

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, POLITICAL SCIENCE & HISTORY



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A LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Hello, readers!

It has been a long road to the publication of the first issue of The Athenian. Starting a newsletter is not something we thought we could do. It was a concept that we are proud to see taking shape today. This newsletter is named after Athena, the Greek Goddess of wisdom, art and skill—all the values it embodies.

The Athenian aims to serve as not only an informative newsletter, but also a platform for students to express their creative and literary talents.

This issue signifies change and progress, but is most importantly, an endeavour to discover roads less travelled.

We are indebted to Dr. Fr. Jose CC without whose encouragement and foresight, The Athenian would have only been an idea. We would also like to thank everyone involved in making this maiden issue a reality.

We trust this newsletter serves its purpose and we wish you a wonderful read!

Drishti Baliga Deepika Ravishankar

SANGAM TWO DAYS OF EXHILARATION!



The celebration of Sangam, the national level fest hosted by Vrittanta, the Undergraduate Students' Association of the Dept. of International Studies and History, CHRIST (Deemed to be University) took place on the 5th and 6th of September 2019. It saw a participation of around 150 students across 7 thrilling events.

The first and also the flagship event of Sangam, the Young Statesman Award, a day-long event, was conducted on the first day and 18 teams contested heatedly over 3 rounds for the top award. It was a truly enriching experience for their arguments were well structured and put forth and the contestants themselves were highly knowledgeable.

Day 2 saw six events happening simultaneously; each more exciting than the other. There was a rush of joy as regular classes were foregone and the

student body was allowed to witness the events.

Expressions, the street-play competition and no doubt the most happening event, had 4 teams going head-to-head on the theme of 'Prism of Possibilities'. A plethora of subjects such as addiction, gambling, drunk driving, depression, body-shaming was portrayed in a way that pushed the audience to connect with the realities of life.

An interesting event was Movie Analysis. With 8 teams of 2 participants each, they were first quizzed on critically acclaimed movies before a discussion was initiated on themes in movies that are relevant to today's world, like feminism. A list of socially relevant movies was then given to the participants who chose one and



analysed it thoroughly.

The two politically charged events were the Crisis Committee and the Youth Parliament that had a rage of participation! The former had around 30 participants representing various countries. They first presented their handle numerous crises. The Youth Parliament with 40 MPs had stimulating discussions on the main topic of 'Rethinking Federalism in India' with focus on the abrogation of Article 370, financial issues between states along with debate on a Bill on the Secessionist Movement in India with special reference to Kerala. Awards were given to the Best Parliamentarian and the Best Speaker.



The most entertaining events were the Music and Dance events. The music event, 'Synchronous', was a group event in which four teams of 3-6 members and 1 compulsory instrumentalist took part. It was conducted in two rounds testing the participants' singing and creative skills as well as how they would work under pressure. The whole event was greatly mesmerising and Swetha Menon of 5HEP said, "It was very innovative and a pleasure to experience." The dance event had four teams of 4-7 participants who performed energetically to genres ranging from contemporary to south Indian. The audience cheered and whooped and the entire atmosphere was electric!



The art event had 8 teams of 2 each creating pieces on the theme, 'India as a Unipolar Power in the World'. The highlight of the competition was that the paintings were done on plywood provided to the participants. The result was an exquisite collection of paintings that beautifully captured the students' imagination.

The fest ended with a rousing valedictory function. The two days of Sangam 2019 were not only enormous fun but also indelible, especially for the third years. The memories created and friendships forged are not to be easily forgotten.

Drishti Baliga 4 HEP

Photo Credits: Sangam Media Team

THE CITIZENSHIP CIRCUS: HOW THE NRC HAS WARPED THE LIVES OF IMMIGRANTS

The National Register of Citizens is a list maintained by the Government of India, of relevant information of all genuine citizens since the 1951 Census. The objective of the process of the NRC is to identify "illegal" immigrants and deport them to their native countries. Recently, the north-eastern state of Assam has updated its list due to the cross-border 'illegal' immigration, especially from Bangladesh, which has been resented by locals.

The All Assam Students' Union (AASU) started a movement which demanded the identification and eventual deportation of such illegal immigrants. This movement lasted for about 6 years. It eventually led to the signing of the Assam Accords in 1985. This

guaranteed citizenship to people who could prove, with documentary evidence that either they or their ancestors were born in the state of Assam before March 25, 1971 which was set as the cut-off date. The key element of that accord was the detection of illegal immigrants, the deletion of their names from electoral rolls, and their deportation (to Bangladesh).

In the wake of the Bangladesh Liberation War (1971) and the slaughter of Bangladeshi intelligentsia, students and religious minorities, an estimated 10 million people fled East Pakistan and a percentage of them entered India through Assam driven by well-founded fears of persecution. The immigrant settlers in Assam now faced the threat of deportation, under the laws established through the Assam Accords. While the task was sought to be accomplished with the help of tribunals set up under the IMDT Act and in keeping with the provisions of the Foreigners Act, the whole exercise proved farcical and eventually ended in a failure with the

Supreme Court striking down the Act in 2005. The situation meandered till 2013, when the Supreme Court ordered that work on the NRC be completed without further delay.

Assam's tortuous experience with preparing its NRC, first mooted in 1951 ultimately saw its completion in 2018 in accordance with the Supreme Court directions. The final list updated in the NRC has stripped citizenship away from nearly 19 lakh people in Assam. The people whose names are not in the list will now have to appear before the Tribunal and fight for

cut-off date is that if a person is born in India in 1971, but their parents crossed the border in that very year, then they would still be considered an illegal immigrant today.

Bulk of the excluded are the poorest of the poor, a considerable majority of them constituting women and children. The six detention camps across Assam can hold only up to 3000 people each and "illegal" immigrants have been stuck here in a legal circus with no end in sight as neither the government nor the courts know what to do with immigrants who lose their case in the Foreigners Tribunal. There are no repatriation treaties with Bangladesh. The cases aren't being given the attention they deserve as the Tribunals aren't equipped to deal with thousands of appeals. Administrative lapses, procedural inadequacies, institutional failures have added to the precariousness. The people excluded from the list are left disillusioned and vulnerable as they have no understanding of the process of inclusion and exclusion or the workings of the NRC and modes of functioning of the Foreigners Tribunal.

The NRC updation process which originally appeared as a panacea to the long standing Detection of illegal immigrants, has sparked nation-wide controversies on the ambiguities surrounding the efficiency and the operation of the judicial system of India and the kind of treatment being meted

out to foreigners and immigrants. The current initiative, even if wellintentioned and successful, would prove to be of little use without prevention of the arrival of migrants. Deportation being a largely unfeasible alternative, the efforts of the government need to be complemented by effective border management on the eastern front through smart fencing. The task ahead is enormous and highly complex, the biggest challenge as also the real responsibility of the Indian state lies in just and sensitive handling of the whole range of issues besides securing just and dignified life for all.

> Deepika Ravishankar 4 HEP



Varija M (2 HEP)

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE KHMER ROUGE: THE CAMBODIAN GENOCIDE



Cambodia, or the then Democratic Kampuchea, had undergone the darkest period of its history in the mid-1970s in the form of the Cambodian Genocide which claimed the lives of nearly 2 million Cambodians. This article aims at evaluating the rise and fall of the Khmer Rouge and Pol Pot, its leader.

RISE OF THE KHMER ROUGE:

The Communist Party of Kampuchea or the Khmer Rouge rose to prominence following French colonisation and was also significantly influenced by the Vietnamese communist reign. Cambodia, as any third-world nation under the colonial rule, witnessed mass mobilisation under Communist leadership which was fuelled by the Indo-China war of the 1950s. The party became an official political party by 1968.

Cambodia's animosity towards the West was nurtured following the American backed coup against Prince Sihanouk in 1970, which deposed him and Marshal Lon Nol gained power. The Khmer Rouge forged an alliance with Prince Sihanouk thus scripting the civil war and the political legitimisation of the Khmer Rouge through the rise of Pol Pot. The Khmer Rouge ousted the American backed government on April 17, 1975, and seized control of Phnom Penh.

The Khmer Rouge received substantial aid from Mao's China between 1970 and 1975 due to the strategic importance of Cambodia against the ties between the Soviet Union and Vietnam. It is also a fact that the rise of the Khmer Rouge and Pol Pot was partly due to the influence of the Sino Communist Party under Mao Zedong. Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge and the CCP alliance exhibited ideological affinity.



RULE OF POL POT:

Pol Pot borrowed the policies of Mao like the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution further the revolution instigated by the Khmer Rouge. The Khmer Rouge embraced the tidea of communes to transform the society into a classless one along the Maoist lines of Marxism-Leninism. The government then began the process of emptying the city population to labour camps and employing them in collectivised farms. The labour camps exhibited inhuman practices of physical abuse, disease, exhaustion and starvation.

Pol Pot declared the year 1975 as "Zero Hour", as he promised to rebuild the New Republic. The assiduous vilification of the intellectual class comprising students, academics, doctors, journalists, artists, the rich, while also singling out the religious minorities for persecution, was prevalent. This philosophy resembles that of the Cultural Revolution in China where Mao openly advocated the humiliation and persecution of those who were deemed to be enemies of the state. The manufacturing of the enemy from within defined the communist rule in Cambodia.

Pol Pot declared, "To stop the weeds you must also pull up the roots" targeting children who were not exempt from the persecution. This brutality was evident in the establishment of 'killing camps' in

the later stages, which used starvation as a means to rid the society of "undesirable population".

THE FALL OF THE KHMER ROUGE:

The fall of the Khmer Rouge regime was scripted with the Cambodia-Vietnamese conflict of 1977 and the subsequent invasion of Vietnam in 1979 which overthrew the regime of Pol Pot. This was followed by an installation of the socialist regime with the defectors of the Khmer Rouge. Many of the previously governing elites fled to Thailand and several others to Thai villages, launching guerrilla warfare against Vietnam.

Cambodia under the rule of the Khmer Rouge and Pol Pot witnessed the worst mass killings of the twentieth century that claimed an estimated 1.5-2 million lives. The Cambodian genocide between 1975 and 1979 remains a blot on the post-colonial history of Cambodia.

Nikhil Jois 4 HEP

PUBLIC SECTOR BANK MERGERS

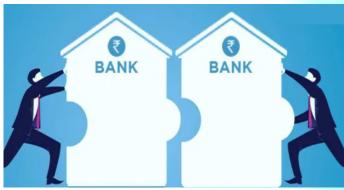


The Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitaraman recently announced the amalgamation of public sector banks (PSBs) with the proposed plan to merge 10 PSU banks to form four larger banks, resulting in the overall count of public sector banks in India falling to 12 from 27 in 2017.

This idea originally conceived in 1991-92 by the Narasimham Committee was adopted and implemented by the Narendra Modi government in its first term. The process initiated with the merger of State Bank of India (SBI) and its subsidiaries and Bank of Baroda with Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank in 2018. The second round of mergers came in late August this year with the announcement of four more mergers: Punjab National Bank with Oriental Bank and United Bank, Canara Bank with Syndicate Bank, Indian Bank with Allahabad Bank, and Union Bank with Corporation Bank and

Andhra Bank. The resulting institution of Punjab National Bank with Oriental Bank and United Bank will become the secondlargest public sector bank in India.

The positive side to this mega-merger decision is that 10 PSBs will get a total of 55,250 crore capital from the government and 88 percent of all PSB businesses will be with these consolidated banks. Ms. Sitharaman said that the PSBs would appoint a Chief Risk Officer and longer terms would be given to directors on management committees to ensure continuity and smooth transition. The merger will reduce the cost of operation for banks and will broaden their geographical reach. This union will also lead to the availability of a bigger scale of expertise that will help reduce the inefficiency they had as smaller banks.



The move is also said to have been made with due consideration of the compatibility of technology platforms which makes it much easier for banks and customers. The FM reiterated that this move is in lieu of the 5 trillion economy goal of the Modi 2.0 government.

However, on the other side, many have raised questions on the negative impact it could have on an economy that is already slowing down. Some share concerns that the mergers will force banks to focus on internal and operational issues rather than growth. Few banks also had a regional audience that the merger has taken out of the equation. Some argue that there are no 'global scale' banks being formed with the largest Public Sector Undertaking that resulted from the merger failing to even rank in the top 100 largest banks in the world.

The remunerations of this consolidation thus, are still far from being conclusive. However, it definitely is a massive step towards change but whether it is a welcome change or not is something that only the future will tell.

Anupama M 2 HEP

REFLECTIONS ON THE RISING RIGHT-WING POPULISM



World over, the populist right-wing politics is gradually occupying the centre-stage. Brexit followed by Donald Trump's election to US presidency took the world and mainstream politics by astonishment. The rise and success of new right-wing parties is clearly reflective of a fundamental reshuffling of

the global political landscape. What exactly is understood by 'right-wing'? The Collins Dictionary defines it as, "A person or group having conservative or capitalist views." The term 'conservative' being heavily subjective, it would be rather unfair and erroneous to view all rightwing governments around the globe in that light. However, when looking through the pages of history, similarities found between right-wing governments allow us to use this umbrella term to define them. Propagation of capitalism, a strong sense of national identity, religious conservatism, etc., are features that bind the right-wing parties together. The world has seen its fair share of rightwingers; from Hitler and Mussolini to Margaret Thatcher, Tony Blair, Shinzo Abe and the BJP, all are (or have been) ideologically speaking right-inclined within their respective nations.

Recently, there has been an upsurge in support of rightist governments. And this support in Europe is primarily triggered due to the propagation of strict immigration policies. People are afraid of losing jobs to 'outsiders'. Refugees are phobic about facing 'uncertain' futures and the lurking threat of being sent back to an 'unrecognisable' home. It is the reigning popular belief that refugees bring along with them terrorists, Islamic radicalisation and foreign culture and most right-wingers, known to safeguard their cultural beliefs, are inevitably against the integration of refugees into their societies. In 2017 Angela Merkel's warm and welcoming gesture towards 1 million refugees faced massive backlash from the Germans including the opposition, in turn, paving the way for rigid and strengthened immigration policies. Italy today homes Europe's largest far-right movement through the anti-immigrant 'Lega' with Matteo Salvini as the leader actively building bridges with far-right European parties in countries like Hungary, Sweden, France, and the UK, that align with his anti-immigration and anti-EU policies.

This notwithstanding, the right governments are not spared of criticisms. Most recently, Jair Bolsanaro came into limelight for the Amazon rainforest fires for all the wrong reasons. On the question of climate change NGOs and governments from across the globe accused him for trading off the Amazon with development to such an extent that it took the Brazilian governments days to



deploy forces to tackle the fires. The Trump government too has faced serious backlashes for signing out of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and for dismissing climate change as a concept "created by and for the Chinese in order to make the U.S. manufacturing noncompetitive." Yes, Mr. Trump did tweet that America's policies like the proposed "Muslim-ban," creation of the wall, etc.,

have all been tainted with heavy criticism. Time and again allegations are also being openly raised against the BJP-led government in India for its narrow and partisan stand on issues like demonetisation, surgical strikes, mob lynching, the beef ban, rising communalism, growing unemployment, and so on.

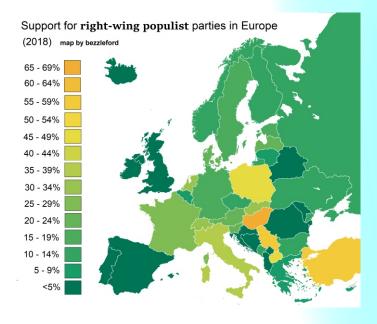
However, not everything right is to be quoted as wrong. Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro, is the newest addition and his agenda wasn't a stricter immigration policy, it was focused more on restoring stability in governance and arresting corruption. When Donald Trump came into power, immigration was at historic lows in America. Both India and Israel, contrary to Brazil, had been experiencing fairly good economic conditions when their respective right-governments came to power. It may, therefore, be said that multiple reasons underlie popular verdict in favour of establishing new right-wing governments. If we accept it as an overwhelmingly popular and democratic choice, then shouldn't the hardcore democrat and devotee of public opinion in us embrace this change?

Why then are people so sceptical and wary of right-wing populism? One plausible reason may be attributed to the fact that people instantly think of Hitler and Mussolini when they think of the 'right'. Extreme forms of ultranationalism and the logic of 'superior race' are things no one wants to relive because of the severe repercussions the world has experienced. Recently,

however, in some countries, notably Hungary and Poland, populist governments besides undermining the basic institutions of liberal democracy have started acquiring an anti-democratic and authoritarian face. All these developments have made critics view the new populism as a potential threat to political stability and democratic governance. Still, however, one must remember that right-wing populism has not emerged out of the same reasons everywhere. Although some nations did witness a spike in right sentiments because of anti-immigration ideals but others have elected right-wing governments on economic grounds, while still others have elected them simply because of dissatisfactory performances by prior governments. Turkey, a country ruled by the right, hosts around 3 million Syrian refugees alone. Shinzo Abe's "Abenomics" aims at sustainable growth and tackling social issues through technology which has helped boost the Japanese economy.

While right-wing populism at the moment does not seem to be completely antithetical to liberal democracy, however, its growing influence is certainly symptomatic of a deeper social crisis. Visibly, there is an increasing trend towards polarization of societies along with strong sense of disillusionment and discrimination among a sizeable section of the world population who donot find themselves adequately represented within the traditional institutional framework of existing democracies. In the wake of the democratic failures,

disparities and inadequacies the right wing parties have emerged as viable spaces for alternative representation. The hitherto dissenting voices, long isolated on the margins, seek to break the longstanding consensus on management of politics and economy in liberal democracies. They challenge the established institutional commitments of



political liberalism to tolerant, balanced governance and the ideational preferences of economic neo-liberalism for open borders, globalization and free trade. In the reigning democratic global order 'inclusion' is the future-and the governing policies across countries must be integrative in form and spirit. And, the right wing populists to thrive must shed their conventional communitarian character to embrace a more cosmopolitan look compatible with pluralistic and multi-cultural societies.

Sahar Basharat 4 HEP

CREATIVE CORNER



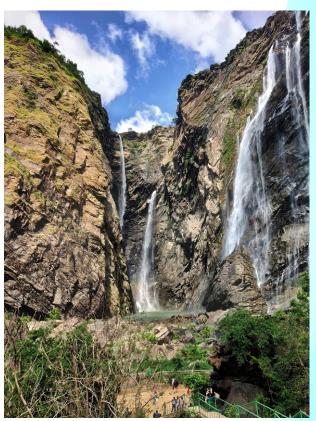
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Varija M (2 HEP)



Anupama M (2 HEP)

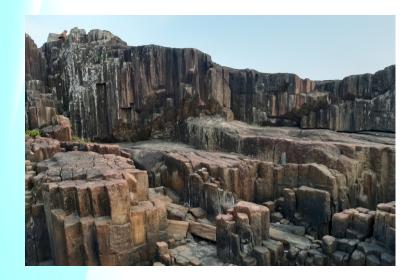


B Nireekshan (6 HEP)





Shreyash Pandey (4 HEP)





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ASTROLOGY AND THE HUMAN MIND

The desire to know the unknown is human curiosity; the temptation to chase the unknowable is grotesquery. Astrology is one such grotesquely human attempt that seeks to unravel the secret connections between the celestial and the earthly.

The answer to the question as to why human beings turn to astrology for answers and guidance shall not be easily understood, or may even be given, for that

matter, until one is ready to admit that human beings are exquisitely sophisticated animals. We are fettered by our desperate urge to become the masters of our destiny. It is this innately curious human character coupled with the intense conquering quest which takes its manifestation in the form of a distinct

practice all by itself: astrology.

Modern day astrology although rooted in our ancestors' astronomy diverges widely in its essence from it especially with respect to observations and nature of interpretations of the co-relations

between the movements of the heavens and the events of the earth. The blaze of dazzling bright light piercing the night sky, combined with the roaring fury of thunder and torrential downpour - both fascinated and unnerved - our forefathers. To comprehend such unknown phenomena, they attributed certain human characteristics to the skythe sun and his eclipses, the moon and her varying shapes and so on. As time progressed, they began tying their own destinies with the movements of the planets and the placements of the stars. Gradually (although quite ironically), the ball of imagination got catapulted to

> other-worldly realms and now the stars are assigned the additional incharge of dictating destiny even in their afterlife in addition to correcting the immediate present. Unlike the past focus on the 'big' questions relating t o cosmic significance and its impact on humanity at large, the current

making "individual" life predictions. Modern astrology undermines the wisdom and insights of the ancient practitioners on cosmic harmony and the place of mother earth in the universe.

tilt is towards

ARIES

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The collective legacy of our forefathers

has been such that around 95% of modern Britons know of their zodiac signs and over 50% of the same population agree with the character description of zodiac The growing influence and multiplying human expectations have taken individuals way beyond their urge and curiosity to know what lies ahead to often make them addicted to and hankering for easy gains, overnight successes, instant deletion of life impediments and quick readymade remedies. More than belief it is the stresses and strains of modern life that lure large numbers into finding comfort and taking refuge in the cushioning claims and lofty speculations of astrology. Besides capturing human personality and temperament it also appears as a handy coping mechanism for life's challenges and complexities. In contemporary times the sun-sign approach to astrology seems to have grown in popularity that strives towards what may be called "domesticating the universe" to glorify the logic of 'autonomous' self and 'free' will as against ancient astronomy's humble envisioning of our galaxy as a tiny dot in a perpetually expanding universe. Alongside, one also witnesses rising growth of television channels and horoscope sites solely dedicated to astrological practices and zodiacs with overwhelming concerns for worldly matters like money, career and love.

Unforgettable are the Bard's lines from Julius Caesar: "Men at some time are masters of their fates: The fault, dear

Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings." Stories of great men do not resemble the character description of their zodiac signs. Modernity and the advent of astronomy as an independent field of study has brought people out of their naiveté.

Astrology has been around us since the beginning of human civilisation. Although modernity has moved pulled us away from reposing our complete trust in astrology, it is nowhere near to vanishing off the face of the earth in the entertainment, amusement, diversion and fun that it often offers. It seems that only an astrologer can read astrology's horoscope and tell us of its destiny.

Prajwal B M 4 HEP





— J. P. Morgan



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FACTS & FUN



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Nasal sense

Nasal sense

Nasal sense

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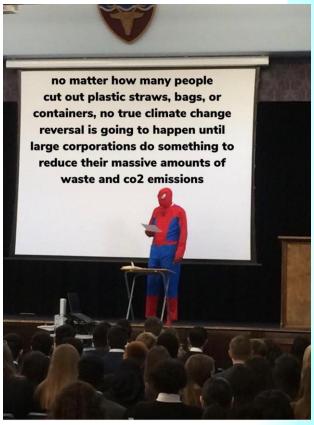
Nasal sense

Nasal sense

Common sense

Using a reusable water bottle instead of buying plastic bottles

- 1. As per a UN Human Development Report of 2007 08, only 125 countries, with 62% of the world population, have a free or partly free press.
- 2. In Estonia, voters can cast their votes online!
- 3. As of 2017, Bolivia probably has the highest rate of political turnover with almost 200 governments since 1825.



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PAGES OF POETRY

Merry or Mellow?

Caged she is, in the world of yours Sometimes a bloom, sometimes so bloss. The garden inside seems gracious, The plants twirled around the bars, selflessly hid the silver-coated restrictions. The butterflies inside, hide the realities with colours. The pleasant air forged her in there. The warmth she gets is all one can ever wish for, But, is it worth all? Away from the sunshine, away from the shores? Away from the deathly hallows, away from mores? Away from breeze and away from squall? Away from life?

And, away from death?

Debleena Deka 4 EPS

Promises

The promises I make, I can't keep.
In a trance of sadness, the distance
I keep, becomes miles fewer
I don't just want to breathe, I want to live
Time waits for no one, but I wait... for you
The promises I make, I can't keep
But I keep them anyway

Ankush Patnaik 4 HEP

Translated from Hindi by Deepika R 4 HEP

On Each Other's Team

April 8, 2008: a cloudy day. But somehow everything brightened up just by looking at him.

His glossy chestnut eyes, radiant face which shone like the morning sun and his frisky look got me positively electrified.

Comfortably curled up in many layers of the rug, he began wagging his tail as I neared him. I plonked beside him, picked him up with utmost care and caressed him. I was flooded with euphoria.

I held him close to my heart and whispered, "Sandy. You like the name?"

Seven and a half years gone by and he still manages to make me feel loved and understood.

He is the first person to wish me good morning. His heavy breathing and several licks on my face start my day.

He brings a smile to my face within a fraction of second. His adorable wobbly walk and childlike expressive face effortlessly make me break into a smile.

He is my efficient de-stressor. His mere presence makes me forget that I ever was blue.

He is my 30kg missile of joy and I love him!

Truly, the best things in life are not things.

Vaishnavi Guthi 4 HEP

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