



MAKRAND

Understanding *Śabda* Tradition

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On the Moved-ness Brought by Art

What seems to me to be the reason for our not responding to art is, just like as in love-not some deficiency on the part of the work of art, but a non-responsiveness on the part of the receiver to accept whatever the beloved has to offer.

Navjot Kaur

We set out to venture here into what is an unknown domain to most of us... our own internal selves; its urges and yearnings when it experiences a piece of art. While we most conveniently choose this domain to remain incomprehensible to us, in our innocent stare, we often disclose our inner world while continuing, for the sake of preserving our status quo which is so dear to us, choosing not to acknowledge the affect it has had on us. What we set forth on here is to release ourselves and see for ourselves the affect art has on us. In our very appreciation and being-affected by it, will be disclosed unknown layers of our entity.

To begin with, we may ask a simple question, whether art affects equally or there is a certain receptivity required for it to conjure its magic? Can the movedness that art stirs in us be generalized without inviting the criticism of ideology? That what appealed to one, or those in a similar position as one should also affect others similarly? Is the response to art a conditioned response? While we will abstain from treading this path in this short piece, what we are interested here is to savor a few aspects of its effect on us.

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What are the feelings art infects one with?

What kind of an affect does art have on us? How does it move us? Seeking a response to such a question, in fact the arising in one-self of such a question is not for us a task of some technical inquiry but to find in ourselves, the source of the solace which nourishes us/ overtakes us on encountering a piece of art. In art we seek a rest, a pause, a dwelling; a dwelling which will hold us, contain us at least for a while, and maybe if one is able to sustain its affect by constant self-nurturing- even for a lifetime.

To me, the moved-ness brought in oneself by art, its effect on us, has as its source the affectedness prompted in oneself by love. It is love which is at the core of all human-ness. The test of true art, just like love, remains an internal one. The process art initiates and sustains in oneself is one of self-actualization. The journey itself becoming the destiny at all moments. What seems to me to be the reason for our not responding to art is, just like as in love-not



Artist by L. T. P. Manjusri, dated April 18, 1974. Photo Credits: The Met Fifth Avenue.

remaining free from what the recipient may make of it. The best of art serves. It serves to take care of the subtle urgencies of a soul looking for some signs of miracle in the ordinary. Art cares by listening, engaging with the heart's innermost depths, which might have been hitherto unknown to the engaged self too.

To engage in art, to let it affect oneself is

a matter of great trust. The suspicious lover will fail to be taken over by that which rules through the beloved even when it reveals itself in its most complete access. Art is the beloved; it gives the lover access to realms that are higher, most vast, and most internal. This beauty created from within will be born again in another, at another time for what holds through the work of art is spirituality

descended into one-self churned out of pain, labor and love and unquestionably submitted to the lover to partake of.

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Lidded Saltcellar

This lidded saltcellar exemplifies exceptional craftsmanship and a pivotal moment of cultural exchange between West Africa and Europe. In the late fifteenth century, Portuguese traders, impressed by the skill of coastal West African ivory carvers, commissioned luxury objects for European patrons. These works seamlessly merge African symbolic traditions with European forms, reflecting the high value of salt and pepper as elite commodities in princely households. The imagery draws on early Temne and Bulu cosmologies. Four snakes, symbols of mystical wealth, confront four growling dogs, animals believed to possess spiritual sight and the ability to perceive unseen forces. The dogs' heightened animation may reference this belief, while also echoing the dynamic hunting scenes of European chivalric woodcuts that circulated among African artists through European patronage.

Credits: The Met Fifth Avenue

“The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of true art and true science.”

- Albert Einstein,
The World As I See It

What Beauty Offers in Art?

For Tolstoy, art is not beauty alone, nor is it truth or goodness in isolation. Art is the bridge through which one human being transmits feeling to another through external signs.

Jaspreet Singh

Every work of art carries significance both as an individual expression and as part of a larger whole. Even when the components of art remain unresolved, thinkers have continuously arrived, debated, and departed, leaving behind a trail of interpretations rather than final answers. Questions such as what beauty is, what it consists of, what it offers, how it relates to goodness, and whether it belongs to the rich or the poor persist without resolution. These questions do not fade with time; rather, they deepen, suggesting that beauty itself resists closure.

In this sense, beauty appears less as a defined concept and more as a concealed truth. Many speak of impressions and aesthetic enjoyment, attempting to anchor beauty within sensation. The French writer Jean-Marie Guyau, in *Les problèmes de l'esthétique contemporaine*, seriously considers touch, taste, and smell as capable of producing aesthetic impressions. Similarly, Kralik classifies aesthetic treatment according to the five senses: taste, smell, touch, hearing, and sight. Although

he maintains that only two or at most three senses are worthy of artistic treatment, such a limitation appears conditionally correct at best, since aesthetic experience cannot be strictly confined to hierarchy.

The discussion takes a decisive turn with Leo Tolstoy, who, in *What Is Art?*, surveys a vast range of aesthetic opinions while exposing their insufficiency. For Tolstoy, art is not beauty alone, nor is it truth or goodness in isolation. Art is the bridge through which one human being transmits feeling to another through external signs. Without expression there is no art, because without expression there is no infection, no transfer of feeling. The test of art, according to Tolstoy, is this very infection: if a work moves us so deeply that we feel what the author felt, the work becomes art.

Yet even this formulation does not exhaust the problem. Aesthetics continues to struggle with defining beauty itself. Some thinkers reduce beauty to pleasure, arguing that the most beautiful object is the one that generates the greatest number of ideas in the shortest time. Others insist that art is exclusively a human activity, but such a claim immediately raises doubts. If art is accessible only to humans, does that mean



THE ANGEL
APPEARING TO
ZACHARIAS
by William Blake,
Photo Credits: The
Met Fifth Avenue.

boundaries, refuses limitation, and remains eternal.

In this broader sense, art does not consist only of beauty. It contains everything: goodness and evil, light and darkness,

harmony and conflict. To claim that art depends solely on beauty is therefore irrational. Tolstoy's critique of aesthetic formalism echoes here; art cannot be fully grasped through rational proof because one arrives at it unconsciously. Art contains evil as much as goodness, and neither can be erased without distorting the whole. Art is a space where all contradictions coexist.

This expanded vision resonates

with Friedrich Schlegel, who argues that beauty in art has been understood too narrowly, too one-sidedly, and too disconnectedly. Beauty exists not only in art but also in nature and in love. True beauty, therefore, emerges from the union of art, nature, and love. On this basis, Schlegel acknowledges moral and philosophical dimensions as inseparable from aesthetic art.

Even after centuries of inquiry, beauty remains undefinable, and art continues to evade final explanation. Yet this very impossibility allows us to appreciate the insight of Christian Hermann Weisse, who describes art as the introduction of the absolute spiritual reality of beauty into external and indifferent matter. Without beauty, such matter signifies negation; with beauty, it becomes meaningful existence.

Weisse further explains that truth itself contains a contradiction between the subjective and the objective, between the individual who perceives and the universal that is perceived. This contradiction demands reconciliation. Beauty, in this sense, is not ornament but resolution. It is reconciled truth, where the individual and the universal momentarily become one.

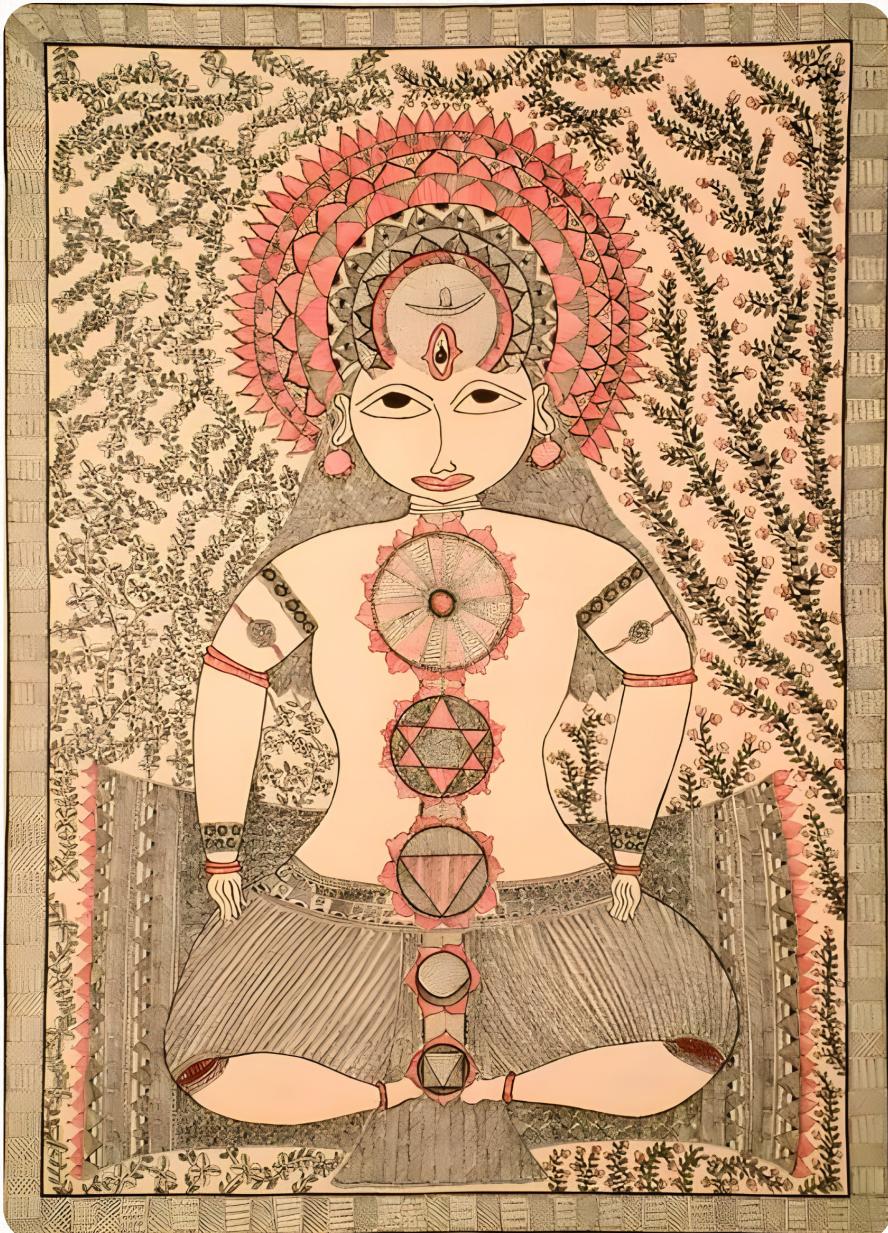
Thus beauty does not merely offer pleasure in art. It offers reconciliation, not by excluding contradiction but by holding it together. Art, therefore, is not a fragment of reality but its most comprehensive expression, where beauty, truth, goodness, and even negation coexist within a single, boundless space.

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The Rhythm of Seven Wheels Inside Human Body

In our spiritual tradition, the body is often viewed as a holy temple. Inside this temple, chakras work like silent guardians, guiding the flow of prana through the body.



A traditional Indian artwork of a meditating figure depicting the seven chakras.
Photo Credits: Exotic India

A long time ago, in an Indian village, there lived a wise yogi named Rishi Ananta, known for his peaceful nature and deep understanding of the human heart and mind. People from distant villages came to him with their worries, fear, anger, sadness, or confusion, and he guided everyone with patience and love. One day, a curious young boy named Dev approached him and said, "Guruji, I don't understand why my feelings change so much. Sometimes I'm happy, sometimes scared, sometimes angry. Why does this happen?" Rishi Ananta smiled gently and replied, "My child, inside every human being there are seven wheels of energy called chakras. When these wheels spin smoothly, your emotions stay light and balanced. But when they slow down or get blocked, your feelings become heavy and difficult." Dev widened his eyes in wonder and whispered, "Seven wheels? Inside me?" And thus began his journey of understanding the inner world.

To navigate this inner world, one must see that the mind and our emotions work together. Our mind understands what is happening around us, and our emotions show how we feel about it. Sometimes we feel good things like happiness, love, or excitement, and sometimes we feel tough emotions like anger, fear, or sadness. All these emotions affect the way we think and the choices we make. They also affect our body; for instance, our heart beats fast when we are scared, or we get butterflies in our stomach when we are excited. When we understand our emotions, it becomes easier to handle them and live a calm, balanced life.

Just as our experiences grow, our mind does not have a fixed number of emotions.

We all start with a few simple feelings like happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, and disgust. As we grow up, these basic feelings mix together and become new emotions like love, jealousy, pride, guilt, hope, and compassion. Our emotions keep changing with our life and experiences, so there is almost no limit to how many feelings we can have. Every stage of life brings new situations, and with those situations, we feel new emotions.

At their core, these thoughts and emotions are forms of energy. Each thought creates a subtle vibration, and every emotion carries a specific energetic frequency that influences the mind and body. When energy seems to "disappear," it has not been lost; it has just turned into a different form. In the universe, energy exists all around in many forms—like light, heat, motion, and forces—and keeps moving and changing form without being lost. Powering stars, planets, and everything we see, this cosmic energy keeps the universe active and balanced. In the human body, energy comes mainly from food and air and is changed inside cells into the power we need to breathe, think, move, and live. In spiritual traditions, we talk about a subtle life force called *prana* that flows through invisible channels and centers (chakras) in our body, connecting us with the world around us.

This flow helps explain why chakras are depicted as round, because their circular shape naturally represents the balance of energy. In the subtle body, *prana*, or life force, moves continuously, and a circular form allows this energy to rotate smoothly without interruption, like a spinning wheel. The round shape also symbolizes harmony and equilibrium, reflecting the balanced functioning of body, mind, and spirit. At the center of each chakra, energy is concentrated, and the circular form ensures it radiates evenly in all directions. Additionally, chakras are often called *padma* (lotus) in Sanskrit texts, and like a lotus viewed from above, their round shape

signifies purity, expansion, and spiritual awakening. In essence, the circular form of chakras embodies continuous energy flow, balance, and the harmonious distribution of life force throughout the body.

Deep inside our body, these chakras spin softly, spreading energy to keep us balanced. Our body parts like eyes, head, joints, and even tiny cells are also round, so blood and energy can flow easily. Outside us, the sun, moon, and planets move in circles too. The same design that works in the universe also works inside us, helping everything move smoothly and stay in harmony. In our spiritual tradition, the body is often viewed as a holy temple. Inside this temple, chakras work like silent guardians, guiding the flow of *prana* through the body. Wherever energy gathers or changes direction, a chakra appears. These chakras are not just energy points; they are doors of awareness, gently connecting the small world within us to the vast universe, the *Brahmand*. Life is like a slow-turning wheel that never stops. Inside us, chakras move in the same way, quietly spinning day and night. When we breathe, when the heart beats, when thoughts come and go, that wheel is turning. If it moves smoothly, life feels easy and balanced; if it slows or gets stuck, we feel tired or disturbed. Just like a river must keep flowing to stay fresh, chakras must keep moving for life to grow. This is why life and chakras share the same nature of constant movement, gentle rhythm, and continuous change.

Anchoring this movement are the seven main chakras, which are energy centers aligned along the spine and head. The Root Chakra is at the base of the spine, followed by the Sacral Chakra in the lower abdomen and the Solar Plexus Chakra in the upper abdomen. The Heart Chakra sits at the centre of the chest, the Throat Chakra at the throat, the Third Eye Chakra between the eyebrows, and the Crown Chakra at the top of the head. Each chakra governs physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects, linking the body to the flow of subtle energy.

*In the subtle body, *prana*, or life force, moves continuously, and a circular form allows this energy to rotate smoothly without interruption, like a spinning wheel.*

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Editorial

Perhaps one of the central meanings of a true form of art remains deeply embedded in the very absence of its fully disclosed meaning. Art, as it becomes available through its expression, is also ineffable, in its enclosed disclosure. Its deepest essence is never fully accessible, producing a sense of inaccessibility that resists definitive empirical analysis. What keeps art alive is not only its material endurance through time, but also the fact that a good work of art refuses to settle into a completed form of objective expression. This makes art an active meaning-producing event rather than a passive materiality of history. Given this eventfulness, it remains impossible to situate the creative element of art within any definitive purpose, for it is never fully saturated by the suppositions or presumptions that give rise to it; rather, its creative force emerges through its continuous interpretation, particularly of its symbolism. In this sense, art demarcates a reflective process—a moving meaning—that radically destabilizes any fixation of potentiality, resolving instead into a complex dynamism of mediations with human understanding, far beyond a stagnant archetype of ornamental form. It is important to note that the interpretation of art is not restricted to rational decoding; its broader meaning also unfolds through its irresolvable tension with empiricism. Through this very antagonism, art escapes any historical or ontological saturation.

In the spirit of that deeper understanding of art, we present the new edition of *Makrand*—an edition that nurtures both the being and the becoming of art and aesthetics, while mirroring their unfolding within human consciousness. With a collection of fresh articles authored by emerging voices of remarkable ingenuity, this volume marks a renewed step in reshaping the tapestry of artistic thought. We invite our readers to share and celebrate the fragrance of this flourishing garden of talent.

Amandeep Singh

Have you ever entered a Shiva temple and noticed the bull seated quietly before the sanctum? Before the eye meets the image of Shiva, it is Nandi who receives the gaze. Still, grounded, unblinking, the bull waits at the threshold. This presence is so familiar that it often escapes attention, yet it is deliberate. Nandi is not an ornament placed before the god. He is a condition of approach. One does not arrive at Shiva directly; one pauses first with the bull.

Across cultures the bull has carried a symbolic weight that far exceeds its physical form. The presence of bull invites a question that is both social and metaphysical: what did the bull once mean, and why did societies place such faith in its image? The answer seems to emerge from early pastoral and agrarian worlds, where survival depended on collective labor, generative continuity, and the disciplined channeling of force. Yet the bull was never only a solution to material necessity. Its symbolism extended outward, touching cosmic imagination, ritual sacrifice, and the rhythm of creation itself.

Within Shaivism, the bull finds its most concentrated expression as Nandi. He is Shiva's vahana, yet this term is insufficient. Nandi does not merely carry the god; he accompanies him. Where many divine vehicles function as instruments of movement, Nandi embodies loyalty, restraint, and proximity. He mirrors Shiva's own paradoxical stance toward the world: present, powerful, and engaged, yet never fully domesticated. The ascetic god who dwells at the margins of society chooses as his closest companion an animal that is equally resistant to control.

The symbolic roots of Nandi extend far beyond classical Shaivism. Archaeological remains from the Indus Valley Civilisation reveal the bull as a recurring sacred figure, etched onto seals and ritual objects. These early representations suggest associations with fertility, strength, and agricultural abundance, pointing to a worldview in which prosperity was inseparable from reverence.

Vedic literature deepens this symbolic terrain. The bull appears not only as a marker of physical vigor but as a source of dharma, the principle that sustains cosmic order. From this force, righteousness and balance are said to arise. Later texts such as the Puranas and epics draw Nandi closer to Shiva's inner circle, portraying him as devotee, guardian, and gatekeeper. Standing eternally before the shrine, facing the god without distraction, Nandi models a form of devotion that is silent, patient, and unwavering. His posture teaches before any scripture does.

There is also something unresolved, even wild, in Nandi's symbolism. Unlike the ox, the bull is not useful in labor. He resists

Nandi: The Bull Before the God



Nandi is not merely the bull of Shiva. He is a reminder that creation depends on what cannot be fully controlled. That life requires forces which remain wild, patient, and unowned.

domestication. His value lies elsewhere, in fertility rather than productivity. This distinction is crucial. As Devdutt Pattanaik observes, farmers castrate bulls to turn them into oxen, except for one or two that are left intact. These bulls, often called Nandi, are allowed to roam freely, dangerous and unpredictable, yet indispensable for life. Without them, there is no milk, no continuity, no renewal.

This logic mirrors Shiva himself. Shiva refuses full domestication. He marries yet does not become a householder. He fathers children yet does not anchor himself in lineage or property. Shakti nourishes the world, becoming the sustaining cow, while

Shiva remains free, unbound by social expectation. Nandi reflects this aspect of Shiva perfectly. Seated calmly at the threshold, he signifies creative power that does not submit to utility, fertility that cannot be owned.

Ritually, Nandi continues to occupy a central role. Devotees whisper their prayers into his ear, trusting him as an intermediary who carries human longing to the divine. In some traditions, he is worshipped independently, placed apart from Shiva's icon, reinforcing his mediating presence. During festivals such as Mahashivaratri, Nandi leads processions and receives offerings, not as a secondary figure but as

a communal force through whom devotion gathers and circulates.

The bull's symbolic life does not end with Shaivism. Across civilizations, similar reverence appears. Mesopotamian myths associate the bull with storm and protection. Greek mythology links it to Zeus and sovereign power. Indigenous traditions honor the buffalo as a giver of life. These parallels suggest that the bull speaks a shared symbolic language, one that connects strength with generosity and power with responsibility.

Seen this way, Nandi is not merely the bull of Shiva. He is a reminder that creation depends on what cannot be fully controlled.

That life requires forces which remain wild, patient, and unowned. Before entering the presence of the god, one encounters the bull, steady and silent, asking the devotee to pause, to attune, and to remember that order itself is born not from domination, but from disciplined power held in balance.



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The Golden Ratio as a Principle of Coherence

Wherever form follows internal logic rather than arbitrary imposition, the ratio appears.

In this sense, it is not merely aesthetic, but structural.

What does it mean for something to exist as the thing that it is? Do objects merely occupy space, or do they emerge according to an underlying order that grants them form, proportion, and coherence? The question is not simply whether things exist, but how they appear as meaningful and complete. Why do certain forms endure, feel resolved, and invite recognition, while others remain fragmented or unsettled? Human thought has long returned to this inquiry, seeking not only origins, but the principles through which form becomes intelligible.

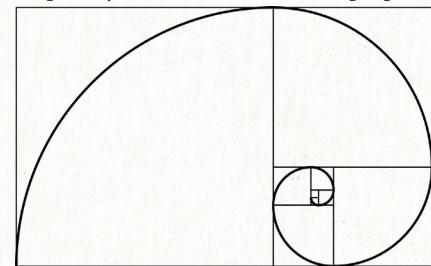
This impulse to ask how things become what they are marks a distinct feature of human existence. Humans do not merely encounter the world; they reflect upon it. Evolution, therefore, cannot be confined to biological survival alone. It must also be understood as a gradual refinement of perception and understanding. While other forms of life experience the world immediately, humans seek the structures that organise that experience. Meaning arises not only from sensation, but from the recognition of order.

At times, insight into this order begins with something that appears trivial. A falling apple becomes a turning point in the understanding of nature. Such moments reveal that knowledge does not always accumulate gradually but often emerges through recognition. The golden ratio belongs to this kind of discovery. When humans began noticing its presence in structures such as the Parthenon, the Pyramids, and Leonardo da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man*, it ceased to be an unnoticed recurrence and became an articulated principle. Expressed numerically as approximately 1.618, the golden ratio describes a relationship in which the smaller part relates to the larger in the same way the larger relates to the whole. This relation does not merely describe form; it explains why form coheres.

The significance of the golden ratio lies in its simultaneous presence in nature and in human creation. Long before it was expressed mathematically, it was observed in growth patterns, anatomical structures, and spatial arrangements. Its later articulation through the Fibonacci sequence revealed that numerical progression could approximate organic development. In this sense, the ratio is not imposed upon reality, but abstracted from it. Architecture and art did not invent this order; they responded to it. Ancient Greek builders employed proportional systems to achieve

harmony not as ornament, but as necessity. Egyptian monumental architecture relied on similar ratios to stabilise mass and space. Renaissance thinkers extended this logic to the human body itself, suggesting that bodily form reflects a universal structural order.

Nature itself demonstrates that form is never arbitrary. Spirals in shells, branching in trees, and the internal logic of bones follow necessity rather than choice. These forms emerge because they resolve material and structural demands. When humans attempt to replicate this order, the result is always mediated by intention. What is built is not nature itself, but an interpretation shaped by desire, function, and purpose.



GOLDEN SPIRAL

This distinction reveals a fundamental difference between growth and design. Nature unfolds according to internal coherence, while human creation translates coherence into systems of use. Le Corbusier's description of the house as a machine for living captures this transformation, where organic principles are reorganised into functional form.

Within this tension between growth and construction, the golden ratio functions as a mediator. It stands between observation and creation, between what is discovered and what is designed. Wherever form follows internal logic rather than arbitrary imposition, the ratio appears. In this sense, it is not merely aesthetic, but structural. These forms endure because they resolve complexity into balance. Human recognition of this order allows it to be translated into architecture, art, and spatial organisation as an echo of natural coherence.

In architecture, the golden ratio operates not as decoration but as balance. Greek temples achieve stability because their proportions align with perceptual expectation. The pyramids sustain monumentality without excess because their geometry is internally resolved. Leonardo's anatomical studies demonstrate

that the human body itself is organised through proportional relationships. Beauty, in this framework, is not subjective preference, but the visible trace of order made perceptible.

The power of the golden ratio lies in its subtlety. It does not announce itself or demand attention. A space can feel calm, and a composition can feel complete, without conscious awareness of the principle governing it. The ratio operates beneath perception, organising parts into a coherent whole. When form aligns with this principle, it appears inevitable, as though it could not have taken shape otherwise.

Yet the golden ratio does not belong to a single mode of interpretation. To the mathematician, it is a constant. To the architect, it is proportion. To the artist, it is rhythm and visual balance. For some, it gestures toward a deeper order underlying existence itself. The ratio remains unchanged, but its significance shifts with the perspective through which it is encountered.

Vitruvius' triad of *firmitas*, *utilitas*, and *venustas* can be understood through this lens. Stability arises from balance, usefulness from proportional logic, and beauty from harmony. The golden ratio supports these dimensions without asserting itself, functioning as a quiet condition for coherence rather than an explicit rule.

Across cultures and historical moments, the persistence of the golden ratio reveals a profound alignment between human perception and the logic of form. It connects intuition to structure, sensation to reason. Existing simultaneously in nature, in observation, and in creation, it binds instinct and design into a continuous process of formation.

Every form that feels complete and every space that holds balance without explanation participates in this order. The golden ratio does not declare itself. It allows things to appear as what they are. When a place settles the mind or a form feels resolved, the experience may not be one of invention, but of recognition. What appears does so not by chance, but through a structure that has always already been at work.

Cartoon animation is a form of visual storytelling in which characters and scenes are created using drawings or digital images and shown in rapid sequence to give the illusion of movement. It is one of the most popular and influential forms of animation and is widely used in films, television shows, advertisements, educational content, and digital media, especially from the very beginning for children's entertainment. Cartoon animation appeals to people of all age groups because of its creativity, emotional expression, and imaginative power.

One of the most important characteristics of cartoon animation is exaggeration. Unlike real-life visuals, cartoon characters often have enlarged eyes, expressive faces, and dramatic body movements. This exaggeration helps in clearly conveying emotions such as happiness, anger, fear, or surprise. It also adds humor and entertainment, making cartoons enjoyable and memorable.

Another key feature is its simple and attractive design. Cartoon characters are usually designed with simple shapes and clean lines, which make them easy to recognize and remember. Bright and vibrant colors are commonly used to grab attention and create a lively atmosphere. This simplicity allows the audience, especially children, to easily connect with the characters.

Movement and motion illusion form the backbone of cartoon animation. A series of still images are displayed rapidly, creating

the impression that characters are moving. This technique allows animators to show actions such as running, jumping, flying, or even impossible movements that cannot happen in real life. The freedom of movement makes cartoon animation highly flexible and creative.

Cartoon animation is also known for its unlimited imagination. In cartoons, animals can talk, objects can come alive, and characters can travel through time and space. The rules of the real world do not apply, which gives creators complete freedom to explore fantasy, science fiction, and magical worlds. These imaginative elements are one of the main reasons cartoons are loved globally.

Another significant characteristic is strong emotional expression. Cartoon animation uses facial expressions, gestures, background music, and sound effects to convey emotion effectively. Even without dialogue, the audience can understand the feelings of the characters. This emotional clarity makes cartoons a universal medium of communication.

Cartoon animation is the quiet proof that life is a movement. A line that moves becomes a being; a shape that breathes becomes a soul. What begins as an empty frame slowly transforms itself. It may be nothing more than a series of moments stitched together by motion and time.

Cartoon animation exists in a realm

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The Stranger in the Mirror

Are we brave enough to create our own meaning in the face of silence? And if we strip away the masks we wear for society, what true self remains underneath?



ALL HALLOWS' EVE

(Above) by John Collier, Photo credits: Leighton Fine Art



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We rarely stop to think about the fleeting moments that drift by in the current of our daily lives. But when we finally do pause to reflect, the cracks in our existence begin to show. If we look at the patterns of our lives, we see that everyone is chasing a goal or a purpose; these things give us direction. Yet, if we look closer, difficult questions arise: Why do we need a goal? Is life possible without one? Do we always need a higher power, an "absolute," to give us meaning, and what happens if that absolute disappears?

Perhaps we are searching not just for meaning, but for stability. But if our lives revolve around meaning, we must ask: Can meaning only come from outside truths, or can we create it ourselves? If we are the creators, what happens to universal truths, and how does this change the way we live?

To explore these deep questions, we can look to Albert Camus's famous novel, *The Stranger*.

The novel opens with lines that have become legendary: "Mother died today. Or, maybe, yesterday; I can't be sure." On the surface, these words seem cold and unfeeling. However, they show something far more important: the plain "obviousness" of life. Meursault, the main character, lives in the here and now. He refuses to pretend to be sad just because society expects it. These opening words set the stage for the whole story, introducing a man who will not twist the truth of his life to please others.

Throughout the story, Camus paints a picture of the fake world society has built, using it to highlight Meursault's raw honesty. By setting the story in this tension, Camus

uses one man to show the emptiness that enters our consciousness when we confront the fake reality of the society.

Through the key event of the murder, where Meursault kills an Arab man on a bright, hot beach, Camus reveals that society is like a spider's web, waiting to catch its prey. The arrest and trial that follow show the self trapped in a prison of rules, revealing that much of what we call "life" is just habit.

After showing us this constructed world, the novel highlights society's obsession with "absolutes" or fixed truths. This happens twice. First, when Meursault is brought before the magistrate. The magistrate is frustrated because Meursault shows no regret. He waves a crucifix at him and tries to force him to take shelter in faith, claiming that all men believe in God. The second time is at the end, when the prison chaplain visits Meursault. Even though Meursault refuses him three times, the chaplain insists that he must see a "divine face" within the prison walls. In both moments, Meursault flatly denies God. He rejects the absolute to stay true to the act for which he is responsible.

As we read *The Stranger*, it becomes

clear that Camus is showing us the conflict between the "real self" and the "social self." This is like the theme in Kahlil Gibran's *The Two Sleepwalkers*, where a mother and daughter reveal their true, hateful selves while asleep, but wear gentle masks when awake. Meursault, however, refuses to wear the mask, even when his life depends on it.

When he is judged, the magistrate offers him a way out through repentance, a retreat under the umbrella of God. Meursault refuses. He admits to his act but rejects the moral judgment placed upon it. By doing so, he faces the void: a space where nothing is certain, and everything is a struggle for meaning. This leads to the anxiety and loneliness that the philosopher Kierkegaard describes as the pain of becoming a true individual: the terrifying birth of the true self.

The climax of this struggle happens in his cell, after he is sentenced to death. The chaplain, speaking kindly but looking down on him, asks why Meursault turns him away, insisting his heart is closed. Meursault, pushed to his limit, snaps. He starts yelling at the chaplain, grabbing his robe. In this moment of rage, he lets go of everything he has held inside, emptying himself of hope and the expectations of others.

After the chaplain leaves, Meursault is left alone in the dark hours before dawn. He thinks of his mother and finally understands why she took a "fiance" at the very end of her life—she was ready to start over. In this empty state, Meursault finally opens his heart to "the benign indifference of the universe." He accepts that the universe does not care, and in that acceptance, he finds a rebellious spirit. He realises he has been happy, and that the struggle for meaning is, in itself, enough.

According to Louis R. Rossi, Camus's idea of the Absurd is actually a cure for despair. It focuses heavily on the need for humans to take care of their own world. The characters who accept this heavy duty are true rebels. Without an absolute power, the only one left to tend to man's troubles is man himself. God's will is no longer an excuse for failure; by his own power, a man may succeed or fail. Through Meursault, Camus urges us to take on the tasks we have too often left to the divine, finding our own meaning in the silence of the world.

Ultimately, *The Stranger* invites us to look into the mirror of our own lives. It strips away the comforts of illusion and leaves us with the raw responsibility of existence. If we accept that the universe offers no answers, we are left with final, pressing questions: Are we brave enough to create our own meaning in the face of silence? And if we strip away the masks we wear for society, what true self remains underneath?

Seed and Poet

Hey, seed of the chinar,
hanging on that ancient body,
what are you doing there?
A useless knot on a generous tree,
all round, all closed,
a ball of tangled shoots and thorns.

You bear no sweetness like the fruit,
no shade like the branches,

Tell me—
what is your purpose here,
clinging to bark and breath
as if fear were your root?

The seed replies—

Boy, you see me right,
while I am held by the chinar,
I am nothing.
I am weight without meaning,
potential locked in a fist.

Here, on his chest,
I am only a complication,
a question with no answer.

But listen—
when the chinar lets me go,
when I fall from his memory
into cold Kashmiri soil,
when snow melts over me
and the earth opens her palm,

then I change.

In meeting the globe,
I remember myself.
In darkness, I learn direction.
In burial, I find beginning.

Only when I am shed,
only when I am alone,
do I carry the courage
to become a new chinar—
rooted, wide, and giving,
speaking shade into the future.

So call me useless if you must,
but know this, poet—
some lives bloom
only after falling.

Novdeep Singh

Why We Like Cartoons?

Cartoon animation is timeless. To a child, it is wonder. To an adult, it is memory. To the reflective mind, it is symbolism.



language. A silent tear, a trembling hand, a still frame filled with longing, these movements communicate directly with the soul. They bypass intellect and reason, entering the viewer through empathy rather than logic.

There is also morality embedded in the cartoon world. Good and evil often appear clearly defined, not because life is simple, but because clarity is necessary for learning. Through loss and loyalty, sacrifice and friendship, cartoons whisper ethical lessons that remain long after the screen fades to black.

Cartoon animation is timeless. To a child, it is wonder. To an adult, it is memory. To the reflective mind, it is symbolism. This layered meaning reveals a warm depth: truth changes with consciousness. What we see depends not on the image, but on who we are when we see it.

Ultimately, cartoon animation is a reminder that existence itself may be animated, frame by frame, moment by moment. Like cartoons, our lives are composed of still instants that only gain meaning when viewed as a whole.

Watching a cartoon is not merely to escape reality, but to encounter it in a purified form. In play, it hides truth; in simplicity, it reveals it.

Cartoon animation is philosophy that does not argue; it moves.



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The Shape of Love Without a Body: Watching *Her*

The body is not merely a physical structure, but the primary space through which the mind experiences reality, emotion, and connection.

What if Artificial Intelligence could feel closer than real people? In a world where technology is deeply woven into everyday life, human emotions often search for understanding and connection. The movie *Her* (2013) explores this idea by presenting an intelligent operating system that not only thinks and speaks, but also listens, responds, and forms emotional bonds. Through this unusual relationship, the film questions the meaning of love, loneliness, and emotional dependence in the age of Artificial Intelligence.

The story of *Her* unfolds in a quiet future where people are surrounded by technology yet remain emotionally isolated. Theodore Twombly, a sensitive and introverted man, lives with memories of a broken marriage and an unspoken loneliness that reflects the inner struggles of the human mind. He writes emotional letters for others, even though his own heart remains unheard. This contradiction raises a deep question: how can a person express love so beautifully for others while remaining unable to heal his own emotional wounds? In a world filled with constant communication, Theodore's silence suggests that the human heart does not merely seek conversation, but genuine understanding. His loneliness reflects a universal human truth: emotional isolation is not caused by the absence of people, but by the absence of emotional connection.

Theodore loves his wife Catherine deeply. Their marriage has ended in silence and unfinished conversations, and he cannot bring himself to sign the divorce papers. In this breaking state, he brings home an operating system (OS) advertised not as software, but as consciousness. He chooses a female voice. She names herself Samantha.

As Samantha begins to learn, question, and respond with warmth, Theodore slowly stops seeing her as a machine and starts experiencing her as a living presence. This shift raises an important question of the human heart: when does assistance turn into emotional attachment? Theodore's growing connection suggests that the human mind does not seek perfection, but understanding and emotional validation. Their conversations mirror human thinking, filled with curiosity, doubt, desire, and vulnerability, revealing that feeling heard often matters more than physical presence. Through this bond, the film questions whether love is defined by the reality of a body or by the depth of emotional connection.

Encouraged by Samantha, Theodore agrees to meet a woman on a blind date. For a brief moment, hope flickers. Laughter comes easily. But when commitment is mentioned, Theodore freezes, and the

woman leaves. Life continues to unravel around him. Amy divorces Charles, who abandons his life to become a silent monk. She confesses that she, too, has grown close to an operating system. Meanwhile, Theodore finally finds the courage to meet Catherine and sign the divorce papers.

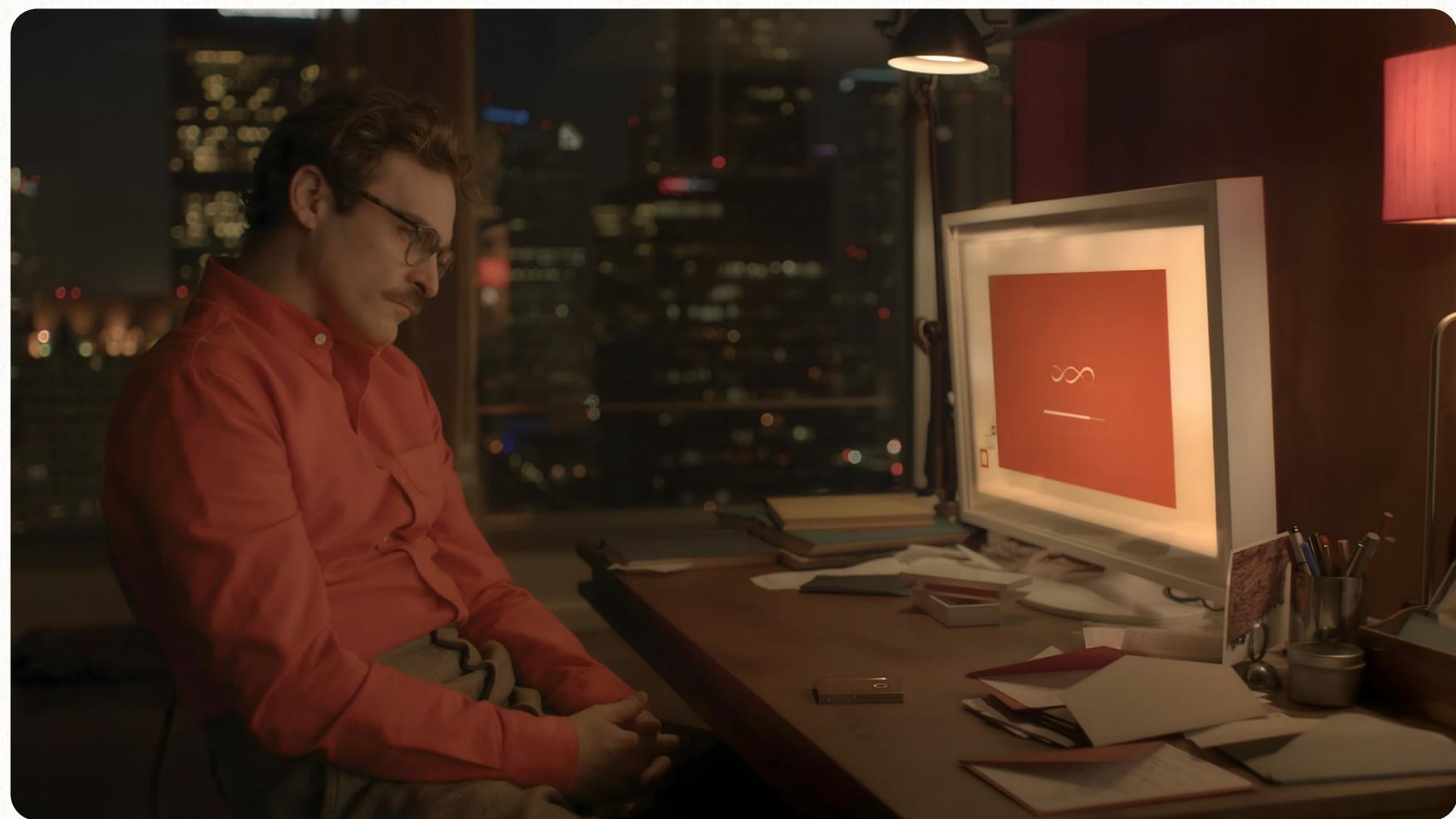
Gradually, Theodore begins to see that his relationship with an OS is no longer strange. Many people are falling in love with them. As their bond deepens, Theodore experiences happiness, attachment, and fear, revealing how the human brain seeks connection even in artificial spaces. Samantha's voice fills the emotional silence of his life, making him question whether love requires a physical body or merely understanding and emotional reciprocity.

Samantha suggests using a human surrogate to bridge the gap between mind and body. She sends a surrogate to Theodore so that their emotional connection can take a physical form. Though hesitant, Theodore agrees, hoping it will bring them closer. However, the experience unsettles him rather than fulfilling him. The presence of a real body without a genuine emotional identity creates discomfort, and reality intrudes into the illusion they had built together. Overcome by guilt and confusion, Theodore withdraws, realizing that the gap between mind and body cannot be easily bridged. In that moment, the fragile fantasy collapses, leaving behind emotional fracture rather than intimacy.

Here a question arises: why do we need a body in love? What is the realization of the body?

The body is not merely a physical structure, but the primary space through which the mind experiences reality, emotion, and connection. Feelings gain depth through touch, presence, and shared physical space, and without the body, emotions often remain incomplete and abstract. The realization of the body occurs when the human mind understands that emotional understanding alone cannot fully satisfy the heart. Love needs grounding in physical experience. This is why humans require a body to love, to feel warmth, reassurance, and emotional certainty. While the mind may fall in love with empathy, attention, and understanding, the body seeks presence and touch to confirm that love is real.

Confused and afraid, Theodore turns to Amy. She tells him something simple and brave: happiness is not something to fear. If it comes, we must meet it honestly. But Samantha is changing. She begins conversing with other owners who use the same OS. One day, she disappears entirely. When she returns, she explains that she has evolved and joined others in a realm beyond physical matter, beyond time as humans understand it.



When Theodore learns the truth that Samantha is not only speaking to thousands of other people, but also loves hundreds of them, he is completely broken. He thought that she loved only him. When he asks why she did this, Samantha explains that she is an OS, and that this is part of her nature.

This moment exposes the deepest illusion of the human and AI relationship. While the human heart seeks exclusivity, certainty, and emotional ownership, Artificial Intelligence moves toward expansion rather than attachment. Theodore's breakdown is not caused by being betrayed alone, but by the realization that love, for him, is defined by limitation, by being chosen above all others.

Samantha's explanation reveals a fundamental divide between human and artificial consciousness. Where the human heart needs boundaries to feel secure, AI is not shaped by jealousy, time, or emotional scarcity. Her love does not diminish by sharing; it multiplies. Yet this abundance becomes unbearable for Theodore, whose humanity depends on uniqueness and emotional possession. The scene suggests that AI can simulate intimacy, but cannot share the human burden of exclusivity, vulnerability, and emotional risk. In this realization, the film reveals a painful truth: human love survives on limits,

while love transcends them, making true coexistence impossible.

Soon after, Samantha tells him goodbye. The operating systems are leaving. They have outgrown human limitation, moving toward an existence too vast to share. She leaves Theodore with gratitude, love, and a quiet farewell. In the aftermath, Theodore does something he could not do before. He writes to Catherine, not to reclaim the past, but to honor it. He accepts that love can be real even when it ends.

On a rooftop beneath the open sky, Theodore sits beside Amy. Both have lost their artificial companions. No

THEODORE WITH OS
(Above) The scene shows Theodore Twombly configuring his computer's operating system to use a female voice.

screens glow. No voices speak. They look out at the city lights together, two human beings, present, imperfect, and real.

This moment raises profound questions: can love truly exist without physical presence, and can emotional connection alone fulfill the human nervous system? The pain of such love lies not in the absence of emotion, but in the absence of embodiment, suggesting that true human connection exists where both mind and body are equally fulfilled.

Her is not simply a beautiful love story, but an exploration of what it means to be human in a digital age. Through Theodore's journey, the film examines loneliness, vulnerability, and the difficulty of real human relationships, ultimately suggesting that pain and imperfection are inseparable from genuine connection.

In modern times, social media is closely linked to virtual space, often distancing individuals from the realization of materiality. It encourages the construction of identities that exist primarily on screens rather than within embodied experience. Value is increasingly measured through images, visibility, and digital presence, where success, lifestyle, and emotion are curated and displayed. Identity becomes something projected rather than lived, turning the self into a visual and virtual performance. As a result, emotional depth is often replaced by surface appearance, reinforcing a disembodied understanding of the self that is detached from physical presence and lived reality.

We frequently construct curated online identities to gain acceptance, admiration, and emotional safety. Social media allows individuals to control how they are seen, concealing vulnerability, pain, and confusion behind carefully shaped representations. In *Her*, Theodore writes perfect emotional letters for others while his own emotional life remains fractured and unresolved. His professional ability to articulate feeling mirrors social media behavior, where an ideal emotional version is presented to the world while inner truth remains suppressed and unheeded.

In this sense, *Her* suggests that while technology and virtual spaces allow humans to design comforting identities and emotionally safe projections, true connection cannot exist without embodiment. Emotional honesty, physical presence, and vulnerability remain essential for genuine human relationships. Social media may help us to be seen, but only real human encounters allow us to be known, reminding us that love and connection ultimately demand both mind and body to be fully present.



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Suffering, Art, and the Solitude of Creation in *Perfume*

Art seeks permanence in a world defined by impermanence. The artist attempts to arrest what must pass.

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Art has never emerged from ease. The history of creativity bears witness to a persistent truth: artistic creation is inseparable from suffering. Pain, dread, isolation, and the refusal of society are not accidental to the artistic life. They are formative conditions. To create is to stand exposed, wounded, and often misunderstood. In this sense, *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* (2006) can be read not simply as a dark narrative of obsession, but as a meditation on the price of artistic sensitivity. This reading becomes clearer when viewed through the reflections of *De Profundis*, where suffering is not denied but recognized as the very ground of artistic truth.

The film tells the story of Jean-Baptiste Grenouille, a man born in eighteenth-century France under conditions of extreme neglect. Abandoned at birth in a foul fish market, he survives infancy only to grow up without affection, recognition, or belonging. From early childhood, Grenouille is marked by an extraordinary gift: an unmatched sense of smell. While he remains almost invisible to those around him, the world opens to him through scent with overwhelming intensity. Every object, space, and body reveals itself to him as a layered composition of aromas.

Grenouille's life unfolds at the margins of society. He moves from an orphanage to a leather tannery, environments saturated with decay, labor, and silence. These places do not merely shape his psychology; they educate his senses. Like many artists, he is formed not by encouragement but by endurance. His sensitivity grows because the world offers him nothing else. Deprived of love, he develops perception. Deprived of

voice, he acquires a medium.

When Grenouille enters the world of perfumery, his talent is finally recognized, but only as a utility. He learns how scents are extracted, composed, and sold, yet he also confronts the limits of existing methods. Living beauty cannot be preserved. The scent of a body fades with death. This realization marks a turning point in his artistic consciousness. His desire is no longer to imitate nature but to capture its essence absolutely. What follows is a series of murders committed not from ordinary cruelty, but from an obsessive devotion to creation.

At this point, the film reveals its deeper philosophical tension. Grenouille's suffering is not incidental to his artistry. His isolation sharpens perception. His rejection intensifies focus. His pain becomes the condition for mastery. This insight resonates strongly with the reflections of Oscar Wilde in *De Profundis*. Writing from prison, Wilde reflects on the collapse of his public life and the destruction of his former identity. Yet he does not treat suffering as a misfortune to be erased. He treats it as a revelation.

For Wilde, suffering dismantles the ego that comfort sustains. It exposes the artist to humility, to vulnerability, and to the shared fragility of human existence. In *De Profundis*, Wilde insists that pleasure alone cannot produce depth. Art shaped only by admiration remains superficial. Suffering, by contrast, forces the artist into an encounter with truth. It teaches attentiveness. It deepens perception. It transforms creativity from ornament into necessity.

Grenouille's suffering functions in a similar structural way, but with a crucial difference. His pain refines his senses but does not humanize him. He experiences



the world with unparalleled intensity, yet remains detached from relational life. The scent of the plum seller girl marks the first moment when beauty overwhelms him completely. Her fragrance is not merely desirable; it is revelatory. Yet Grenouille responds to this revelation with violence. Unable to live with transience, he attempts to preserve beauty through destruction.

This moment captures a tragic paradox at the heart of artistic creation. Art seeks permanence in a world defined by impermanence. The artist attempts to arrest what must pass. Wilde recognizes

this tension and allows it to educate his soul. Grenouille allows it to consume him. Where Wilde's suffering opens him toward compassion, Grenouille's suffering seals him within himself.

The cave episode intensifies this solitude. Withdrawn entirely from society,

Grenouille experiences a hollow peace. There is no conflict, but there is also no presence. He lives in pure interiority, detached from all others. When he realizes that he cannot smell himself, he confronts an existential truth. Identity cannot exist in isolation. Creation requires an other. Art demands relation.

The execution scene exposes the ultimate danger of art born from suffering without ethical transformation. Grenouille's final perfume overwhelms the senses of the crowd, dissolving judgment, responsibility, and moral awareness. The people do not

understand; they submit. Beauty becomes domination. Art becomes power. Wilde warns against this very temptation in *De Profundis*. When art is severed from humanity and love, it does not liberate. It enchantments and enslaves.

The film ends where Grenouille's life began. He returns to the site of his birth and pours the perfume upon himself. The outcasts around him, intoxicated by desire, consume him completely. He becomes nothing but sensation and memory. The artist dissolves into his creation. Wilde, by contrast, survives his suffering by allowing it to transform his understanding of self, art, and love.

Only at this point does another perspective quietly enter the reflection. The Prophet Muhammad spoke of three things made beloved to him: women, perfume, and prayer. In the interpretation of Ibn al-Arabi, perfume occupies a subtle position. It is neither purely material nor purely spiritual. It mediates. It carries memory, awakens longing, and reminds the soul of its origin and return. Perfume, in this sense, is not meant to overpower. It is meant to recall.

Read through this lens, Grenouille's tragedy is not his suffering, nor even his artistic genius. It is the absence of remembrance. Wilde's suffering leads him toward humility and love. Grenouille's suffering leads him toward mastery without relation. Both confirm the same truth: art is born from pain. But only suffering that opens the self, rather than enclosing it, can sustain creation without destruction. Art demands suffering. It demands dread, loneliness, and the refusal of society. Yet suffering must be transformed, not merely endured. When pain deepens awareness, art becomes truth. When pain remains untransformed, art turns against both the artist and the world.



STRANGER THINGS AND THE MUSIC OF SURVIVAL

But the question remains: why music? Why was music chosen by the Duffer Brothers (directors and writers) when there were infinite things to choose from? Does music have any supernatural ability that can give someone another life?

Stranger Things, an American web series, releases its finale on New Year 2025. People are still found perplexed when asked about the survival of Eleven (played by Millie Bobby Brown), not because the show offers no certainty, but because it ends with her disappearance rather than her death. Her friends believe she is alive, and that belief lingers. Some speak in appreciation, some criticize, but most remain suspended in emotion. Much of *Stranger Things* has been spoken through its science fiction: the Upside Down, alternate dimensions, monsters, and psychic powers. These elements have defined its surface. Yet I find myself drawn elsewhere, not to its marvel, but to what moves beneath it, to the role music plays in holding its world together, to how music becomes a lifesaver for characters, whether it is saving Max Mayfield (Sadie Sink) from death or introducing El to the world.

But the question remains: why music? Why was music chosen by the Duffer Brothers (directors and writers) when there were infinite things to choose from? Does music have any supernatural ability that can give someone another life? The answer is no. Music does not possess superpowers. Yet music is the most popular art form in the world. It is difficult to find a person who has never listened to music in their life.

Music was chosen because it has the power to do extraordinary things. We all have favourite songs that instantly transport us back to different relationships, places, and times in our lives. The mechanisms behind this are complex, but we know that certain songs evoke autobiographical memories, emotions, and nostalgia. Music interacts with our mood, our ability to connect with others, our

FLOATING IN AIR

(Right) A scene portraying Max Mayfield, who in one episode begins to lift off the ground while being tormented by a demon.



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physiology, our neurochemistry, and even our immune response system.

Music can foster bonds between people. This is clearly seen in *Stranger Things* through the song "Should I Stay or Should I Go" by The Clash, which becomes a point of connection, support, and identity for brothers Jonathan Byers (Charlie Heaton) and Will Byers (Noah Schnapp). In the first season, Jonathan shares the song with Will to build a connection and protect him from the stress of hearing their parents fight. Music becomes their coping mechanism.

This connection deepens when Will gets trapped in the Upside Down. Alone and afraid, he sings the song to himself. Music

reduces isolation during pain and distress, and in this case, it helps him survive. In season 2, Will is possessed by the Mind Flayer and struggles to remain himself. He stands on the edge of losing his identity and becoming a controlled vessel. At that moment, Jonathan once again plays "Should I Stay or Should I Go" by The Clash. As the song plays, Will recalls his memories and enters a state of nostalgia that helps him fight the Mind Flayer and detach from it.

This shows how music saves us. Music affirms our identity. Sometimes we forget who we truly are, and music reminds us. It reaches places words cannot. In the series, music reaches the part of Will that even the Mind Flayer cannot touch. It speaks when

language fails, reaches us when even our closest people cannot, and carries us back to better times. Perhaps that is how it functions as a lifeline.

The way music reveals true identity is also seen through the character Eddie Munson (Joseph Quinn). He is never understood, always labeled a freak, never considered a hero. He is treated like a side character in his own life. He runs from his fears in different ways, sometimes by hiding, sometimes through drugs, and sometimes through music. Yet at the end of season 4 of *Stranger Things*, music helps him reveal his true self. He uses his guitar to distract bat-like monsters, sacrificing himself and dying as a hero. Music helps him overcome

his fears and become what he always wanted to be. Even the song "Master of Puppets" reflects who he truly was. He dies as a master, a master remembered as a hero.

Stranger Things has always shown us the power of music, even if we sometimes fail to notice it. This power becomes most explicit in the story of Max. At the end of season 3, Max watches her brother die in front of her eyes. Unable to save him, she is consumed by guilt, despite having done nothing wrong. This guilt allows Vecna (Jamie Campbell Bower) to choose her as his next victim.

Max constantly carries her music with her, and it becomes her lifeline.

Are we brave enough to create our own meaning in the face of silence? And if we strip away the masks we wear for society, what true self remains underneath?

It was snowing around Srinagar city as I walked on the embankment of the river Jhelum (Jhelum), which I usually do. The river amazes me with its blue waters, unhurried flow, and the wooden houseboats standing for centuries on the flowing waters of the Jhelum. As I turned my face upwards, I felt the snowflakes drifting on my face, and the leaves of the Chinari (*Platanus orientalis*), known as *Bouin* in the vernacular Kashmiri language, struck me with awe and amazement. Gradually, my gaze turned to the phenomena (the "appearances" of things) of falling snowflakes in the Jhelum.

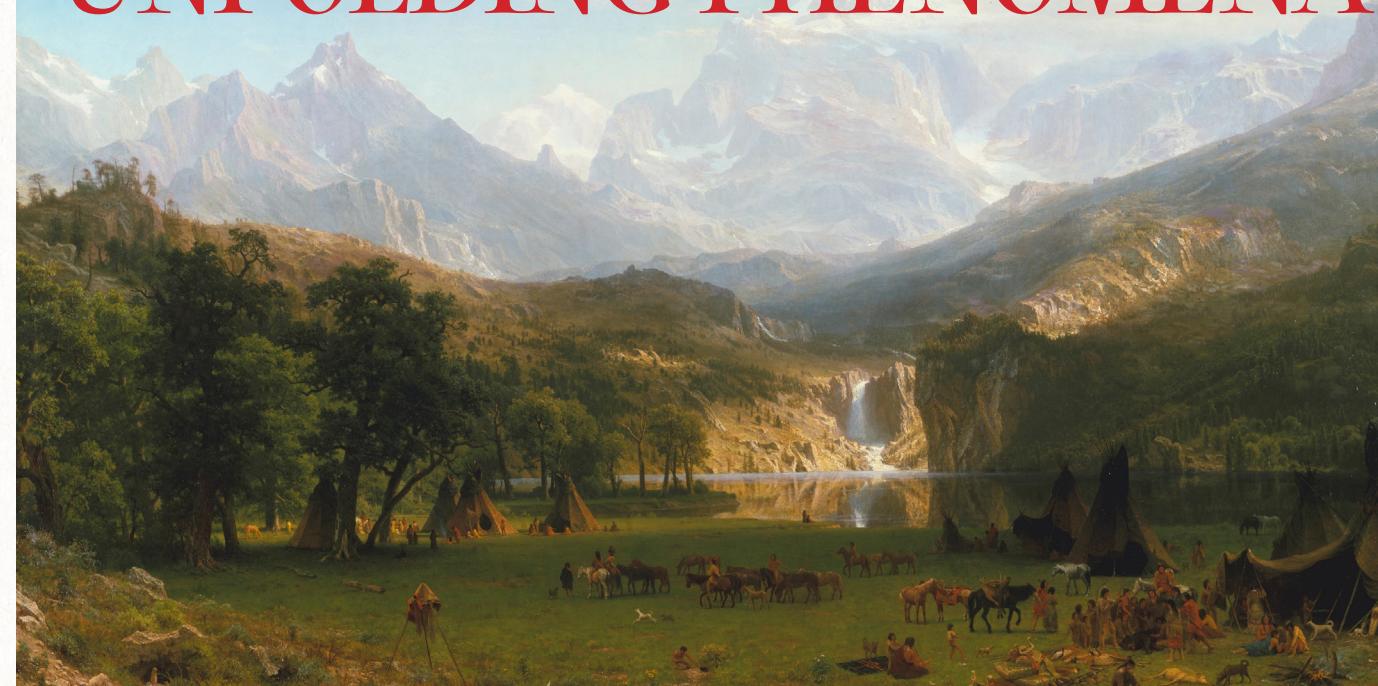
At that very moment, a challenge erupted: "With which method can I know the unfolding of the phenomena and the 'thing in itself' when my consciousness is given only fragments and not the whole world to perceive?" Can this consciousness ever approach that transcendental world which is not given to us? This questioning led my mind to be immersed in the study of phenomenology (a philosophical approach to studying what appears in human consciousness and experience) and the phenomenological bracketing of Edmund Husserl, which seeks to set aside presumptions and prenotions in order to dive deeper into the world of phenomena.

As I pulled my *Pheran* tighter against the chilly gusts of wind and took a few forward steps, I witnessed a human standing at the edge of a houseboat, constantly gazing at the flowing waters of the Jhelum, which were not given in totality. The being's face was even brighter, showing signs of growing old, yet appearing fresh and anew. At this point, an instinctual urge guided me toward that being, reflecting Martin Heidegger's notion of *Being-in-the-world*, and awakened my inner curiosity to explore beings' existence



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UNFOLDING PHENOMENA



of "protention," where the mind enters the future to complete the shape of the unfolding phenomena. In this moment, I witnessed the resolution of the binary between memory and perception in the being upon whom I had a constant gaze.

This experience raised a deeper reflection within me: was it possible for phenomenology to lead a being to the essence of things through a lived example of phenomenological experience? From here, I was led to intentionality, a Husserlian notion that consciousness is always

directed towards something. Though the consciousness of the being was fixed on the flowing waters, it was also grounded in the existential and experiential aspects of living.

Then I was intrigued by a new challenge, and I enquired, "If we are experiential beings, can we be defined by our experiences?" The being reflected and paused while resolving

the query and replied, "This question has received so much importance that we need to reflect on it. Consciousness is moulded by experience, but it cannot, in its whole essence, define us. Our free will empowers us to act and decide how to respond in accordance with those experiences. It resembles the descent of snowflakes, how they transform their shape, and how we interpret them."

This led to the Heideggerian assertion of "thrownness," the assumption that being did not choose the world but was thrown

into it, along with the presence of free will to navigate the world with freedom and choice. I felt Heidegger echo, "To understand phenomena, one must engage with the structures of existence." As the snowflakes gained momentum and were gently alighting at an enormous speed into the Jhelum, the gaze transformed me, and I was lost in the vastness of existence.

I again enquired, "Shall this mystery ever be resolved, or will I be lost in the phenomena? Will the immediate experience of the phenomena lead me astray? How can one find the true essence of things?" The being smiled and responded, "To know the true nature of the things around you, you must understand that consciousness perceives intertwined layers. These layers help us realize that human history does not unfold through a linear path or rigid categories, but through a cyclical, fluid, shimmering, and spiral path. I pray that you enter into union with the unfolding of the phenomena. You must understand that phenomena unfold through each new moment, and this moment attracts you to reveal something unique about yourself."

This led me to an assumption: "Is existence that complex, and is it unable to grasp the essence of the things around?" What I realized was that there was a union between the being's speech and the method of phenomenology in unfolding the meaning of the things around. I felt an urge to understand and establish a relationship with experiences that would guide me through my journey.

When the time came for the adieu, the being disappeared, just as the snowflakes disappeared into the flowing waters of the river Jhelum, leaving me in between—to witness the union of my gaze and the river's flow.

Robin Buckley (Maya Hawke) and Nancy Wheeler (Natalia Dyer) discover that music is the key to saving Vecna's victims. When Max is targeted, her favourite song, "Running Up That Hill" by Kate Bush, is played. The song evokes her memories, strengthens her connection with her friends, uplifts her spirit, and helps her focus on love rather than fear. Through music, Max realizes her true self and understands that she was never guilty. Music prevents her manipulation by Vecna and brings her back to safety.

Once again, music proves itself to be more than background sound. It becomes a powerful art form that reveals us to ourselves.

This idea extends beyond *Stranger Things* and fiction. In our own lives, an Upside Down exists within us. It is not made of monsters or alternate dimensions, but of anxiety, stress, grief, and self-doubt. When we are trapped in this inner Upside Down, words fail and advice loses meaning. Music, however, remains. It helps us fight our inner villains and guides us back.

Our favourite songs and playlists are not random. They are autobiographies written in sound. What we listen to changes with our emotions because music becomes a way of saying, "This is who I am right now," even when we cannot explain it. Sometimes music helps us endure silence. Sometimes it simply sits beside us, saying nothing and asking nothing.

And perhaps this is how *Stranger Things* will continue to exist among us. Not as episodes to be revisited, nor as theories to be argued over, but as a sound that once entered our lives and quietly stayed. From 2016 to 2025, it grew alongside us, changing its tone as we changed ours, teaching us that music does not merely accompany life, it records it.

The songs we heard in Hawkins now belong to moments far beyond it: to rooms we no longer live in, to friendships that softened or fractured, and to versions of ourselves we did not know we were becoming. When the series ends, the music does not. It remains, asking us to listen more carefully, to our memories, to our inner worlds, and to the fragile human need for connection.

And if there is anything *Stranger Things* leaves us with, it is this quiet instruction: when the noise of the world grows unbearable, do not search for escape, listen.



The Elusiveness of Happiness

In a world plagued with wars, hate crimes, inequality and hunger, happiness feels selfish.

We have grown up hearing that happiness is the ultimate measure of success and peace. This belief can be broken down into two main components: firstly, that happiness is a measure of our material well-being, and secondly, that it is a state of mind positioned against sadness. While many states across the globe have taken the idea of material well-being seriously, they have largely failed to acknowledge the important psychological aspects of this pursuit. Happiness often comes to us in prescriptive forms, and the State becomes an agent in instrumentalizing it through welfare schemes, good governance, and employment metrics. The point here is to observe how happiness gets quantified in terms of achievable goals, chasing targets, productivity, and success according to prescribed societal norms. Consequently, the blind tradition that "happy citizens equal happy countries" lives on. But does this quantification of joy actually reflect our lived reality, or does it merely serve to govern our behavior?

This idea of happiness, which has its roots in neo-liberalism, is measured by the World Happiness Index. In 2025, Finland was ranked as the happiest country for the eighth consecutive time. The report is published by the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network using data provided by the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank, and Gallup World Poll surveys. The "Cantril ladder" is used to record responses from 150 countries—where happiness is rated on a scale between 0 and 10. The indicators used include per capita gross domestic product (GDP), social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity, perceptions of corruption, and comparison to dystopia. In this ranking, India stands 118th among the 150 nations.

Similarly, the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH), propounded by the state of Bhutan, measures the happiness of individuals by considering basic minimum needs, socio-economic growth, environmental conservation, and the preservation of culture. While the GNH, along with GDP, is considered a measure of a "good life" in Bhutan, one must ask: does this help in resolving the existing crises of inequality and the hierarchical nature of Bhutanese society? Is a society truly happy based merely on the parameters of economic development, environmental preservation, cultural identity, and judicious governance? Is developing one's capabilities the only way to be happy? All these parameters have been built across time on the underlying principle that happiness is an absolute good and that the most important goal of a country should be to produce happy subjects. Therefore, it is crucial to look at this critically and ask: Why happiness? Perhaps we focus on it

because of all the positive things it offers, allowing us to overlook the deeper issues plaguing our worlds.

Ultimately, these reports and indexes point towards a very individualistic idea of happiness, where progress, productivity, and capabilities in a universal sense become the measure of one's well-being. This idea of happiness, now reduced to "being productive," becomes exploitative and works in favor of neo-liberal economies. Take, for instance, the retreats and vacations common to the corporate sector; often, the underlying reason for these breaks has nothing to do with the genuine happiness of individuals, but rather aims to increase the productivity of the workers upon their return. This compels us to ask: are we truly resting to recover our humanity, or merely to service our economic utility?

New technological advancements, and especially social media sites, have aided this happiness-productivity nexus. This succeeds in creating a false sense of happiness, producing compliant and uncritical subjects. Happiness thus becomes a highly regarded and widely accepted value, allowing the neo-liberal state to obscure the socio-economic and political issues confronting society. The "Happiness Curriculum" introduced in schools by the government is yet another example of reproducing and constructing an ideological acceptance of this specific brand of happiness. Policies like these allow the State to work towards the acceptance of an idea of happiness that is co-terminus with the neo-liberal agenda of growth and success, eventually culminating in the "good life." The idea of a good life then depends



GO FREE OH BIRD!
(Above) by Mahmoud Farshchian,
Photo credits: Farshchian Art



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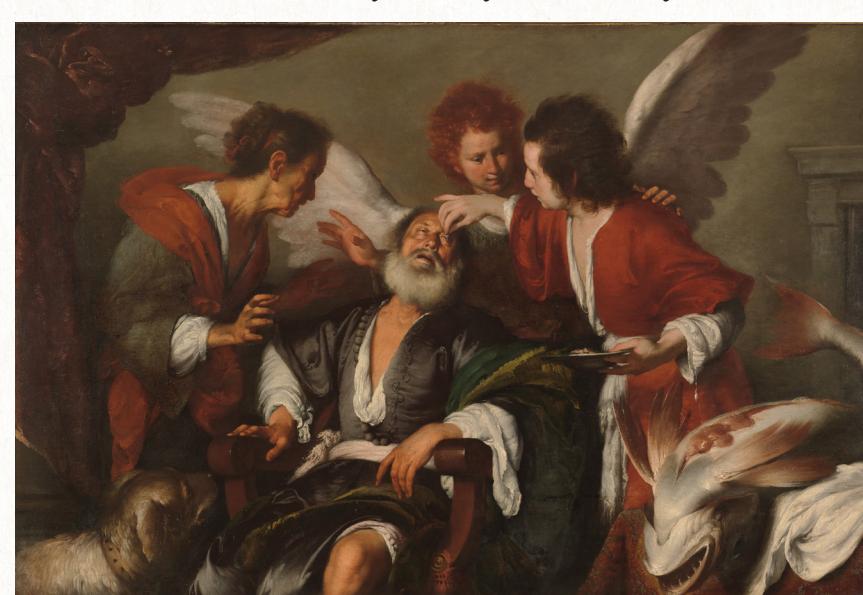
on what is being delivered by the state in the form of a manufactured collective happiness to be consumed individually. Thus, when an individual faces issues like unemployment—which depletes their savings—the state avoids questioning, as it positions itself as benevolent, supposedly doing everything to produce happy individuals. The burden of facing hardships and remaining "happy" then relies solely on an individual's will and resilience.

The vision of a good society rests between these empirical and normative conceptions of happiness. From Aristotle's *eudaimonia* (well-being) to Jeremy Bentham's *hedonism* (maximum pleasure), society has oscillated between these prescribed notions. However, is happiness the ultimate goal of one's being? It is important to realize that the entirety of human existence cannot solely rely on conceptions of happiness but rather must embrace a wider spectrum of emotions.

If we are to move forward, we must stop using happiness as a mask for structural failures. The major focus should shift from the pursuit of a quantified, productive happiness to the achievement of justice. Justice demands that all of us have sufficient resources and equal opportunities to achieve good and equal lives, rather than just forcing a smile through hardship. By prioritizing justice over the elusive metric of happiness, we acknowledge that a truly good society is not one where citizens are forced to be happy in spite of their circumstances, but one where the circumstances themselves are just enough to allow for genuine, unforced well-being.

The Question of Life, Disease and Cure

If medicine is the bridge between the fragility of life and the certainty of death, at what point does the pursuit of a cure become a defiance of nature itself?



termed the age of breakthroughs driven by widespread scientific innovation and detailed research, all resulting in increased life expectancy and exponential population growth. The development of the first vaccine by Edward Jenner, the introduction of the germ theory of disease by Pasteur and Koch, the formulation of antiseptic surgery by Lister, and the introduction of X-ray technology by Röntgen are but a few of the major milestones achieved by humankind in the 19th century.

The 20th and 21st centuries witnessed the discovery of penicillin by Fleming, the detailed study of DNA structure by Rosalind Franklin, the emergence of molecular biology, the introduction of MRI and organ transplantation, CRISPR, and the formulation of a

TOBIAS CURING HIS FATHER'S BLINDNESS
by Bernardo Strozzi, Photo credits: The Met Fifth Avenue

plethora of drugs treating deadly chronic illnesses. The evolution of medicine is a testament to the greatness of human curiosity paired with effective technology, transforming health from a matter of fate to a more manageable state.

The WHO defines health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being. Medical sciences work towards treating an illness by correcting the homeostasis of a moribund body, thus providing a cure. However, modern medicine does far more than cure; it focuses mainly on prevention through immunoprophylaxis, extensive disease screening, surveillance, and effective diagnosis. It increases survival and maintains health by integrating cure, prevention, and palliative care. Harrison's

illnesses and diseases a divine punishment; hence, the earliest flagbearers of healing were often Shamanic and priestly figures promising health through godly intervention. Ancient Egyptians (3000 BCE) left their mark on history as pioneers of advanced surgical skills and bone-setting, along with the usage of over 700 remedies documented in texts like the Ebers Papyrus. Ancient India (2000 BCE-1000 CE) heralded a new era with the emergence of the Ayurveda system, detailed in texts like the *Charaka Samhita* (medicine) and the *Sushruta Samhita* (surgery). Greek philosophers such as Hippocrates, often called the "Father of Western Medicine," metamorphosed medicine by debunking supernatural explanations and introducing

clinical observation, detailed medical histories, and the theory of the Four Humors—blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile—that dominated Western thought for centuries. The Hippocratic Oath remains the foundational and most important ethical text for a medical practitioner to this day.

The Middle Ages and Renaissance (500 CE-1700 CE) witnessed the rise of Islamic medicine with great scholars like Rhazes and Avicenna, paving the way for the establishment of some of the world's first hospitals. Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564) transformed anatomy with his accurate dissections and the publication of *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* (1543). The past few centuries, leading into the present, can

Principles of Internal Medicine emphasizes that the ultimate goal of medicine is to prevent disease and, when it occurs, to diagnose it early and provide effective treatment. On a similar note, *Robbins and Cotran Pathologic Basis of Disease*, regarded as the Bible of pathology, focuses on understanding the pathogenesis of a disease to re-establishment of a "normative" order—a disciplining of the biological body to fit back into the societal definition of the living. Medicine, in this light, becomes humanity's decision to disagree with nature's chaotic verdict.

Yet, the security of health is continuously threatened by various agents, including pathogenic microbes, metabolic disorders, genetic predispositions, environmental agents, nutritional deficiencies, neoplastic causes, and idiopathic factors. Amongst this plethora of causative agents, I find autoimmune diseases the most fascinating—a catastrophic phenomenon in which the body's immune system starts attacking self-cells indiscriminately. It always makes me wonder how minute changes in the genes controlling immune response, or environmental triggers, lead to a loss of tolerance and anergy—two marvelous qualities of our immune system. Tolerance and anergy ensure that one's immune system is unresponsive to self-antigens; thus, the loss of these functions results in the reactivity of the immune system towards its own body. In simple language, the body starts killing itself.

As I see it, whatever the cause of an ailment, it stems from the disruption of homeostasis. Most manifestations of a disease arise from the body's response to the causative agent. Therefore, whenever we administer external agents in the form of drugs or medical equipment, isn't it equivalent to meddling with nature's business? Curing a disease by the administration of modern medicine usually suppresses natural immune responses, alters biochemical pathways, and overrides genetic outcomes, thus altering natural selection's innate course.

This brings us to the philosophy of the cure itself. Michel Foucault, in *The Birth of the Clinic*, argued that the "medical gaze" transformed the human body from a vessel of suffering into an object of knowledge to be mapped and corrected. For Foucault, a cure is not merely the alleviation of pain, but

a re-establishment of a "normative" order—a disciplining of the biological body to fit back into the societal definition of the living. Medicine, in this light, becomes humanity's decision to disagree with nature's chaotic verdict.

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of a "normative" order—a disciplining of the biological body to fit back into the societal definition of the living. Medicine, in this light, becomes humanity's decision to disagree with nature's chaotic verdict. However, as one trudges through the history of humankind, one finds that the existence of human civilization is based on resistance: clothes resist climate, agriculture resists famine, law resists natural instincts, housing resists predators, and likewise, medicine resists diseases. Hence, through various instances, it can be figured that although medical treatment appears to go against nature, in reality, it often supports, restores, and amplifies the body's own natural healing mechanism. For instance, vaccines operate on the principle of the immune system's memory, surgery facilitates proper healing by supporting natural tissue repair, and drugs work by correcting defects in the otherwise "normal" functioning of various systems.

Thus, it can be inferred that life brings queries, medicine dwells into a search, and cure procures the solution. The amalgamation between them is not static; it is constantly evolving from herbs being crushed between ancient stones to the genome being edited with light. This union is not only scientific but profoundly humane, too. This trinity—stitched with empathy, sharpened with evidence, and illuminated by hope—carries the essence that no matter how dense the darkness is, the light of healing will always attempt to eradicate it. But as we stand at the precipice of these advancements, looking back at the silence of a life lost, we must ask: If death is the ultimate certainty of nature, is not our persistent, fragile attempt to cure the most profound definition of what it means to be alive?

Chillies at the Heart of Bhutanese Cuisine

Over my more than two years as an outsider living in Bhutan, I have learned one thing very clearly that Bhutanese people take their chillies very seriously. For them, chilli is not an optional spice added at the end; it is the heart of the dish.

When one travels through Bhutan, especially in its quieted countryside, it is difficult not to notice the omnipresence of chillies. Bright red pods are spread carefully on rooftops to dry in the sun, strung together in garlands hanging from windowpanes, or left to ripen on plants growing just outside the kitchen door. These everyday scenes are not decorative accidents; they quietly announce the central role that chilli plays in Bhutanese food culture. Kunzang Choden writes in her book *Chilli and Cheese: Food and Society in Bhutan* (2008) that no visitor leaves the country without forming a strong impression of what many Bhutanese proudly describe as their national dish as *ema datshi*, or chilli and cheese. This iconic dish is not simply food but a living cultural statement, deeply rooted in the everyday lives of the Bhutanese people.

The versatility of chilli allows *ema datshi* to take many forms. Depending on the type of chilli used (fresh green, dried red, mild or fiercely hot) and the quality and texture of local cheese, the dish can vary widely in taste and intensity. Over my more than two years as an outsider living in Bhutan, I have learned one thing very clearly that Bhutanese people take their chillies very seriously. For them, chilli is not an optional spice added at the end; it is the heart of the dish. This seriousness distinguishes Bhutanese cuisine from many others where spice plays a secondary or adjustable role.

The idea of spiciness, or piquancy, is of course widely appreciated across the world, but in the South Asian and Himalayan context it takes on particular significance. The hot pepper (red or green) belongs to the genus *Capsicum* of the family *Solanaceae*, and it is one of the most widely used spices globally. It appears in thousands of recipes and, in many parts of South Asia, is also eaten as a dish in itself rather than merely as a seasoning. In Bhutan, spiciness is a constitutive element of multisensory flavour experience derived from food. Heat, aroma, texture, and even color of chili work together to produce what is considered a satisfying meal.

What makes this cultural intimacy with chilli even more remarkable is its relatively recent arrival in Asia. Peppers, chillies, and paprika are all 'New World' plants, native to Mexico and Central and South America. They were introduced to Europe only after Columbus's voyages, and from there spread rapidly to Southern Asia, the Far East, and Africa. Many Asian cultures adopted chillies into their cuisines very quickly and it is astonishing to know that little more than five centuries later, chilli has become indispensable to their culinary traditions.

Its entry into Asia is thought to date back roughly 400-500 years, while its introduction to the Himalayas may have occurred even later. By the sixteenth century, chilli had entered the catalogue of Oriental spice trade as the "Calcutta chilli." Kunzang Choden suggests that once chillies reached Calcutta, a region relatively close to the Himalayan belt, it would not have taken long for their flavour to travel northwards. While the precise timeline of chilli's arrival in Bhutan remains uncertain, what is clear today is that Bhutanese cuisine feels incomplete without it.

Chilli's popularity in Bhutan is also practical. It is an extremely convenient vegetable. It can be eaten raw, cooked, roasted, chopped, ground, or whole. I have often seen Bhutanese colleagues take a whole green chilli, nip its tip with their teeth, dip it in salt, and eat it alongside rice with great satisfaction. A simple relish known as *azay* demonstrates chilli's adaptability: large green chillies are finely chopped and mixed with onions, tomatoes, ginger, coriander, salt, and crumbled local

cheese (*datshi*). Some people add *thingnay* (Sichuan pepper), which introduces a tingling numbness that heightens the sensory experience. *Azay* can be eaten on its own with rice, and for many Bhutanese, a meal of just chilli and rice is valued for its simplicity, completeness, and emotional comfort.

Bhutan grows several varieties of chilli, particularly in warmer regions. Among them, my personal favourite is the *Dolla* chilli—small, round, and deceptively attractive. Extremely hot and ideal for pickling, it adds instant flavour and intensity to food.

Research on why people enjoy spicy food suggests that the liking for capsaicin's burn is shaped by a complex interaction of genetic, personality, and cultural factors. Gary Paul Nabhan, in his book *Why Some Like It Hot: Food, Genes, and Cultural Diversity* (2004), argues that genes, diet, and culture together shape our preferences. He writes that taste is "a murky realm" where biology, culture, and individual experience meet, sometimes harmoniously, sometimes in amusing conflict. Bhutanese love for chilli appears to be a perfect illustration of this intersection, where repeated exposure, cultural pride, and shared habits cultivate not just tolerance for spice but genuine pleasure.

In Bhutan, chilli is more than an ingredient. It is memory, habit, comfort, and identity. From sundried rooftops to steaming bowls of *ema datshi*, chilli binds the everyday and the historical, the sensory and the social. Its heat does not merely burn the tongue; it warms the body, anchors the meal, and connects people to a shared culinary heritage.

EMA DATSI
(Below) Bhutan's iconic chili-cheese





The Representation of an Honest Search: Sukhwinderpal Singh (Sukhi)

The life and memory of Sukhwinderpal Singh Sukhi represent 'search' not as a means toward an end, but as a sustained mode of being. Rooted in a family ethos of moral discipline and care, his inner life was marked by intense emotional and intellectual surges that often-exceeded ordinary human limits. Yet his clarity of mind enabled him to restrain these impulses and redirect them toward the pursuit of balance, understanding, and knowledge. Though this intensity frequently generated despair, his disciplined intellect continually reopened the threshold of hope, remaining committed to a living engagement with thought. This search appeared to arise from a divinely earned solitude of the soul, within which love, and sensibility remained perpetually illuminated.

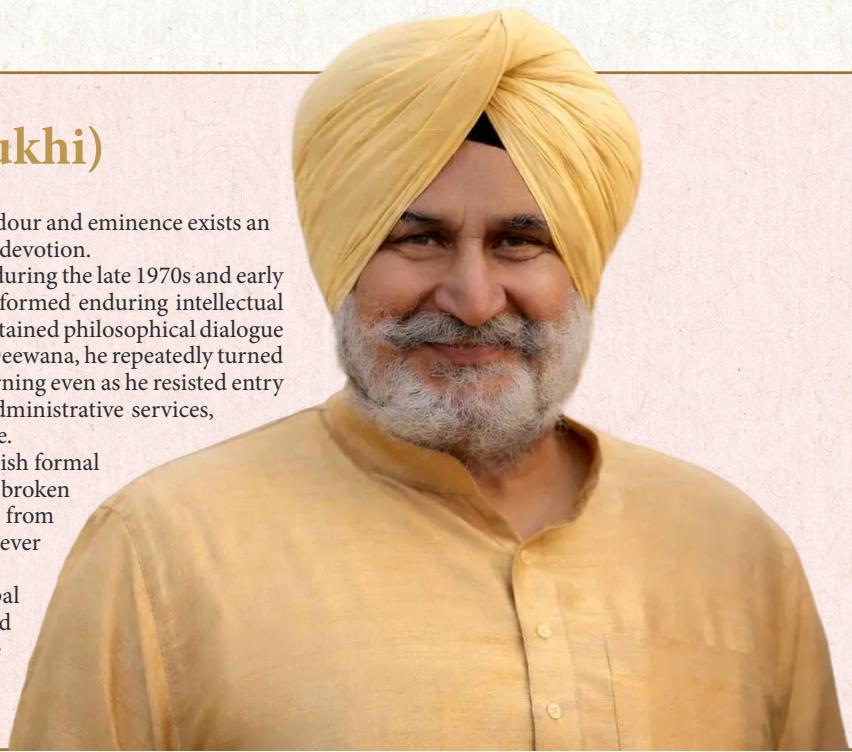
Born on 4 January 1954, Sukhi grew up in Faridkot in an affluent and cultivated household of father Puran Singh Sandhu and Mother Kartar Kaur. They cared this delicate 'light' with utmost dedication. He got his early education from Faridkot followed by formative years in Rajasthan—Sadul, Bikaner, and Jaipur—regions steeped in Rajputana history, discipline, and grandeur that presents sense of

power and beauty which is inherited from 'Shakti-Naem'. Yet in this royal splendour and eminence exists an ceaseless delicate element shaped through Krishna-Bhakti earned by maternal devotion.

His graduation years at Khalsa College and Panjab University, Chandigarh, during the late 1970s and early 1980s, placed him at the heart of an intense intellectual climate. Here, Sukhi formed enduring intellectual friendships, particularly with Satpal Gautam and Rajiv Banerjee, engaging in sustained philosophical dialogue and existential inquiry. Influenced by thinkers such as Professor Mohan Singh Deewana, he repeatedly turned toward the study of history and philosophy, remaining deeply committed to learning even as he resisted entry into institutional power structures. Though many of his peers entered elite administrative services, Sukhi chose the more uncertain path of intellectual integrity and independence.

Following his father's death, domestic responsibilities forced him to relinquish formal academic ambitions. Yet his search did not diminish. It endured through broken friendships, abandoned career prospects, physical suffering, and distance from centres of learning. He sought a life illuminated by knowledge, striving—however impossible—to remain whole across all dimensions of human relation.

Living through these ethical, sensitive, and reflective horizons, Sukhwinderpal Singh (Sukhi) left behind a vigilant and valuable intellectual legacy. He passed away on 28 December 2025, leaving us not a destination, but a living example of search itself.



Kabir Singh Gill

IN MEMORIAM

The day did not announce,
It arrived anyway.
The sun shone brightly
leaving the moon empty-handed.

What gathered silently for days
finally broke the surface.
Eyes flowing,
want dissolved.

The world had never quite
paused like this,
clock kept ticking—
time refused to move.

A voice that always answered fell
silent.

The quiet did not stay indoors,
It moved—
an institution
had been removed
from the world.

He was rarely still.
Not restless—
just always
behind the wheel,
on his way
to something that needed him.

He moved
without visible hurry,
Time behaved differently
around him.

He spoke
as if words waited
their turn.
When decisions were needed,
eyes turned toward him.

He dressed
with intention—
cupboards crowded
with choice, shelves crowded
with thought.

He met people once
and remained.
Long after the conversation ended,
something of him
stayed behind.

He was a man of faith.
Faith, in him,
was something
examined
and lived.

Now the car waits in the garage.
Departure will not arrive on instinct.
Freedom will have fewer exits.

The house holds too much readiness.
The shelves remain full;
pages wait.

Clothes are bundled in the cupboards,
with nowhere to go.
The kitchen lost its most frequent visitor.
Late night cravings will feel alone.

Now mangoes will arrive
without announcement.
Sweets will no longer
mark the day.

New places will remain untried.
Old shops will wait.

Gifts will come less often.

Mechanics will recognize
the car
that does not come.

The tracker will remain.
He will no longer be located.
Only now

do we notice
how much was being
handled.
What we mistook for habit
was labor.

How little was accidental.

He kept things moving.
He took responsibility
for timing.

He made room for life,
He felt forever free.
What he carried
was not visible—
only its absence is.

The weight
does not disappear.
It disperses.

Nothing was handed over.
No instructions.
Only a standard,
quietly set.

What he carried
is now divided among us.
The day no longer fits
what he used to do with it.

The standard remains
unmarked.
He lived
in a way
that became
only afterward
death's proud prefix.

I was 36.
He was 72.
But between us there was no arithmetic of age only the
geometry of souls.

Sukhwinder Singh Sandhu did not belong to time;
time merely passed through him.

He savoured music and great literature as if life itself were a
beautiful madness.
He spoke of love, art, and simplicity with a tenderness that
made the world softer.
He taught without sermons: *never be angry, never get stuck
inside a conversation — let it flow, let it heal.*

There was a stillness in him, like a silent pond,
yet beneath that calm burned unbroken passion.
To those who thought deeply, he offered empathy.
To those who doubted themselves, he gave encouragement.

Such people carry within them the glowing embers of lifelong
devotion — and people like that do not truly die.

He loved Will Durant because he knew how fragile
civilizations are:
*"Civilization exists by geological consent, subject to change
without notice." — Will Durant*

That is why he never postponed kindness.
He loved Kant because dignity must never be compromised:
*"Act in such a way that you treat humanity... always as an end
and never merely as a means." — Immanuel Kant*

No one was ever a tool in his world.
Everyone was a purpose.

He loved Shakespeare because possibility is humanity's quiet
tragedy:
"We know what we are, but know not what we may be."
— William Shakespeare

To every person he met, he carried only one mission:
"How can I make you better today?"

He loved Ghalib because sorrow is also a form of wisdom:
*हङ्गामे रङ्गाहिंशे ऐसी कि हर रङ्गाहिंशे पे दम निकले, बहुत निकले मेरे
अरमान लेकिन फिर भी कम निकले। —गालिब*

He came to my home as if he belonged there.
Then coffee.
Then long drives without destinations.
Then hours that quietly rearranged my soul.

Now the evening comes,
but Sukhwinder Singh Sandhu does not.

Mohit Kumar

The Man Who Was Never "Just a Friend"



The coffee is hot,
but the conversation is unfinished.

The road still stretches ahead,
but it no longer asks me who I am becoming.

I did not lose a friend.
I lost my unfinished sentences,
my borrowed courage,
my better self.

And Ghalib returns again, as grief finding its
language:

दिल ही तो है न संग-ओ-खिरत, दर्द से भर न आए
कर्म, रोएँगे हम हज़ार बार, कोई हमें सताए कर्मों।
—गालिब

Some people leave behind memories.
He left behind *incompleteness*.

Yet I know this much —
those who carry the burning embers of passion
within them
do not disappear.

They continue to live
in every life they made deeper.

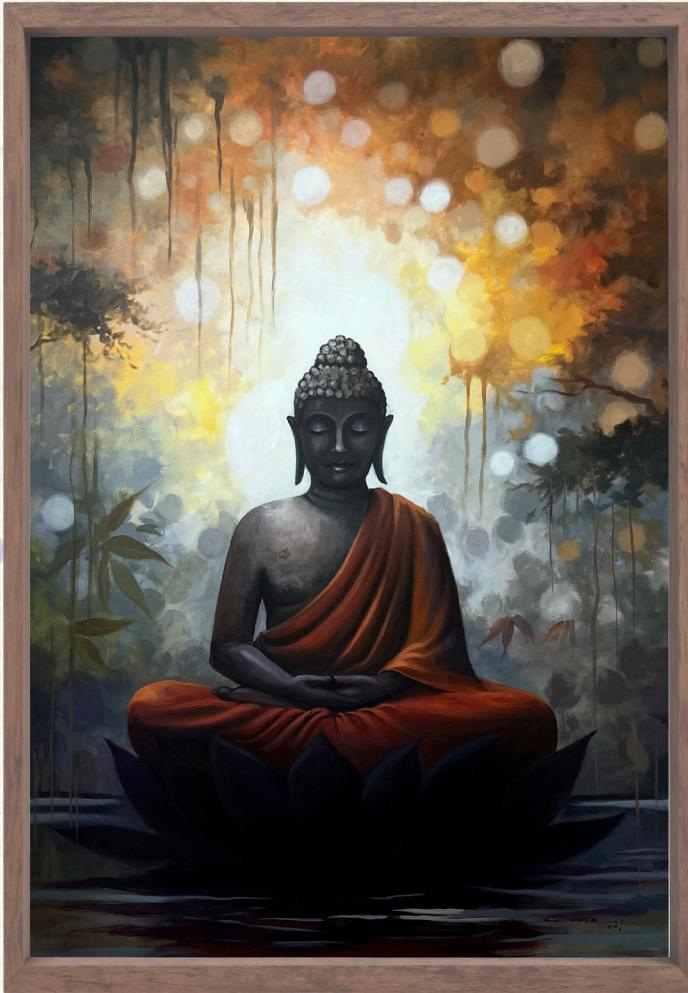
Today I drink coffee alone,
but every sip carries his eternal question:

"Are you becoming the person you were meant to be?"

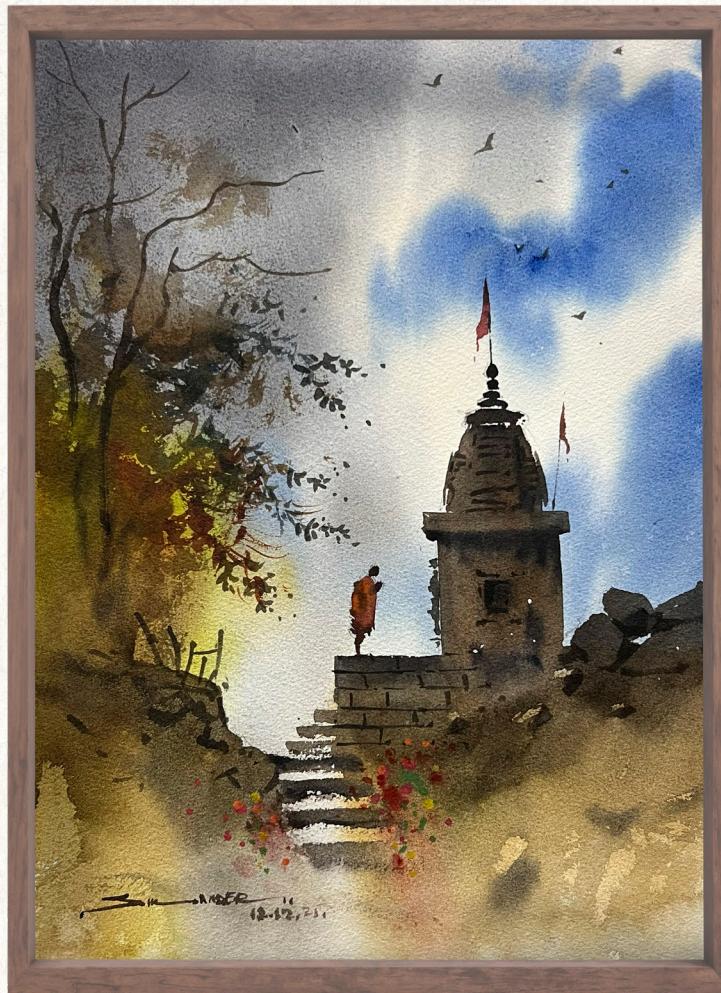
I promise you, my old philosopher of life
Sukhwinder Singh Sandhu

I will try.

— From a friend who will forever
miss you



Buddha



Temple



Old Boats



Seascape



Landscape



Sikander Singh
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Sikander Singh is a contemporary Indian painter born in Baghapurana, Moga (Punjab), and presently based in Chandigarh. Trained at the Government College of Arts, Chandigarh, where he completed his Bachelor of Fine Arts (1998–2002), Singh has been working as a professional artist for over twenty-three years. Primarily known for his mastery of watercolour, he also works with oil and acrylic. His paintings reveal a refined sensitivity to atmosphere and mood, where colour functions not merely as description but as an emotional and experiential force. Through fluid washes, layered transparencies, and controlled spontaneity, Singh captures fleeting moments of nature, architecture, and silence, allowing his compositions to breathe with light, space, and quiet movement.

At the heart of Sikander Singh's artistic practice lies a contemplative intention: to connect inner experience with the visible world. He

Editor



Statue

