

SOCIUS

REFLECTIONS OF THE WORLD AROUND US

Newsletter



Editorial

‘ My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humour and some style’ - Maya Angelou

Sociology as a discipline encourages the students to reflect on issues happening around them in a critical manner. The classroom discussions help the students to connect with society outside. It encourages students to be reflective about their life, their actions and their choices.

Some of their reflections and experiences have resulted in creative expressions in the form of poems, stories or essays. This newsletter is a compilation of the reflections and reviews of undergraduate students of Sociology on various social issues. It also has few entries with nature as the focus. The theme of this year's world environmental day is 'connecting with nature'. A reflection on how one connects with nature is important especially in this epoch of anthropocene.

The Department of Sociology and Social Work is happy to provide a platform for students to express their reflections through the newsletter.

Dr Maya M

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“I see trees of green, red roses too
I see them bloom for me and you
And I think to myself what a wonderful world .“

-Louis Armstrong

Winter in Bangalore is probably the best time of the year. The forest fire flowers are in full bloom, the days are pleasant and the tabebuia trees colour the skyline of the city.

Nature’s way of reacting to the changing weather is magical. We rarely make time to stop, think and appreciate what nature has to offer us.

The Department of Sociology proudly presents this year’s edition of the newsletter, Socius. We have received an over-whelming response from the student community and hope this continues.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in making this happen.

Signing off,
Amrita Ragavendiran
Student Editor

BECAUSE YOU ARE A GIRL

This is the standard flow of conversation that occurs whenever I make demands for freedom or for the right to do things that my brothers and male friends can do: Why can't I go for a trip with my friends? Because I am a girl. Why can't I stay out as late as my brother does? Because I am a girl. Why can't I travel alone? Because I am a girl. Why can't I hug my male friends? Because I am a girl. Why can't I have a sleep-over at a friend's place? Because I am a girl. Is that the grave crime that I have committed for which I am being punished with the oppression of my will?

In Indian society, being a girl is like being a burden. I have seen that in many families, including my own, when a girl is born, it is not a cause of happiness as much as a sad occasion. There is this ritual that when a person dies, you aren't allowed to touch anything in the house before showering after the last deeds of the person. Similarly, if a girl is born, and you go to see her in the hospital, you have to shower before going on with your daily routine. On the other hand, if a boy is born, there is a grand celebration to which all relatives and family friends are invited. Right from her birth, a girl is made to feel like she is a burden, like her family is not completely happy to have her in their lives.

I have a distant aunt, who first gave birth to two girls, and then got three abortions, because all three of the fetuses were girls. And her family was satisfied with her only when she gave birth to a boy, ten years later. Is it really that important to be a boy? Boys can roam about on their own as soon as they learn how to. But a girl needs to be accompanied by someone. After all, who knows what might happen to her, while she is out alone on those streets? Her brother can "protect" her. When I was in school, and assignments and coaching classes had made it necessary for me to go out alone, if I was not back home by 8:30 PM, my mother would start hyperventilating and as soon as I got home, the admonishing would begin. My brother, on the other hand, could get home at 11:30 in the night and get away with it. What kind of justice is this?

My brother goes for night-outs, trips within and outside the State, while I have never even had a sleep-over at a female friend's place. When asked why he could do it and not me, the reply always remained the same. Because I am a girl. If a boy is hanging out with girls, he is a stud. He is a ladies man. But if a girl is seen with a bunch of

boys? She is ruining her reputation in society. People instantly start judging her, and many a times, she is branded as a slut. Growing up, I was asked to stop hanging out with a female friend from school because she had a lot of guy friends and by being seen with her, my reputation would also get disrupted.

A part of every female body gets destroyed and rebuilt every month, with the loss of a huge quantity of blood. We literally store and nourish life inside of us, bringing that life to this earth. Is this not a testament of our strength? Yet, instead of being supported when our bodies are undergoing such trauma, we are asked to hide it. Not being allowed to enter religious shrines, to touch the food that the entire family is going to eat and sleeping on separate beds are customs that are still followed and make females think that periods make them impure. If girls can endure so much, can we still say that boys are stronger than girls?

Another question that I would like to ask is, why should the girl always be careful with how they dress? A girl should not dress provocatively because she incites men in that way. So, how do you explain the rape of women wearing burkhas and the rape of small children? Were they also dressed provocatively? Girls can wear whatever they feel comfortable in, whatever makes them feel beautiful. It is the male gender that needs to learn how to respect women, see them as more than mere objects and know that they are in no way superior to women.

We, girls, are not asking males to protect us. We can take care of ourselves. We are just asking them to change their mentalities, to not rape us, to not throw acid on our faces, to respect us as their equals. It is true that India is progressing and these issues are coming to the fore, and that injustice towards women has decreased considerably. But, the day I am able to walk an isolated street alone after dark and not feel anxious, the day my mother does not have to call me at 9 pm to make sure that I am home, the day I can wear whatever I want without eyes following my movements on the street, the day no girl will have to say that she was denied something because of her status as a girl; only then will I be able to say that India has been able to eradicate all prejudice against women. Only then, will I be able to say that men and women are equal in all dimensions of life.

Kritika Chhapolia | 2EPS | 1730739

UNTITLED

Everyone and everything taught him the same thing,
All was black or white; wrong or right.
They used the Black board as a tool
The blackness over- powered by the white call rule.
It took him one full black board to realise,
Never to trust with closed eyes.
The black board was now grey
All was a blur,
Nothing could make him otherwise convinced,
Nothing was absolute ever since.

Sameeha Sharma | 4PSEng | 1630348

SMILE

Standing in the crowd with a hope to reach the stars,
Taken by those very people; locked away behind bars,
Nothing left to do now, each day brings a new pain,
Yeah! Life goes on, lessons learnt; That's how we've been trained.

Nod your head, smile more and always be ready to lend,
Because that's the golden rule child; The one to make friends.
For that's how society works now; Talking more and communicating less,
This is the 21st century, the Modern World's mess.

Trudging along the same old path, faces blank and grey,
Feigning a smile when asked: 'How was your day?'
Hopes of a future which once seemed so bright,
Are now filled with questions of identity: Are we hiding it right?

Everyone's lost here trying to make their way,
Trying to cross the maze of life, looking for a ray
Maybe we've forgotten what it's like to feel anything at all,
Forgotten to listen, forgotten to understand.
Yes, that's what caused our downfall...

Maybe it's not too late to cross that mile,
Dream again, Hope again...
Life is too short to do anything but Smile.

Mishthi Rastogi | 2PSEco | 1730547

UGLY TRUTH

Masks we wear,
burdens we bear.
Just so the society,
Would treat us fair.

Leave aside the complaints
and think for a second or two.
Don't you judge them too?

Anju P | 2PSEco | 1730525

UNTITLED

Plastered smiles and tired eyes
Cried a river for there is no magic
Tears diluted with loneliness
Lips cracked and peeling with fear

But my eyes are aware, awake
Lined up with vessels of poetic prosaic
With light, dread and luminous hope of acceptance
and, my layers of poison
Look up towards the sky
And it looks delusional that,
Suspended scars of the air itself for
Your heartless heart and its heartbreak.

But I race, wait and sing.
So that ambivalent rain can seep through your porous voice
and echo through the vastness of that past
Innocent, wild and caged.

S V Vivekananda | 2PSEng | 1730313

AN ACCULTURATION SAGA - NRI Experience in India

Being born and brought up in the Gulf has its perks. Especially when you consider living in a place like Abu Dhabi, with its shimmering evening lights lining the pitch black Arabian Sea. The city that is awake even at the wee hours of midnight in all its glory. Ah! What a sight to behold, I thought to myself as I enjoyed the last bit of the place I had been living in all these years. It will be more than at least 4 months before I can catch a glimpse of this beautiful place again. Waving goodbye, and sitting back in my airline recliner I ponder over my cherished moments there. Leaving even for a matter of months is not a thing to be talked about. But no other options seemed to converge before me and maybe this was the best choice perhaps? I reckon so.

Post my grade 12, I was in a total fix on choosing my career path as I had a plethora of interests that crossed me and it was literally impossible to come to a consensus on the winning one. That is when my parents came up with the idea of letting me take a gap year. Although initially, I was quite bewildered, I finally settled on the suggestion. They proposed that I go to an institute in Kerala where they give a formation training and direct to courses in line with one's aptitude and interest. That sounded great to me as I would finally be able to make a reasonable and prudent decision, although at the cost of a year.

Joining the institute, I was in for a major culture shock owing to the different practices, way of living and mind-set of the people there. The clothing styles too were distinct and it was more traditional in nature. Being born and raised in the Gulf, the Malayalee slang way of talking among the youth and food habits here were vague and alien to me. I came to a realization that many people held a conservative mind-set on opposite-sex relations, clothing and various other areas for that matter. I'm definitely not generalizing, there may be exceptions to it but I'm quoting from personal first-hand instances and experiences. The topic of sex was a taboo, and hardly anyone publicly opened up about it and were diffident in their approach to it. They held many prejudices against NRIs and one of them was that all of us were rich. As a result, my friends at the institute kept me marginalized on the pretext that I was filthy rich and not their material. I had a hard time convincing them how wrong that notion was, and that NRI's too come from all types of financial backgrounds and being outside India doesn't necessarily make a person rich and opulent.

The streets, motorists, the roads, and the traffic were the rooms of disorganization. Coming from a country, where the streets are kept spick and span and traffic following set rules with everything functioning in an order and track, I was quite taken aback by the haphazard manner in which the streets were kept and traffic functioned here. The traffic situation was heavily chaotic and only an expert driver could get through Indian roads. Furthermore, there was unnecessary honking everywhere and I often felt greatly relieved to get

back safe after every road ride. The streets had garbage piled up in heaps, emitting a stench. It was a major eyesore to see. Another intriguing aspect of Kerala is the multitudinous amounts of strikes and protests that kept popping up every now and then disrupting everyday life. Not forgetting how surprised I was at the electricity being impeded constantly, but with time I realized that it was a normality here contrary to back home where we had 24/7 undisrupted electricity. All these came as matters of confoundment to me.

The problem of language was quite conspicuous. It was not because I didn't know Malayalam or they didn't know English. It was because most of them couldn't follow my way of speaking English. Their way of speaking English saw a wide discrepancy from mine. Back in Abu Dhabi, I was quite used to speaking in English with my peer groups, but it was quite different here. They only spoke in Malayalam among themselves. So if I had to join in, I had to converse in Malayalam as well, but English crept into the conversation and it was not liked by them. I was often given the deaf ear or asked to repeat a minimum of three times, or as a final resort, I would translate it to Malayalam, which initially vexed me and hampered effective communication.

Confronted with acculturation, two options diverged before me- either assimilate or integrate. After weighing the pros and cons of both I decided it would be best to integrate, that is I adopt the host culture and also retain the culture I've been brought up in. This would give me the advantage to maintain both cultures and have best of both worlds apart from being in harmony with the people where I live. To facilitate the integration process, I had to pass myself as one of them to fit in. Also, a change in my mindset was definitely incumbent for effective transition and integration. Physical and materialistic realms of adopting their style of dressing - wearing dhotis, picking up their slangs and way of talking, and changing my food habits also eased me through the process.

A year on, I feel I have successfully acculturated and integrated. The above-mentioned predicaments don't pose a distress anymore and I have gotten quite used to them. I'm really enjoying my stay and study here. These are social changes that happen at one point or another in a person's life. It made me realise and appreciate how different social structures are across countries and communities. This experience has helped me gain a better social awareness and has aided me to adjust to different social circumstances. Tactfully and strategically dealing with these changes will help us to better integrate with the society we live in, coexist in harmony and live a frabjous and hassle-free social life.

Joel Anto Jose | 2PSEng | 1730370



A perfect contrast.

Akanksha S Demta |4PSEng |1630311

MERITOCRACY: A System of Stratification in Schools

"All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others"- George Orwell

The first commandment of the post 1970s meritocracy can be summed up as follows: "Thou shall provide equality of opportunity to all, regardless of race, gender, or sexual orientation, but worry not about equality of outcomes." However, if we do not concern ourselves with the equality of outcome, we will, over time build a society with horrendous inequality of opportunity and herein lies the paradox of the so called noble system of meritocracy.

Schools and universities across the world today, proudly claim to work on the basis of merit and merit only. They claim to treat all their students fairly and in the same manner regardless of class, caste, and status. My school was no different, and to their credit, they did their best to ensure equality of opportunity. That is, of course, until the teachers began conducting class tests and giving assign-

ments after the first week of school. Inevitably, certain people performed better than others and soon an apparent hierarchy emerged. Despite the management's claim that extra-curricular activities (the use of the term extra itself indicates that it is considered less significant) and academics were given equal importance, students who were academically inclined received certain privileges that others did not. After I did well on the first set of tests, the strict teacher who was adamant about us being on time did not seem to mind as much when I ran to class five minutes late and the commerce teacher who threw people out of class for not bringing textbooks just told me not to forget again. When the class wanted permission to go watch the football match, they sent the toppers to the principal to ask. Soon, all those whose grades were below a B were made to sit in the front rows so that teachers could 'keep an eye' on them.

At the time, I did not think much of these subtle, seemingly insignificant incidents. Perhaps I thought of such meritocratic discrimination on the basis of grades as being insignificant as I was never adversely affected by it. However, when I begin to study sociological perspectives in university, where marks did not result in stratification to the aforementioned extent, I realised that the so called egalitarian system of fair treatment and evaluation that most schools boasted of was not so fair after all.

If one were to look at the system of meritocracy from the functionalist perspective, we would say that hierarchy and inequality are essential components that function to keep the system from crumbling. How could students be evaluated if not by grades? How would universities decide which students to grant admission to? How would the world know the extent of knowledge obtained by the student if it was not tested and the results of the test not expressed in a certain matter? The stratification based on academic performance is a means of primary reinforcement to motivate students to learn and study. Despite what we all like to believe, the stratification and competition resulting from grades is what keeps our school systems running. The division of youth into various categories of competence and intelligence based on grades is essential to the society as it often directly influences future prospects such as job placements. Despite being the bedrock of the education system as well as the most apparent and prominent type of inequality in a school setting, grade based hierarchy is only one of the many systems of stratification that operate in the broad institution of education.

Stratification based on merit is not limited to the classroom, but extends to the sports field, the corridor, and every other aspect of school life. People are divided into cliques characterised by numerous features. The so called popular kids usually consist of sports players, members of bands, student council members, etc. These students gain their membership in these groups or teams due to their abilities including aptitude for music, sports, dance, and even because they may be more extroverted than others and so, interact and make friends with peers quickly. Looking at high school cliques from a structural functionalist perspective, I would say that they are an indispensable part of life in school. They perform the function of being a support system and provide kinship.

A Marxist or a conflict theorist would, however, label the entire system of stratification in schools by grades or otherwise as unjust. More often than not, students with low grades are chastised more harshly than those with high grades. It is not unheard of for students who don't perform well in academics to be dubbed as stupid or labelled dunces by those who obtain higher grades. They are also denied of certain opportunities such as running for student council, applying for exchange programs, or joining sports teams, as eligibility requirements for all of the above include the attainment of certain minimum grades. There is also often a direct correlation between grades and prestige. Those who are not academically inclined are often thought of as being less intelligent and their opinions are given less weightage.

The significance given to grades also cause alienation of students from their peers due to the stress and the time commitment needed to obtain straight 'A's. Ironically, they are also alienated from the content they are learning as the focus is on marks rather than not understanding and applying the information. The conflict approach supports the claim that the concept of merit is being used to justify the privileges extended to certain students at the expense of others. The methods of evaluation of intelligence, competence, and hard work are designed to favour certain abilities and talents over others.

Often, the various cliques in schools come to resemble a system that is frighteningly similar to the caste system. Some of the so called popular groups begin harassing, bullying, and exerting domination over other students, and social mobility between these circles is extremely low. Despite sounding as though it belongs in a typical film or television show set in a fictional high school such as the High

School Musical franchise, such stratification is present in several schools even today.

Rather than dubbing it as being desirable or undesirable, Symbolic interactionism offers a fresh perspective on the much contended topic of academic evaluation. Despite research that proves otherwise, grades are thought of as reflecting of a person's intellect. As a society, we have attached meaning to numbers and alphabets, and used them to create a system of stratification in the academic world. The letter A is no longer just an indefinite article, but a source of inspiration and motivation. The status of a 'straight A student' is coveted and craved by many as it demands prestige.

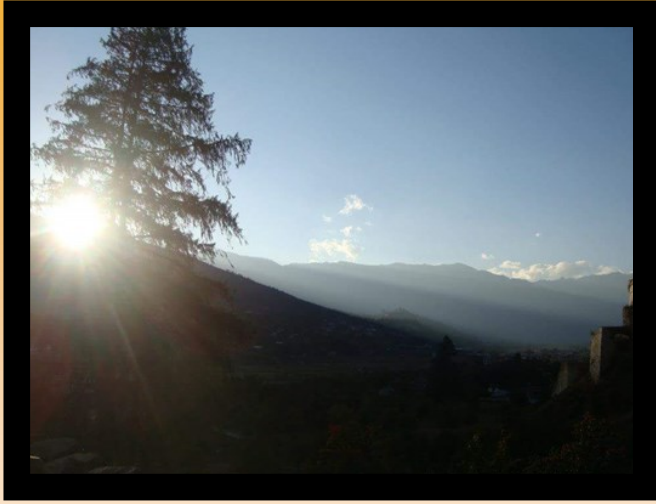
The term meritocracy was coined by Michael Young in his 1958 dystopian satire *'The Rise of Meritocracy'*. Young's neologism, 'meritocracy', has since been transformed from a pejorative term to a positive ideal against which we measure the fairness and justness of our institutions. Justice, social cohesion, progress, fairness and transparency, these are the timeless ideas upon which meritocracy is presumed to rest. However, after viewing what we presume is the ideal schooling system through the layered lens of sociological perspectives, I find myself re-evaluating what I consider fair and whether a meritocracy is even truly merit based. After all, as the saying goes, we cannot judge a fish by its ability to climb trees.

Upasana Nallari | 4PSECO | 1630547



Stairway to Heaven.

Karishma Agarwal 4PSECO 1630575



She expresses her agony through her own canvas

Karishma Agarwal | 4PSEco | 1630575

HUMAN SECURITY

A perplexing paradox of skyscrapers and slums, the diversity and multidimensionality of the Indian social dynamic make the study of human development and well-being a complicated, multifaceted one. Having made impressive strides in the economic front, India now faces a myriad of daunting challenges in the wake of a complex socioeconomic metamorphosis. Considered to be one of the largest and fastest growing economies in the world, India's GDP continues to climb while the citizens are left flailing to find the so-called corresponding improvement in welfare. An atmosphere of increasing animosity, dread, unrest, and intolerance has made the expression of the 'gasping economic elephant' more accurate than we would like it to be.

At the centre of the dynamic, accelerating flux of human development in India, is the concept of human security. The United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security defines human security as 'freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom to live in dignity'. Traditionally, the idea of human security referred to safety from military aggression or mass violence. Today, human security is a much broader, and more comprehensive conceptualisation involving various kinds of threats to human freedom, safety, and fulfilment. As the face of development in India slowly changes, the issues that cast a massive shadow over the daily lives of the people, especially those residing in the choked urban sectors are those involving personal and communal safety and security.

Personal safety plays a mammoth role in determining the level of well-being of a person or a state. The extent to which a person feels safe in their society determines the extent to which they utilise their right to freedom of speech and unrestricted movement. Though this may not strictly adhere to the traditional concept of economic welfare, there is largely a consensus that Amartya Sen's idea of 'freedom is development' is quite significant to human development. Data from the Human Development Report (HDR) of 2015 shows a relatively

high positive correlation between GDP, HDI (Human development Index), and indicators of human security.

Whether it is domestic, sexual, communal, or otherwise, violent tendencies and crimes of any kind always result in a steep drop in human welfare and economic output. A textbook example would be Kashmir. A land literally torn apart at the seams, Kashmir's economic growth is negligible. The application of the Armed forces special powers act (AFSPA) in the region coupled with the constant unrest and violence has made it an unappealing investment destination, crippling the local artisans and tourism industries, thus leaving people in penury with bleak employment prospects, ultimately stagnating the economy. The inability to leave one's home without the fear of being detained and interrogated hinders access to proper education and healthcare services. The seizure of rights to freedom, justice, dignity, and privacy does not form an environment conducive to human development. The alarmingly similar circumstances prevalent in the seven sister states prevent most people in the region from developing capabilities and achieving functionalities. The terror of militancy and implementation of AFSPA increases the threat to personal security significantly and raises the question of whether the region is developing or merely growing.

The emphasis on freedom by the constitution is constantly undermined by political leaders as well as the public. Lynching, moral policing, and violence in the name of religion, justice, and nationalism are ordinary happenings. From events such as the historic communal riots in Gujarat and the violence in Bangalore due to the Cauvery water row, to butchers being beaten after the beef ban and the recent lynching in Jharkhand, people are increasingly afraid for their safety. Without consciously realising it, we seem to have internalised and normalised the nagging fear for our safety pulling at the back of our minds when we take a taxi at night or walk into a market in shorts. According to Indian Express, 2015 saw the registration of over three and a half lakh cases in crimes against women category.

Perhaps the fear comes from increased media coverage, and we're all overreacting. Perhaps we should just trust the law and calm ourselves down. However, the outrage isn't unwarranted. The fear of being the 1 out of 5 women who faces some form of sexual assault is too great to take a chance. After all, they all seem to believe one's safety is in one's hands. So we cover up, go home before it gets 'too late', glance at our surroundings warily, and walk away quickly. It is rather apparent that despite increasing levels of income, education, health etc., our streets are not safe. However, it cannot be denied that the crime rates are falling and wider media coverage and social media have pushed issues of personal security into the limelight causing large scale awareness and a trotting movement for change. As unconvincing as it may seem, we are doing more than climbing a trajectory of economic growth. India may be far from the finish line, but it hasn't stopped trudging.

Upasana Nallari | 4PSECO | 1630547

OCTOPUS OF THE MIND

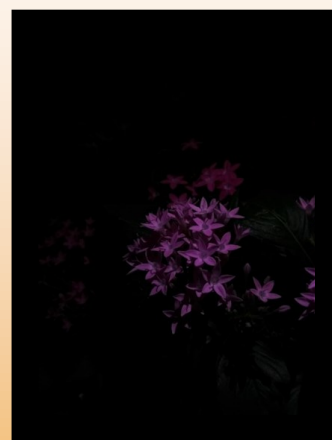
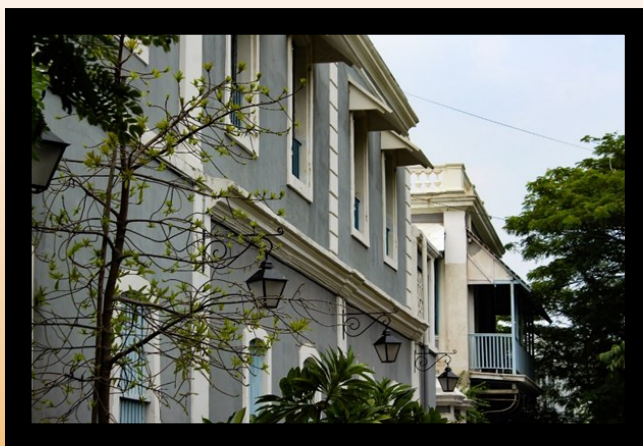


Inspired by the Gothic theme, the painting is a portrayal of how individuals have a vast array of complex thoughts, moods feelings, emotions, conflicts and actions, which result in numerous and varied effects on others. The significance of the title lies in the fact that, just like an octopus is shown as a symbol of fickleness, in my opinion, the society and people too are undergoing changing states of excitement, stress, optimism, pessimism, hope for the future and fear and confusion, all at once. There is no sense of stability. This is due to rapid changes and fluctuations in individuals' relationships. people's attempts to express and understand themselves, geopolitical and diplomatic imbalances, and rapid technological and socioeconomic developments.

In other words, the painting shows both the individual mind and the social mind today.

The painting may be seen both upright and upside down to show different perspectives of the individual and social mind, which viewers may figure out using their perceptions and experiences.

Anshu Pal | 4PSEng | 1630379



Surampudi Phani Datta | 2 EPS | 1730720

“Living in urban areas made entirely of brick and cement, man is losing his connection with nature and everything it has to offer...We fail to look at what has always been around and what will still be long after we are gone.”

Tanika Goyal | 6PSECO | 1530540

“I feel that we are all connected and linked to every bit of the environment. Be it as individuals or groups, we are all related to our surroundings. Our environment acts as a reflection of our inner life, reflecting all our joys and sorrows. This is the environment that we humans are destroying and bringing to ruins.”-

Merilyn Sunny | 6EPS | 1530735

“I turn towards the religious perspective when I think of how I connect with nature. Everything from the sun to the moon, the forests, rivers and lakes, the animals, they're all the most beautiful gifts from God. For to me, nature is the most perfect example of heaven on earth. “

Evelyn Charles | 6PSECO | 1530547

“Appreciating nature is important to connect with it, I also think that acts of environmentalism such as recycling, segregation of waste and use of public transport/carpooling all display one's empathy towards their surroundings. And I try my best to partake in such activities and to do my bit for the environment.”

Anakha Varma | 6PSECO | 1530545

“In the rat race of the city life, we have forgotten the influence of nature on our well-being and have ignored it in the pursuit of material success.”

Delsey Joseph Pulimootil | 6PSECO | 1530558

“Humans play a vital role in nature just like everything else. What separates us from nature is the ability to understand our place within it. This cognitive capacity of ours has historically been the cause of a perceived division between man and nature.”

--Darshan Ashar | 6EPS | 1530751

Connecting with Nature

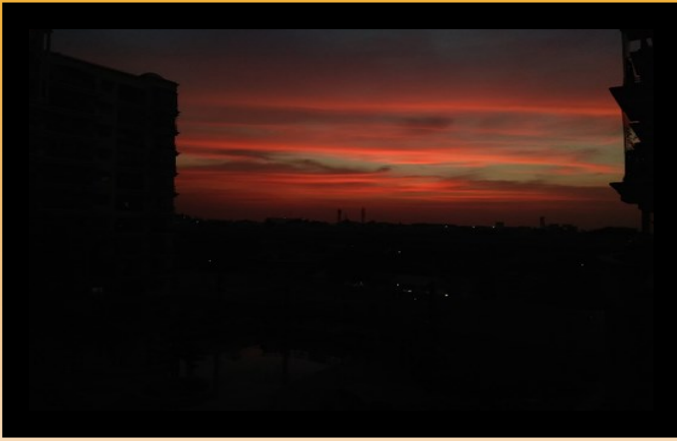
“According to me, being one with nature doesn't only mean appreciating the beauty of nature. In a way, it also highlights the responsibilities we have towards nature as individuals, and as a community of individuals who depend on nature for their very survival.”

Aishwarya Suresh | 6PSECO | 1530510

“Nature has always been a source of incredible comfort and solace for me whenever I experience an emotional outburst.

Sitting in a natural space like a park, or a garden, with my music plugged in is therapeutic to me as I like observing the changing hues of the evening sky and enjoying the silence of surroundings.”

Saumya Bhatia | 6PSENG | 1530338



Actions speak louder than words. Colours speak louder than actions.

Karishma Agarwal | 4PSEco | 1630575

PERSONAL AND GLOBAL TRAGEDIES

You can't save the planet. All of us together, the human race as a collective, might not be able to save the planet. How did we get here again? Doesn't it seem like just a few hundred years ago it was tree worship and sword-swinging? One epoch ago it was all monkey business and pig hunting. Just how exactly did we reach the level of conveyor-belt slaughterhouses and lakes flaming from pollution?

The panacea for this question of "what's wrong with the planet?" has come to be the 'tragedy of the commons', that great phenomena which effectively explains to us how we all think "ah, he'll do it why should I?" The sad truth is that nobody gets around to "doing it", nobody takes responsibility for common natural resources, and out of our ignorance and lethargy, the plight of the commons is born. We've all heard that story before, though. And for reasons that we'll look into later, we just don't care. "Give us something new" our brains seem to be beckoning to us. Let's see two expansions of this tragedy, how it operates in different spheres and on different scales.

The first idea is the tragedy of the global commons, how large scale damage is accruing to nature. This is happening in great part due to ignorant and shanty governance. It is a quite horrifying reality that our most basic procrastination tendencies carry over from our schools into organisations and even governments. The same way we put off our assignments till the submission date and often overlook details, governments will make policy decisions that cost lives and often say 'it was a rushed job' (RBI during the 2016 demonetisation). Even the so-called natural conservation projects like dams and parks are in fact causing a great deal of damage to the environment.

Why should you care? Well to be frank, maybe you shouldn't, because in the tragedy of the global commons, the average individual living from home to work and back cannot make a significant difference. This is not to say that someone holding a significant position in governance or media, academia etc. or someone with a lot of passion cannot shape the currents of change that is much

needed. The thinking is that most people will not operate at this level, and should not be confused with sheer defeatism.

Still feeling like we have no control in matters whatsoever? Fear not, because the next idea expresses just the opposite sentiment: how every individual has an active choice to make in saving or destroying the planet. The concept is tragedy of the uncommon or a personal tragedy, if you may. Over time, it's not just non-human natural resources that have changed or depleted, but also the human natural resource. We often forget in our musing of "What We are doing to nature" that we are in fact a part of nature, not some external influence.

The conditions in which each individual lives have changed, and a lot of people, especially in poorer regions of the world face terrible living conditions. In our cities it seems difficult that we can make a difference at all. But to think about it, if you were to simply not litter on the streets that you commute on every day, the absence of your garbage alone could make a sizeable change in the area. This is just a very obvious and tiny example of how we actually have power to regulate the atmosphere of our personal spheres. In these personal spheres, people actually do have a say in undoing the tragedy of the uncommon.

What has compelled me and perhaps has crossed some of your minds as well is the question of why all the data in the world regarding natural degradation does not seem to work in getting people to care. Why will we probably forget reading even this very article when we move on with our daily fast-paced city lives? My speculation is that all of the information & data we have on the tragedies of nature will continue to be disengaging so long as they remain in the form of data and information.

People don't want to hear about a dreary statistic, they want narratives. It is part of the human condition that we find narratives compelling, and hence we must tell the tale of tragedy, rather than merely reporting the damage in dollars. This is perhaps why traditional communities had such a strong connection with nature. They had tales and stories that personified natural elements and compelled the citizens to respect and revere nature. Since then we have shifted from a sensory mode of life & thought to a more Cartesian existence, and have lost that archaic bond with nature somewhere along the way.

Lastly, we must engage in conservation for our own sakes. We do not have to protect the earth, but rather protect our own lives. The planet has been around for billions of years. Things like plastic aren't destroying the earth; they're destroying our ability to sustain our lifestyle on this earth. In an ideal world everyone is moved by the actions of man, and strive to voice opinions in the tragedy of the global commons. But in the actual world, everyone can still be aware enough to curtail the tragedy of the uncommon, to make a difference in their personal spheres. The collective betterment in individual personal spheres can still be felt as betterment in the global sphere.

Angad Devgan | 6PSEco | 1530502

THE CONSCIENTIOUS COMMUNITY: An Introduction to Environmental Sociology

Environmental degradation, resource scarcity and climate change are terms that are gaining attention in every discipline today. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005) outlined the linkages between ecosystem services and human well-being. It further warned that the disastrous impacts of unchecked environmental destruction would be catastrophic in the years to come if no major policy changes were adopted soon. The Economics of Climate Change (Stern, 2008) studied the adverse effects of global warming on the economic strategies and growth policies of countries, especially developing nations. Sociology as a discipline has for many years now concerned itself with problems that limit human potential and development. The popularity of environmental sociology as a separate and distinct branch is thus hardly surprising in the light of rather disturbing reports of the impact of ecological plunder. Sociology seeks to study society, social organization, patterns and change, among others. Environmental sociology in its essence studies the interrelationship between society and the environment, and hence draws conclusions about the relationship between energy shortages and the stratification system or the socioeconomic status and the exposure to pollution.

The emergence of Environmental Sociology has also created a new paradigm in the approach to study society. Environmental sociologists argue that the differences between various paradigms like the structural-functionalist, conflict, interactionist or ethnographic have been exaggerated. These approaches, however diverse they may seem, are alike in their shared anthropocentrism. Classical sociology uniformly adheres to the “human exceptionalism paradigm” which views human beings as a unique species due to their possession of culture and thus assumes that progress is limitless, making all social problems ultimately soluble (Catton and Dunlap, 1978).

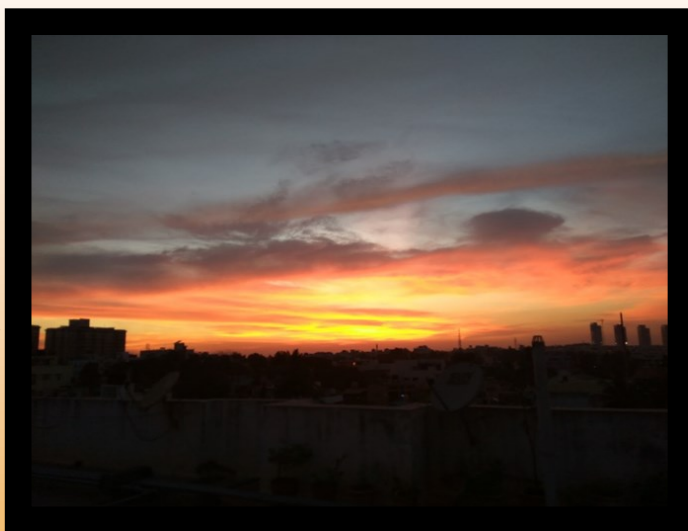
The human exceptionalism paradigm was acceptable when resources were plenty and the threat of disaster was not looming over the human species as it is today. However, in recent times the “new environmental paradigm” has transformed sociological approaches. The recognition of mutual dependence of earth’s species as well as the physical and biological limits to economic growth has resulted in the emergence of a discipline that takes account of the consequences of potentially harmful and ecologically destructive policies: environmental sociology. Growing awareness of the potential threats posed by climate change, especially to economic growth and alleviation of poverty has result-

ed in the recognition of this discipline as an essential and unique branch of sociology. Environmental sociologists work with governments, policy-makers and NGOs to ensure the passage of sustainable policies.

The popularity of this discipline has also resulted from a parallel shift in the attitude of economists and other social scientists to adopting the new environmental paradigm. For example, Amartya Sen and Jean Dréze have proposed the idea that development and environmental preservation must be viewed as mutual rather than opposing factors. This is because the idea of development as the enhancement of human capability rather than as an increase in real income requires such factors as environmental purity and health to be taken into account (Dréze & Sen, 2013). It is thus in the interest of governments, including those of developing nations to encourage environmentally sensitive approaches to development, rather than fundamental growth-centered ones.

Environmental sociology studies the effects of society on the environment, and the effects of the environment on society. This relatively new branch of sociology could be critical in increasing public awareness around environmental concerns and ensuring a sustainable growth path in developing nations. Sociology is moving more and more towards the acceptance of the new environmental paradigm along with a consideration for the social world inclusive of ecosystems. This shift away from anthropocentrism is much needed in a discipline that has the potential to influence major policies and contribute to a sustainable future.

Michelle Nazraeth | 4PSEng | 1630527



When the sun falls, lights rise.

Neha | 4PSEng | 1630387

SKIES FOR A THOUSAND MILES|

Skies for a thousand miles,
and eyes still here
thirsty for another moment
in which to live and die

Does the echo of my
ancient music ring
into trees of past centuries

and a million miles of water
have flown into the sea
yet I drink from the same
stream

Jump into this river and
drown yourself in a bed
of blossomed flowers
and live in the world.
but not be of it.

FENCES

The sky is bright today,
yet we cannot see the light
with broken glasses we see
the fences which are covered in rust

trees are uprooted,
there is no one here anymore
birds had once made nests here
now all we have are broken branches

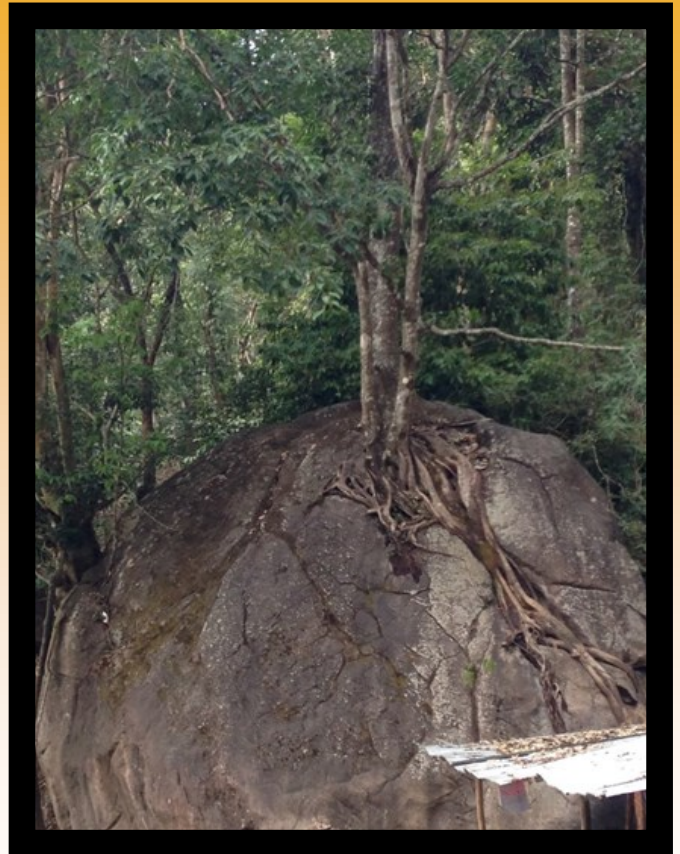
there is no one to mend these fences,
we can only gaze at the stars
and hope for another chance

NIGHT WALKS

notes burnt
keys forgotten
music heard

night walks by apple orchards,
dreams fired into
unknown souls
now playing;Life

Chiramal Aakaash Francis | 6PSEco | 1530504



Much often humanity must visit the roots of time.
For, a man without knowledge of his past, is like a
house on unstable grounds.

Vishaka Bhat K | 4 PSEng | 1630386



The air is clear, the sky is blue. Mother na-
ture, take me with you.

Karishma Agarwal | 4PSEco | 1630575

THE SEVENTH HEAVEN

I see what Nature's Beauty beholds me
My feet dipped in cold yet soothing water
Laying on my back and with closed eyes,
Reminiscing what I had seen as a child...
Walking down a path which shines like gold,
With either side are statuesque trees and
Enticing wild flowers;
This shade made by the leaves shield me
From the piercing rays of sunlight!
Leaving me astonished of how nature's beauty is!

I open my eyes once again and turn back to see
The sight in front of me;
Dry, brown leaves decorating the ground,
All those trees looking high and majestic!
Elegant flowers shining in various colours of light!
But that's not what is bringing me joy or that peace...
Water flowing down in a slow pace through
Its transparent and silvery form!
Flowing on those boulders, they join their mates
And with that sunshine falling on them, one can say
How beautiful are those boulders
Which looks like shiny, black diamonds?
Looks frothy, but with sunlight
I see different colours produced in this form...
Dipping my hand, I push those droplets out
Making them look like tiny gems!
I am here, all by myself, joyous
Yet content with Nature's surprise.
Closing my eyes, I whisper to myself,
"I am in my Seventh Heaven!"

Kavya Manjunath | 2PSEng | 1730375

NATURE



Nature is a place of refreshment and rejuvenation of life energy. The true meaning of beauty and grandeur lies in the womb of nature. Belonging to a traditional village community has its own advantages. Here, one can find perfect blend of nature and human interaction. The time that I spent in my native place increased my respect towards nature. It is a spiritual place where a sense of oneness and integration with one's own self can be found. One can also find tranquillity of mind and soul here. Nature also goes beyond this and sprouts a sense of excitement. Nature with its magnanimity will capture attention without any doubt.

Nature is not a place for business nor is it just a commercial commodity. It has its own system of working and its own dynamic rhythm of working. The thought of overpowering this giant and absolute system and harming it is irrational on the part of human thinking.

Rashmi R Sharma | 6PSEng | 1630388

CONNECTING WITH NATURE

Often, nature is absent in our equation of daily life. In this rush of life, in the midst of processed products, we forget about nature. We remind ourselves of the importance of nature only when it is exploited or taken for granted by others. Nature has become a foreign, glorified concept that we don't personally associate with anymore.

Our ancestors lived as one with nature, consuming what they needed. but taking care of nature at the same time. Unlike us, they lived in harmony with nature. The notions of protecting nature is given the spotlight only when there is some environmental issue or threat; like when human lives are lost because of some calamity. During these times, delegates from different parts of the world come together to discuss these issues. However, the irony is that they make these decisions or find "solutions" in air conditioned buildings, far away from nature.

We buy mineral water, unaware that 3 times the amount of that bottled water goes into its production. We use air conditioners, unaware of its consequences on the environment. We do so many things as part of our daily life, blatantly ignorant of the dire environmental effects. We are oblivious because to us, a healthy environment does not matter. However, we cannot keep digging into the earth's resources and exploiting Mother Nature and expect her to thrive and support us forever. If we continue at this rate, there will be no more nature. If there is no nature, there will be no mankind.

Melissa Monteiro | 6PSEng | 1530535

CAPTIVATINGLY COLD

I once remember an incident when me and my family went to Shimla on a winter break. Since my dad loved driving, instead of going in a bus or hiring a driver, we decided to drive ourselves to Shimla from Chandigarh. My dad suggested that since the weather outside was sunny, he promised that he would take us for skiing once we arrived. On hearing this my sister and I gulped down our food in excitement.

On our way to the skiing resort, we saw gigantic, beautiful mountains topped with snow on the summits, and exquisite trees like the Silver Fir and The Spruce. I honestly could not believe my eyes as the view was so serene, it looked like a scene from a movie. As we were on our way my dad realised that we were on the wrong road, on the shady side of the mountain. That stretch of the

road was very dingy and cold with minimal sunlight, and the entire road was covered with a sheet of icy snow. We could see that the way ahead on the road was very steep and dangerous.

If my dad had not stopped the car and analysed the situation on time, our car could have easily slipped off the road. The car had already climbed onto the icy sleet and it was nearly impossible for my dad to reverse the car as one small mistake could skid the car into the opposite direction. At that point, my dad instructed my sister and me to get out of the car and collect leaves and branches from the trees nearby. Even though we did not want to leave our dad alone in the car, we realised that the only way to make sure that the car reversed properly was to collect those leaves and branches and put them under the tyres of the car.

Finally, we had collected enough leaves and twigs to put them under the back tyres and waited with baited breath as my dad nervously switched the engine on, clutching the steering wheel in a tight grip. The car initially was not able to move but with persistent efforts of my dad it finally reversed back in the right direction. When the car was finally out of the danger zone my sister and I immediately got into the car and hugged my father.

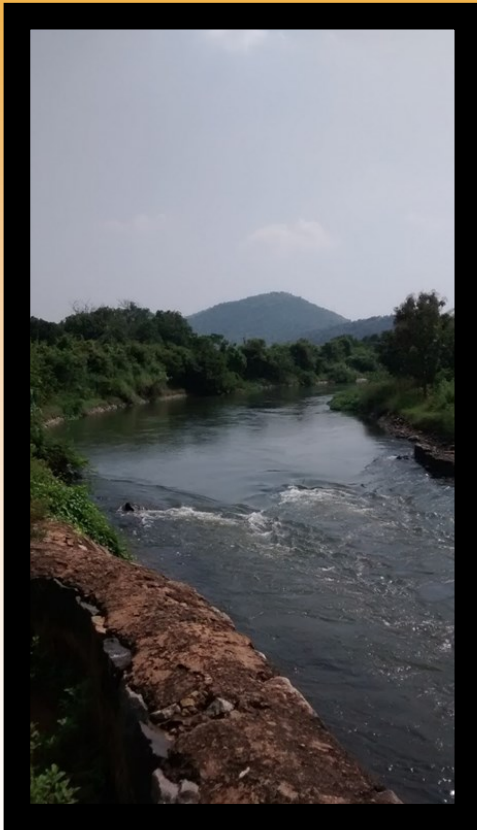
More than any of the activities and places that we visited in Shimla, this incident is unforgettable. I learnt that when we get mesmerised by the beauty of the nature, we should always be wary of the underlying dangers because nature can also take you through the toughest of times and teach you greatest of lessons.

Isha Jaswal | 6 PSEco | 1530561



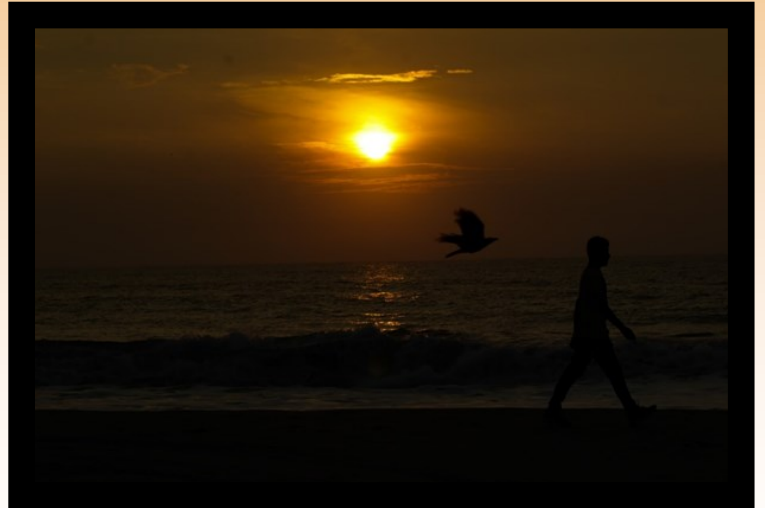
Amidst chaos, confusion, traffic of mind and physical; Above lies serenity.

Akanksha S Demta | 4PSEng | 1630311



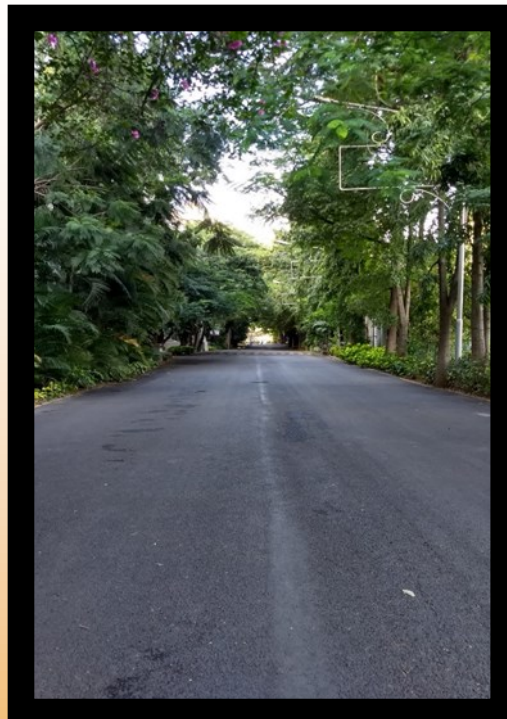
Torpid, Rapids, Flowing, Pausing,
Gushing, Rushing, Peace.

Akanksha S Demta | 4PSEng | 1630311



A place where nature happens to host everyone,
the human, the non-human beings and the materials.
And it happens in a manner where one is
left dazzled.

Surampudi Phani Datta | 2 EPS | 1730720



Our life is like this path, never ending.

Akanksha S Demta | 4PSEng | 1630311