

JANUARY, 2026

WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION, IIT KANPUR

# Ásmi

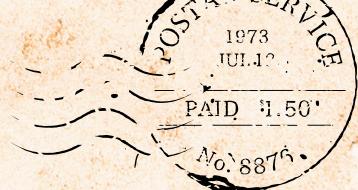


SPECIAL EDITION - LETTERS TO MYSELF



# From the Editor's Desk

## Letter to self

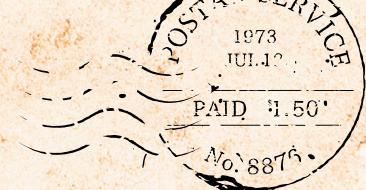


If you have ever caught yourself arguing with yourself and winning both sides, or drafting the perfect comeback hours after losing an argument, don't feel bad: pat yourself on the back instead. You have been practicing one of humanity's most underrated arts: inner conversation. In this issue of *Asmi*, we lean into that art through the theme "Letters to the Self."

Psychologists such as Thomas Suddendorf and Michael C. Corballis have shown that when we mentally time travel to past or future versions of ourselves, we are not just daydreaming: we are rehearsing, reflecting, and often healing. Tilmann Habermas and Susan Bluck introduced the concept of autobiographical reasoning, which suggests that our mind has the incredible ability to stitch memories, emotions, and hopes into a story that feels like 'me'. Meanwhile, our literary greats have been at it for centuries, whether it is Virginia Woolf whispering to her past self or Rilke urging his younger self to be patient toward all that is unsolved.

Why write to your past or future self? Because it sharpens perspective. Your 15-year-old self might laugh at the cautious, safe steps you take every day while making decisions, while your 50-year-old self might pat your shoulder and remind you that most things we panic about shrink with time.





Neuroscientists such as Buckner and Carroll suggest that such dialogues can improve emotional regulation and decision making by activating the same brain networks used for empathy. only this time the empathy is directed inward.

And let us not underestimate the humor in it. If nothing else, writing to your younger self is a chance to say, "Please do not wear that bright yellow dress with green embroidery; you look like a mustard flower popping straight out of a field." Writing to your older self is a chance to say, "I hope you are still singing out loud in the bathroom."

So, what are you waiting for? Pick up a pen and write small letters across time, to the child who thought the world was endless or the elder who knows how finite it is, to the self that doubted or the one that dared. Write with empathy in mind and kindness in tone. If you are looking for inspiration, do read the wonderful letters shared by our readers in this issue of Asmi. They all are wonderful, touching and show wisdom that one acquires as they experience life. It is always good to write to yourself, after all who better to exchange letters with than the one person guaranteed to read them with care.

which is you.

Akansha Dwivedi



Akansha Dwivedi



# Letter to self

Dear 20-Year-Old Me,

I see you there—full of dreams, doubts, and that restless energy to figure it all out. First, you are enough—exactly as you are. That voice in your head picking apart your looks, your weight, your size, choices, or your worth? It's lying. You're more beautiful, capable, and unique than you realize. Be confident. Stop comparing yourself to others; your path is yours alone, and it's unfolding just as it should.

Don't rush to have it all figured out. At 20, you feel the pressure to nail down the perfect score in everything but life isn't a race. Mistakes and failures are valuable lessons—trust me, what feels like a significant mistake now will seem trivial in time, shaping you into a wiser, and stronger version of yourself.

Treasure your parents. Their advice or criticisms, though sometimes frustrating, stem from love. As a parent now, I understand their perspective deeply and miss them dearly. Your sensitivity is a profound gift, not a flaw. Don't hide your tears or dim your radiant smile and infectious laugh. Ignore those who say a woman's laughter should be subdued. Stay vibrant and true—those who matter will cherish you; others don't deserve you.



Relationships will shape you, but not all are meant to last. Friends and relatives. Keep the ones who make you gregarious and acknowledge your presence. Distance yourself from those who drain you, without guilt. Take care of yourself, dear. Your body and mind are temples. Eat healthy and maintain a fitness regime. Continue to embrace the activities that brings you happiness and fills your days with cheer.

Finally, live in the now. You spend so much time worrying about the future or replaying the past, but this moment—your 20-year-old spark—is a gift. Savor it. Laugh more, dance and don't be so hard on yourself. You're doing better than you think.

With all my love,  
Your 50-Something Self



Nalini Sankar



## Letter to self

Dear younger me,

As I grow older and reflect on the past. I realize that I have come a long way, and the things that I once had valued more than my life, are no longer important to me. In fact, it's not just the numbers or my grey hair that remind me that I am growing older, but being slow and dealing with situations wisely/differently makes me feel that I have actually matured in life! Over the years I also learnt that life never gets easier, it just gets different.

Remember, childhood is not something you will experience once again. Therefore, cherish every moment till it lasts. The time spent with parents and siblings is priceless. God has planned everything for us, and we shall follow the hidden signs leading to happiness.

Try to develop a hobby, it helps us a lot! You will have to give a lot more in every sphere of your life than you imagine. While growing up, you will make many mistakes, which is normal, and they will become invaluable lessons for the future. Overthinking is simply the art of creating problems that aren't even there.



Therefore, always be positive and keep moving.

Lean on your faith and be full of gratitude. Eat to your heart's content. No one puts that love as mothers do. It tastes heavenly!

Hug your grandparents. their wisdom is extraordinary!

Cheers to all the unforgettable old memories. and best of luck for the new ones that you are about to create. It is necessary to pause in life and take time to listen to your inner voice. Try to develop a good heart. slow down. appreciate. and be open to criticisms. You made me dream big. and I keep comparing myself to you. Financial independence helps us in adulthood. so study and work smart rather than hard!

I am learning how to be wiser and a better person as an adult. I am making conscious efforts to be kind. and you will be surprised. nowadays. I take care of myself and have learnt to say no! Be carefree. but not careless!

Stay healthy! I love you, my younger self!

From

Your older self



Ekta Narang

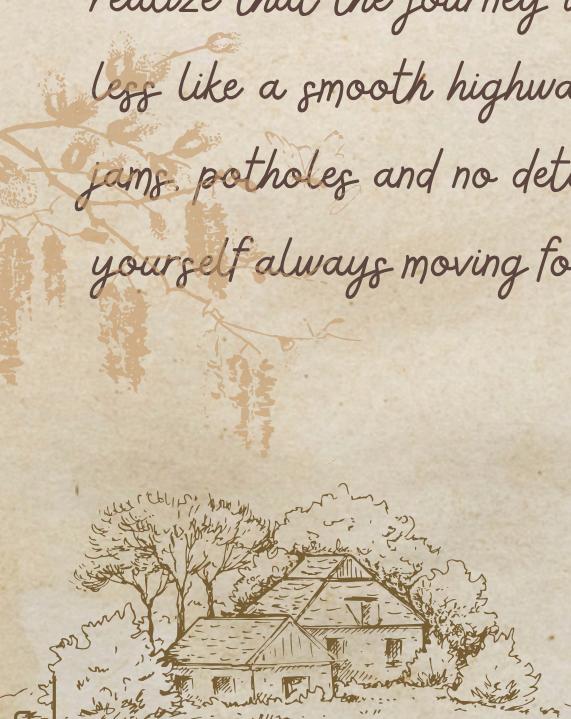
# Letter to self

Dear Younger Me (aka Shilpa 2.0 - Beta. Forever).

First things first- don't stress too much about Home and Work Balance, it's overrated. One day you'll be balancing twenty projects at once- with as much elegance as a juggler who more than occasionally drops a ball and **LAUGHS it off!!!**

Also, stop worrying whether Kanpur's dust and water will ruin your hair- it already has. Own the greys: make it part of your style. And Yes drinking chai with milk and sugar every two hours will not solve any of life's problems and mysteries- but they will give you a lifetime membership in the "pre diabetic club".

That innovative idea you are sitting on? Don't wait for "perfect". You'll realize that the journey itself is one big beta version. Life, you'll learn is less like a smooth highway but more like Kalyanpur traffic: full of sudden jams, potholes and no detour. But somehow, if you stick it out, you'll find yourself always moving forward.



More importantly, be grateful for the little joys, an AC that works, a Tata Nano that may be tiny but gets you wherever you want to go, or a hot cup of chai on a rainy evening. Gratitude, for family, friends, nature, waggy friends and more, carries you through it all!

And here the big secret. You'll always be a work in progress- Shilpa beta 2.0 forever- messy. Multi-tasking, yet quietly resilient and that's exactly what makes life FUN!

With love

Your Older, slightly wiser self



Shilpa Deshpande Kaistha

Imperfect, Juggling, Grateful—and moving forward anyways



# Letter to self

Dear Bala,



I am at that phase of life where I can write a letter only to my younger self. So, I have decided to write a letter to my younger self. I am remembering all the silly mistakes I did when I was very young. At sometimes remember why I did those mistakes. If only there was an undo button or a delete button. I could have pressed and corrected those mistakes.

When I was studying in school, my mother enrolled me in hobby classes telling me that I should learn a hobby so that I can teach my younger siblings if they are interested. I used to believe that only studies should be taken seriously, even when my mother would warn me that I would regret it later in life and yes, I did regret it multiple times in my life. My parents always used to tell me learn a hobby as it will help me relax and be creative as well. During that time what I did was only go to college, study, or pass my time reading story books or play with my siblings.

After landing a job, my father said register yourself for higher studies it will help you in your career prospects. Myself being me, I registered for higher studies and did not focus on the end results. I had to drop out later, only to regret it later.



There is a saying, time and tide waits for none. How true the proverb is. When our parents tell us to focus on studies and extra-curricular activities we don't take it seriously.

Even now, whenever I reflect on these things I always feel I should have focused on one hobby seriously which I could have taught my daughter and which could have helped me to feel relaxed and would also have given a sense of purpose in life. This is what I want to say to my younger self. Listen to your parents. Their way of saying may not always be polite but they have the best interest for your well-being. Learn at least one hobby to make you feel happy and relaxed because in life there are ups and downs which every person has to go through. During those times it is essential to be positive, grateful and happy.

R.Bala Thirupura Sundari



R.Bala Thirupura Sundari



# Letter to self

Dear Little Me,

I see you running barefoot through the green fields, chasing dragonflies, laughing when the rain falls on the old village roof. I see you sitting with your grandparents, breathing in the warm smell of papad and achar, hearing stories while the monsoon sings outside. You don't know it yet, but these moments are treasures you'll carry forever.

The village will always live in you—the glass-clear water under the rice plants in winter, the sound of everyone's voices singing festival songs, the way the whole village stood united even in the toughest of times. Those memories are your roots, steady and strong.

I see you—your tiny hands holding your school bag, your grandmother pressing a one- rupee coin into your palm so you can buy ice cream on the way. That love, pure and unconditional, the kind you will remember long after the coin is gone.

I see the village that surrounds you like a big family—their warmth, their care, their tears when your father left this world too soon. You were only five, yet the entire village stepped in, holding you and your mother close. Their love was like a blanket on the coldest nights, reminding you that you were never alone.

I know you miss your father. That empty space in your heart will ache, but your mother will step in with extraordinary strength—being both father and mother.



Her love, her courage, will be your guiding light.  
Life will take you far away from that house, the fields, the festivals, and the comfort of a big family. You will leave with your mother, carrying only love and resilience. You will stumble, cry, and wonder if you'll ever find your place again. But listen closely: you will not just survive - you will rise.

You will study harder than you ever thought possible, and one day you will walk through the gates of the Indian Institute of Technology, not just as a student but as a scholar. You will stand tall, with the strength of your mother, your father's memory, and your village, all alive inside you.

So, little one, play in the rain. Taste the mango pickle your grandmother makes. Take joy in the clear glassy water under the rice plants. Listen to the laughter of your cousins during festivals. One day, when you feel alone, these memories will wrap around you like a warm shawl. They will remind you - you are never truly alone.

Stand tall, dream big. You are stronger than you know, and your journey is just the beginning. You are stronger than the storms, and greener than the fields, washed after the rain.

With endless love,

Your Older Self



Geetimukta





प्रिय लिली,

बहुत बरस हुए। आज मन हुआ कि तुम्हे पत्र लिखूँ। तुम्हारा चेहरा याद करने की कोशिश करती हूँ। तो वह बनता ही नहीं। अजीब है न। जो इतना क़रीब है। उसे देखने के लिए फोटो (फोज़न-फ्रेम) का सहारा लेना पड़ रहा है। बस एक ही तो पुराना फोटो है मेरे पास तुम्हारा। तुम फूलों वाली फ्रॉक पहने खिली धूप में छत पर खड़ी मुस्करा रही हो। दाएँ-बाएँ के बालों को काढ़कर माँ ने बीच के बालों को कुछ उठाकर बाँध दिया है। शायद मामा जी ने वो फोटो लिया था कभी।

याद है। माँ का पूर्णमासी का व्रत और तुम्हारा उनके पास बैठकर प्रसाद और कथा की तैयारी करना। पूजाघर रसोई के एक कोने में ही था। माँ पता नहीं क्यों सत्यनारायण की कथा तुम्हारे ही मुँह से सुनना पसंद करती थी। लीलावती और कलावती के जीवन में प्रसाद न ग्रहण करने से मची हलचल ने कुछ ऐसा असर छोड़ा कि इतने वर्षों बाद भी जब मैंकाली माँ की पूजा के भोग वितरण के लिए कक्षा होने की वजह से नहीं रूक पा रही थी तब भी मन प्रसाद के बिना जाने को नहीं माना। मैंने पास खड़े एक नवयुवक से पापड़ का एक टुकड़ा ही परोस देने का आग्रह कर दिया। पर वो क्या जाने लीलावती-कलावती के जीवन में आयी झँझावत की कहानी। वह रूखे मन से मुझे सब्र करने की सलाह देने लगा। पर मन में जो बात इतने वर्षों से बैठ गयी थी उसको झटकना आसान कहाँ। मैंने भी थोड़े से प्रसाद का प्रबंध कर ही लिया। इसी से याद आया। माँ कैसे तुम्हें डराती थीं कि किसी और की चीज न लेना नहीं तो पुलिस उठाकर ले जाती है।

बड़े कुछ भी बोल देते हैं बिना यह सोचे कि बाल मन पर बात कितनी गहरे पैठ जाती है। जब उस दिन तुमने माँ को बताया कि "सड़क पर 50 पैसे का सिक्का पड़ा था।" तो माँ सहज ही बोली थीं "कि कहाँ है?" तुम्हारे यह कहने पर कि उठाया नहीं-नहीं तो पुलिस पकड़कर ले जाती। वो बोली थीं "अरे बुद्धू।" और तुम कैसे उनका मुँह ताकने लगी थीं।

तुमसे बात कर के अच्छा लगा। बाकी फिर कभी सही।

सन्नेह।  
तुम्हारी रमा।



Rama Rawat

# Letter to self

## The Alchemy of Choices

My dear 25-year-old self, Manju

It begins with a bold choice -

Stepping into the gates of IIT Kanpur, a premier institution where corridors whisper of excellence, labs glow with the promise of innovation, and every challenge calls you to rise higher. You chose a canvas where brilliance meets hard work, where discovery becomes destiny, and where your own alchemy of choices begins. As you enter this world of research, remember: all are toppers here. Do not be daunted by brilliance; instead, let it inspire you to give your best, every single day.

Remember always -

Sincerity and hard work are the true pillars of success.

The world will take you places - across oceans, into great institutions, and even into halls where Nobel laureates gather.

There you will realize:

It is not the medals, the titles or the applause that define the worth of a life lived, but the quiet strength of sincerity, and the steady fire of hard work.

Hold fast to the values and lessons your parents gave you. They will anchor you when the winds of life blow strong, and they will remind you of who you are, even when the world tries to define you differently. Think of life as a game - sometimes you win, sometimes you lose, but always you play. Embrace the uncertainties, for they are not detours but secret doors leading you to the person you are meant to become.



See the world. Let new cultures, new people, and new challenges shape you. Let your spirit be like the river - flowing, learning, and nourishing wherever it goes.

And in this journey - don't forget to have fun. Laugh deeply, love generously, and live life to its fullness. Do not postpone joy.

- Be as pure as silver, reflecting light with honesty.
- Be as rare as platinum, precious in your principles.
- Be as steadfast as cobalt, strong in your convictions.
- Be as resilient as palladium, enduring and adaptable under pressure.

Here lies the grand lesson: Life is the alchemy of choices. It is not about reaching a destination, but about evolving - towards wisdom, towards kindness, towards emotional maturity, and towards a truer version of yourself. The measure of success is not titles or accolades, but a life of simple living and high thinking, resilience, and the quiet pride of knowing you stayed true to your soul.

Walk on, my dear - you are not just living a life; you are creating one. And through every joy, every uncertainty, every fire you pass through, you will discover this: the alchemy of choices turns your journey into gold.

With love, courage, and faith in you.

[Your Future Self, Manju]



Manju Lata Rao

# अपनी छोटी उम्र के स्वयं को एक पत्र

कभी सोचती हूँ कि अपने अतीत से मैं क्या कहती  
कुछ हिचकिचाती. कुछ मुस्कुराती. कुछ द्रवित हो जाती.

शायद उन अनूठी यादों को एक बार फिर से देखकर भाव विभोर हो जाती.  
नन्हें कदमों की आहट सुन फिर से खिलखिलाकर  
हंसी छूट जाती /

रुकना मत बस चलते जाना. आगे बढ़ते जाना  
ऐसी सोच और पैदा करती.

हर तरह की चीज़ों को एक बार ज़रूर ट्राई करने का भरपूर ज़ोर लगवाती  
हर बार माप तोल कर चीज़ें न करके थोड़ा स्पॉनटेनियस होने को कहती  
ज़िन्दगी और ज़िम्मेदारियों की उधेड़बुन में भी

अपने बचपने को जीवित रखना. कुछ ऐसा निरंतर प्रयास कराती  
हर गलती को गिल्ट नहीं एक्सपीरियंस बनाकर उससे कुछ नया सीखने की ललक  
बढ़ाती

अपनी छवि. विशेषताओं और अनूठेपन में और ज़्यादा प्रसन्न एवं मज़े में रहती

अपने रंग-रूप एवं व्यक्तित्व की सबसे बड़ी वकील बन पैरवी करती  
नहीं. नो. मना करना आपको बुरा और अव्यावहारिक नहीं बनाता है. यह और अच्छे  
से समझाती

थोड़ी और ज़्यादा सब्जियां और फल खा लेना जैसी हिदायतें भी कह जाती  
पढ़ना हमेशा ज़रूरी है लेकिन खूब खेलना और स्वस्थ रहना भी सर्वपूर्ण विकास की  
ओर ले जाता है.

सरल होना. दयालु होना. मदद करना. दरियादिल होना. कोई कमज़ोरी या कमी नहीं  
है. यह पाठ प्रतिदिन याद कराती.

थोड़ी और हिम्मत दिखाकर समाज के विपरीत जाने में भी कोई शर्म मत करना यह  
सच दिखलाती /

an enim ad modum remittit, non  
modo consequit. Quis autem curae dolor in se  
in fugientibus possit. Exceptio sentit  
in diversis malis in se est illa.



आर्थिक स्थिरता. बचत. निवेश. इंशोरेंस. म्यूच्यूअल फंड्स. टैक्स संबंधित जानकारी  
जिसे सीखने की आवश्यकता बतलाती.

बड़े छोटे महत्वपूर्ण फैसले कब. कहाँ. कैसे और क्यों लेने हैं इसका अधिकार भी  
सिर्फ तुम्हें है ऐसा ज़ोर देती

प्यार इतना ज़्यादा बांटो. इतना ज़्यादा दर्शाओ कि दुःख और नफरत की जगह ही  
खत्म हो जाती.

खुल के. खिल के जीना सीखना. जो भी करो उसे पूरे दिल से करो यह बतलाती /  
केवल उसी के साथ दोस्ती. रिश्तेदारी और संबंध होने चाहिए जो आपका. आपकी  
सोच का और आपके दायरों का सम्मान करना जानते हैं /

ज़िन्दगी की दौड़ में बहुत से रिश्ते आते हैं और जाते हैं.

लेकिन जो अभी भी साथ निभा रहे हैं उनको हमेशा पास रखने को कहती.  
कंडीशनिंग और मानसिकता के विपरीत और विरुद्ध न लड़कर उसकी जड़ को  
समझ कर धीरे धीरे नई सोच. समय के अनुसार विकसित करना ज़्यादा प्रेरणाप्रद है  
ये दिखलाती /

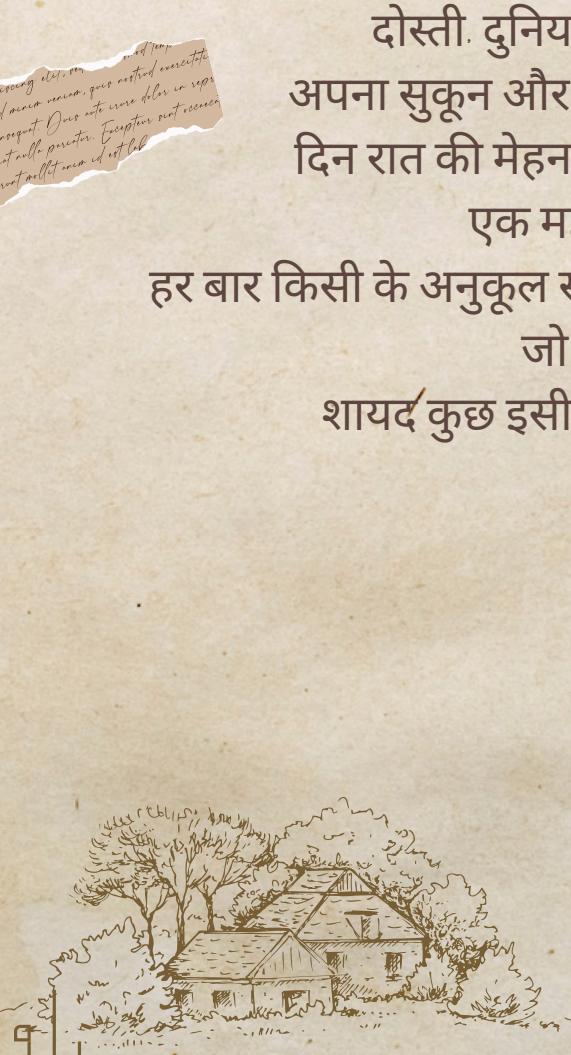
दोस्ती. दुनियादारी सब ज़रूरी है लेकिन सबसे पहले  
अपना सुकून और मानसिक शांति ही सर्वप्रथम है यह दर्शाती /  
दिन रात की मेहनत और दिनचर्या में थोड़ा समय स्वयं को देना  
एक महत्वपूर्ण कड़ी है ये भी बतलाती /

हर बार किसी के अनुकूल सांचे में न ढलकर. सांचो को तोड़कर एक नयी आकृति  
जो वास्तविक है वह दिखलाती /

शायद कुछ इसी तरह की बातें अपने अतीत को समझाती /



Rashi Pant

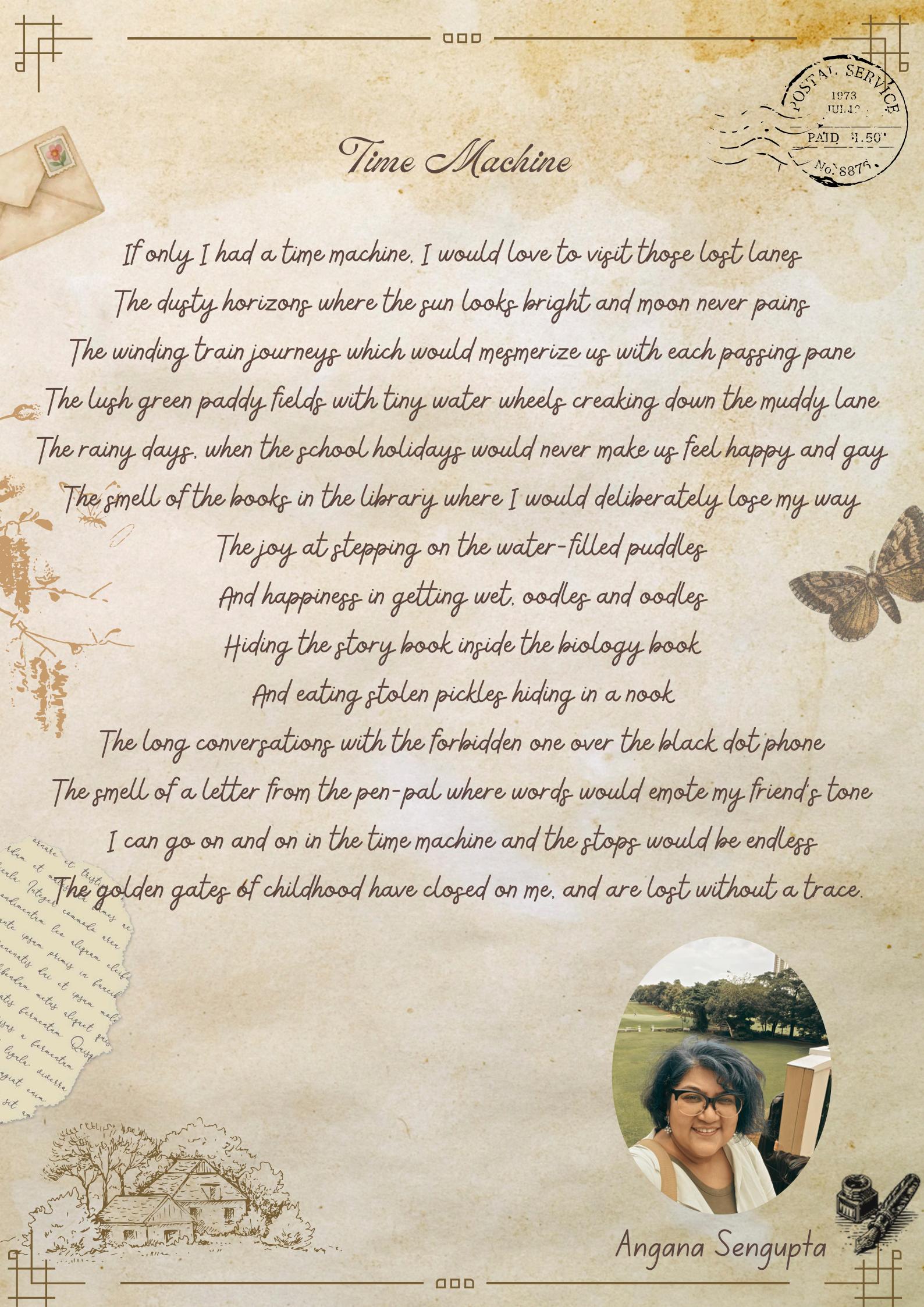


# O Dear Me

Thinking out aloud I am, thinking of bygone times.  
Talking to the little me at twenty, twelve, and nine.  
The little girl with two pigtails, in uniform and school tie.  
Of olden times, those golden times, none knows me better than I?  
Studies, music, art, or books, what did I like most?  
What was my favorite food? Ice cream or garlic toast.  
Favorite color blue or green? Favorite sunflower.  
Did I like sunshine? Or was it rain and shower.  
Who was when my best friend? Different at different ages.  
Did I like free birds in sky? Or birds in iron cages.  
Did I like a cat or dog? Which was my favorite pet.  
Did I like a chugging train? Or a flight by jet.  
Was my favorite sari or skirt? Or those comfy jeans.  
Tell me if you know for sure, keep guessing by all means.  
If permitted, I would like to write my own obituary.  
All of me I'd let you know, who knows me better than me?  
Life has been fairly long, both happy and sad.  
Always have I been a good girl, never was I bad.



Anjana Poddar



## Time Machine



If only I had a time machine, I would love to visit those lost lanes

The dusty horizons where the sun looks bright and moon never pains

The winding train journeys which would mesmerize us with each passing pane

The lush green paddy fields with tiny water wheels creaking down the muddy lane

The rainy days, when the school holidays would never make us feel happy and gay

The smell of the books in the library where I would deliberately lose my way

The joy at stepping on the water-filled puddles

And happiness in getting wet, oodles and oodles

Hiding the story book inside the biology book

And eating stolen pickles hiding in a nook

The long conversations with the forbidden one over the black dot phone

The smell of a letter from the pen-pal where words would emotive my friend's tone

I can go on and on in the time machine and the stops would be endless

The golden gates of childhood have closed on me, and are lost without a trace.



Angana Sengupta



## Creative Corner



Anamika Rathore



Anjana Poddar





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SCAN ME

