea for inflicted living souls, an antidote for grief
People at your threshold queue up to redeem themselves
In this grief-stricken world,
A Tavern of Bacchus, heavenly intoxicating beings to cure,
A sole barterer trading pleasure for pain
A spell, a charm so strong, inevitable, contagious,
Escorts his prey to Zenith of trance,
Traced in the eyes, Heard in the voice of Iyan,
Omnipresent in pieces in all mortals
A Door to a whimsical world...
You are Romance.*



RUPINDER KAUR
is an academician
from Ambala.

And We Meet Again...

*When I heard you first, something clicked inside
I listened to you more and that brought an emotional tide.*

*I prayed to the Universe, as I trust my star
And lo, came that day when you were not so far.*

It was a soulful connection, what we both felt

There was a silent flame and that ice melt

You are someone's fate

I knew always...But oh! just wait...

The blaze of love is slowly engulfing our existence

Yes...We know but nothing can test our patience

*When I found myself hidden securely in your strong arms,
And those soft passionate kisses brought all those charms*

Time stopped that evening when we were together

An Ocean of love filled our hearts as if nothing could ever bother

You lit up those dark chambers of my lonely heart

I became yours forever as only you knew that art.

We cannot be together forever. My love, it is a pain...

The sizzling passion in our hearts crave for each other

And we meet again....



SHIVANI GHOSH
is an educationist
and a Life Coach
from Mohali, Punjab.

BUDDING WRITERS' CORNER

Effervescent Love

It was gently pattering on the asphalt outside.

A slight chill lingered in the air, yet I felt warm, inside and out. She snuggled closer to me, mumbling in her sleep. I caught the word 'love' amongst the incoherent speech. My heart blossomed upon hearing that word, just like a rose. Like an orchard of roses, lavender ones. Her favourite.

My heart warmed up, like one of those cheesy toasts we had once on a snowy December night. We were snuggling on the couch, covered in a sea of blankets. Fuzzy socks adorned her feet while she wore my beanie on her head. She made me feel loved.

My heart throbbed, like the time we squabbled over something silly. Those days filled with burnt food and banging doors reminded me of all the things that made me love her. What didn't break us, made us stronger; and neither of us could resist the need for the other. What was it about, I don't remember. Like I said, something silly.



GAURI PANWAR
is a class XI student
of Bhavan Vidyalaya,
Panchkula.

My heart fluttered, like it did when she said 'yes', nobody close to hear the affirmation, except the million stars above our heads and the water lapping at our sandy feet.

My heart shuddered, like the time we were apart for a week, but it felt more like an eternity. She called me every night and though she tried her best, the radio waves could not hide her strained voice or her tear-rimmed eyes. I did everything to contain myself from abandoning all work and taking the first flight home. Home, where she was.

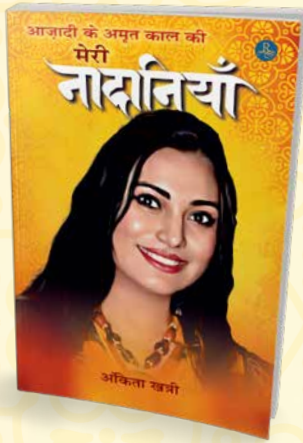
My heart stuttered, like it did when I knew I loved her, the laughter slipping past her lips like a wind chime blowing in the summer breeze. We danced to nothing but the beats of our hearts, gently swaying as I fell in love, deeper and deeper.

She stirred, dragging me back to the present and slowly opened her eyes, her gaze piercing mine. She smiled, and all the colours in the room grew sharper.

"I love you", she said. And loved, I felt.



Ankita Khattry's book
'Meri Nadaniyan' launched
by Shri Anup Jalota, Padma
Shri and Dr. Soma Ghosh,
Padma Shri.



Prabha Anand's poetry collection
'Jeevan Jharokha' launched in
Gurugram by Sharmila Tagore,
Padma Bushan in the august
presence of Sh. Ramesh Chand
Bidhan, IAS, Commissioner,
Gurugram, Prof. Dinesh Singh,
Former VC, Delhi University and
Affan Yesvi, Director, Rhyvers Press.





As the team sat brainstorming to hunt for a suitable title, we discussed among ourselves, 'Art, Literature and Culture must flow effortlessly and unhindered by borders and boundaries of any sort. Only two things flow unbridled- Air and Water. Rivers, we decided, flow with the gushing energy across all constraints. So, Rivers it was.

However, the team decided to play a little with the spellings and instead of the 'I' in Rivers, we replaced it with the 'H' and the 'Y' representing the traditional name of the country 'Hindustan' and the 'Young India'. Thus emerged the name of our publishing house, **RHYVERS** - *an amalgamation of tradition and youthful modernity.*



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Dr RENUKA DHYANI

With all the support that we receive, we move ahead
in our cause to celebrate and enrich literature.
Thank you for making a difference through your compassion
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We are highly grateful to Dr Dhyani.

Rhyvers Beat attempts to bridge the chasm between language and culture and to provide endless space to art lovers and connoisseurs. Our writers and artists will spin yarns, invoke their muse, capture dreams, and paint metaphors to infuse the readers with the vast energy of the flowing Rhyvers.

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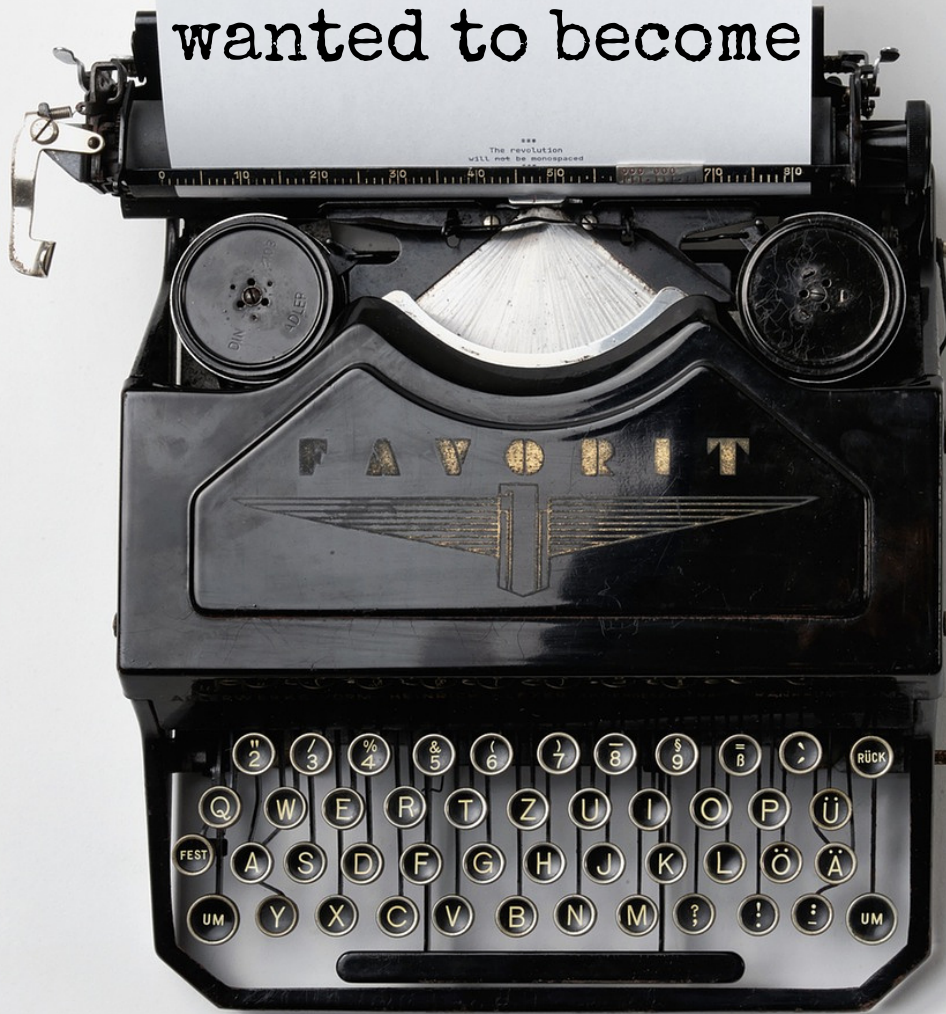


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