

Artistic Expression: Freedom and Boundaries – A Thought-Provoking IGNCA Symposium Marking 75 Years of the Indian Constitution



New Delhi, 8 February 2026:

Commemorating 75 years of the Indian Constitution, a one-day national symposium titled “कला अभिव्यक्ति : स्वतंत्रता एवं मर्यादाएँ” was jointly organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sanskar Bharati and the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA). Held at the IGNCA auditorium on **8 February 2026**, the event unfolded in a dignified yet intellectually vibrant atmosphere, emerging as a meaningful cultural platform that explored the dynamic relationship between art, constitutional values and contemporary society during the ongoing *Amrit Mahotsav* period.

The programme commenced with a ceremonial lamp-lighting by Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi, **Dr. Sandhya Purecha**, **Shri Abhijeet Gokhale**, **Shri Vinod Narayan Indurkar** and **Shri Prabhat Kumar**.

In their opening remarks, the speakers highlighted the intrinsic connection between the Constitution, culture and artistic practice. They emphasised that the Indian Constitution is not merely a legal framework but a living embodiment of cultural consciousness – one that empowers artists with freedom of expression while simultaneously reminding them of social responsibility and ethical boundaries.

The **first session**, devoted to literature, featured insightful reflections by **Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi, Dr. Alka Sinha and Shri Kishor Makwana**. The panel discussed literature as a bridge between power structures, social realities and human sensitivity. Speakers observed that while the Constitution grants writers the freedom to articulate truth fearlessly, it also calls for thoughtful and responsible use of language.

In the **second session on visual arts**, **Dr. Nandlal Thakur, Shri Neeraj Gupta and Ms. Situ Kohli** explored the evolving landscape of contemporary and digital visual expression. They emphasised that visual art communicates beyond words and holds the power to mirror society. Constitutional freedoms, they noted, enable artists to challenge norms and provoke dialogue, provided that sensitivity and cultural balance remain central to creative practice.

The **third session**, centred on performing arts, brought together **Dr. Sandhya Purecha, Shri Chetan Joshi and Ms. Vidya Shah**. Through discussions on theatre, music and stage traditions, they reflected on the stage as a powerful medium for social engagement. Artists, they suggested, carry the responsibility to foster awareness, inclusivity and dialogue through their performances.

Cinema formed the focus of the **fourth session**, where **Shri Atul Pandey, Shri Mustaza Ali Khan and senior journalist-film critic Shri Anant Vijay** examined the wide-reaching influence of films on society. The panellists stressed the delicate

balance between creative liberty and social accountability, highlighting the growing relevance of ethical storytelling in contemporary media landscapes.

During the **valedictory session**, **Sanskar Bharati's National Organisation Secretary Shri Abhijeet Gokhale** drew connections between Bharat Muni's *Natyashastra*, the rights and duties enshrined in the Constitution, and the need for contextually relevant artistic creation. He underscored that artistic freedom achieves its true significance only when aligned with cultural awareness and societal responsibility.

A distinctive feature of the symposium was the presentation of short street plays before each session, offering audiences an engaging thematic introduction. Complementing the discussions was an exhibition showcasing the contributions of women artisans involved in the making of the Constitution and highlighting the artistic dimensions embedded within its spirit.

Overall, the symposium emerged as an enriching and reflective cultural initiative – encouraging artists, scholars and audiences to re-examine the Constitution's 75-year journey through the lens of creative practice. By fostering dialogue across disciplines, the event reinforced the enduring role of art as both a mirror to society and a catalyst for thoughtful change.

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Jha □□□□ □□□□



Vagish K. Jha

Obituary by Neelesh Deepak

It is with a heavy heart that I announce the passing of my dear friend Vagish K Jha. He was a kind, thoughtful, and generous person who will be missed by all who knew him. He was born on [Date] and passed away on [Date]. He was a [Profession] and a [Hobby]. He was a [Personality]. He was a [Personality]. He was a [Personality].

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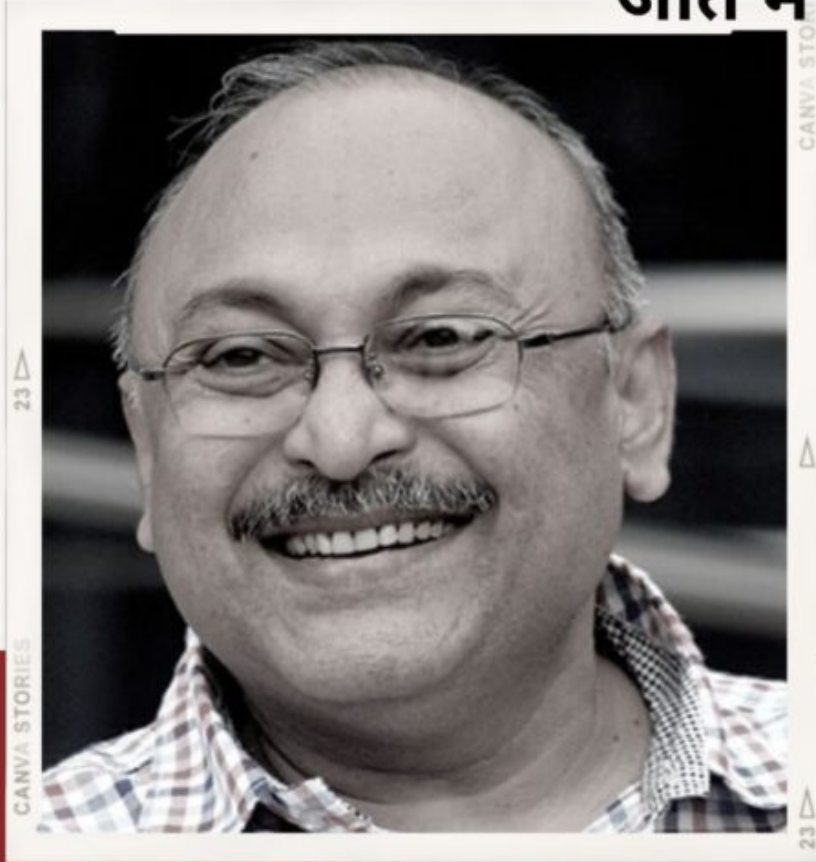
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Memorial service Saturday

तू ज़िंदा है तो ज़िंदगी की

जीत में यक़ीन कर...



Celebrating

**...life
...hope
...dream**

WITH MEMORIES OF

VAGISH KUMAR JHA

15.08.1962 – 22.02.2025

Join us as we celebrate Vagish's life together.

**SATURDAY, MARCH 1, 2025
4:00 PM - 6:00 PM**



Indian Women's Press Corps (IWPC)
5, Windsor Place, Ashoka Road,
New Delhi, Delhi 110001
Near Le Meridien

RAJESH KUMAR JHA
+91 9810216943

Brief Biodata

Vagish K Jha held a Master degree in Philosophy and Masters in

History from J.N.U, New Delhi. In the field of communication, he had ventured into journalism, theatre, television and has also written articles in national dailies and magazines

A sensitive attempt to hear the unheard 'third voice'

"I learned about sexuality when I was in high school. I wanted to know if I was such a person or if there were other people like me. I thought I would tell my parents when I mentioned my marriage. I thought I would die if I married a man. After passing high school, I was angry when my mother told me about marriage. I met 'A' in the first semester of my BA. After talking, I realized that she was probably like me."



Queer Voices from the Periphery

A Collection of Perspectives from Northeast India



Editors

Kaustav Padmapati

Prateeti Barman

In exploring the Assamese language, one inevitably confronts an obvious gap: the absence of a recognized term to encompass individuals beyond the traditional dichotomy of male and female. Within this framework, the term 'third gender', often equated with 'queer', remains an elementary construct, lacking the nuanced depth required for full comprehension. Its acknowledgement in ancient Indian literature and portrayal in artistic depictions of sexual activities serve as examples of historical acceptance, countering prevailing narratives of deviance and abnormality.

Yet, despite this deep-rooted socio-cultural tradition, the contemporary discourse surrounding the third gender has, regrettably, been relegated to the periphery. Social taboos and deeply ingrained prejudices have conspired to throttle open dialogue, relegating the experiences of this marginalized community to the shadows of society's consciousness. However, amidst this prevailing silence, there exists a glimmer of hope – an increasing recognition and acknowledgement of the inherent rights and dignities of third-gender individuals.

Recent shifts in societal attitudes, coupled with governmental initiatives aimed at addressing the needs and concerns of this oft-overlooked demographic, signify a slow departure from the status quo. Concurrently, scholars and researchers are embarking on a journey of discovery, exploring the psychological intricacies and socio-cultural dimensions of third-gender identity. Through their nuanced analyses and empathetic inquiries, they seek to illuminate the lived experiences of this community, thereby amplifying their voices and advocating for their rightful place within the fabric of society.

Edited with meticulous care and scholarly acumen by Dr. Kaustubh Padmapani and Dr. Prateeti Barman, the book **'Queer Voices from the Periphery- a collection of perspectives from Northeast India'** serves as a beacon of enlightenment amidst the prevailing darkness of ignorance and indifference.

Centered on the portrayal of 'queer' identities in the vibrant landscape of North East India, its pages offer a comprehensive exploration of the complexities and challenges faced by this marginalized demographic. While awareness of queer issues may be blossoming in the region, the dearth of literature serves as a poignant reminder of the pressing need for greater social engagement and discourse.

Comprising an anthology of contributions from researchers and scholars, each chapter endeavours to navigate the undiscovered alleys of queer identity with sensitivity and shades. From probing examinations of cultural nuances and identity dynamics to insightful critiques of general homophobia within Assamese society, the book offers a rich compilation of insights and perspectives. Through rigorous research and empathetic inquiry, the authors seek to peel back the layers of societal prejudice and misconceptions, offering readers a deeper understanding of the lived realities of queer individuals.

Namami Sharma's compelling discourse on homophobia in small-town Assam serves as a stark reminder of the entrenched biases and systemic inequalities that continue to infuse our social fabric. By shining a light on these injustices and advocating for greater awareness and inclusivity, Sharma underscores society's collective responsibility towards nurturing a more equitable and accepting environment for all its members. It is through such concerted efforts and unwavering commitment that we may begin to dismantle the barriers of prejudice and discrimination that have long hindered the full realization of human dignity and equality.

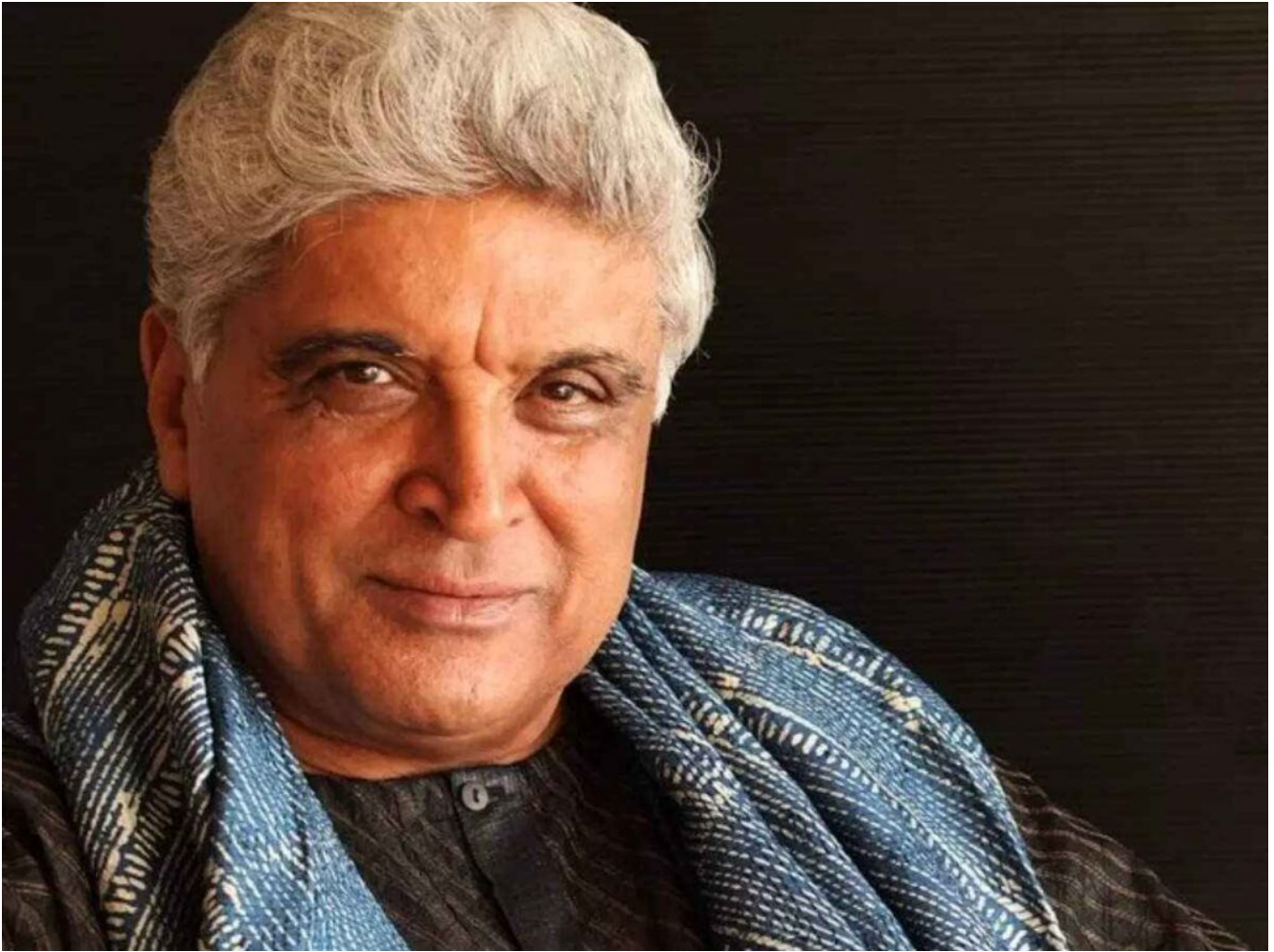
In intertwining together these diverse narratives and perspectives, the book offers readers a panoramic view of the lives, struggles, and triumphs of queer individuals in the unique context of North East India. From the emergence of queer identities within the cultural landscape to the challenges of navigating societal expectations and prejudices, each chapter serves as a testament to the resilience and

courage of those who dare to defy convention and embrace their true selves. Dr. Bibhuti Patel's commendation of the book as a critical catalyst for encouraging dialogue and understanding among diverse identities speaks to its profound impact and enduring relevance. Grounded in evidence-based research and filled with a deep sense of empathy and compassion, the book stands as a testament to the power of scholarship and advocacy in advancing the cause of equality and justice for all.

First published in

<https://cutt.ly/Rw8ZiNqv>

Jadunama – The Power of Time in Literature



First Published in IIC DIARY

India International Centre New Delhi, recently organised an evening evening with Javed Akhtar, where the celebrated poet recited his outstanding poetry and conversed candidly with Anil Shrivatav and audience.

Shri Shyam Sharan, President India International Centre introduced the legendary poet and writer Javed Akhtar as apart from being an author and a poet, was also an outstanding lyricist, script writer who has been awarded with several awards and honors from home and beyond.

Anil Srivastav, engaged with Javed Akhtar in a candid conversation as he talked against casteism and fundamentalism. He used the metaphor of toy very appropriately and said most of us are happy with toys as a child and not when grown up.

He said lineage, heritage didn't give any pride as the genes

are not as important as the environment of poetry that made him. He recited wonderfully with great sensitivity two of his brilliant poems, waqt(Time) and Anshu(Tears) to the appreciative audience overflowing in the auditorium.

He took it as a compliment when asked by Allok Srivastav that though he calls himself an atheist still he wrote of Lord Shiva's tandava, He went on to say that an author has to write differently in different situations that the script demands. He made an extremely significant statement that , "We have to surrender to time and norms." And also mentioned that we are living in a bubble and everyone wants to be victorious. Instead we have to look for yesterday's innocence, respect, honesty and surrender. He talked of the golden era of Hindi film songs with great appreciation as common people don't attend philosophy classes but learn from good film songs.

One very significant statement the erudite poet mentioned is that Hindi and Urdu are of the same origin . Urdu is written in Persian script while Hindi is written in Devanagari and eventually the script is just Hindustani .According to him Hindi and Urdu merged together bringing the best poetry and literature though only time will tell what is good literature. With ghazals, nazm, shayari and splendid conversation a splendid evening passed in an overflowing auditorium with Jadunama or journey of Javed Ji in hands of the captive audience.

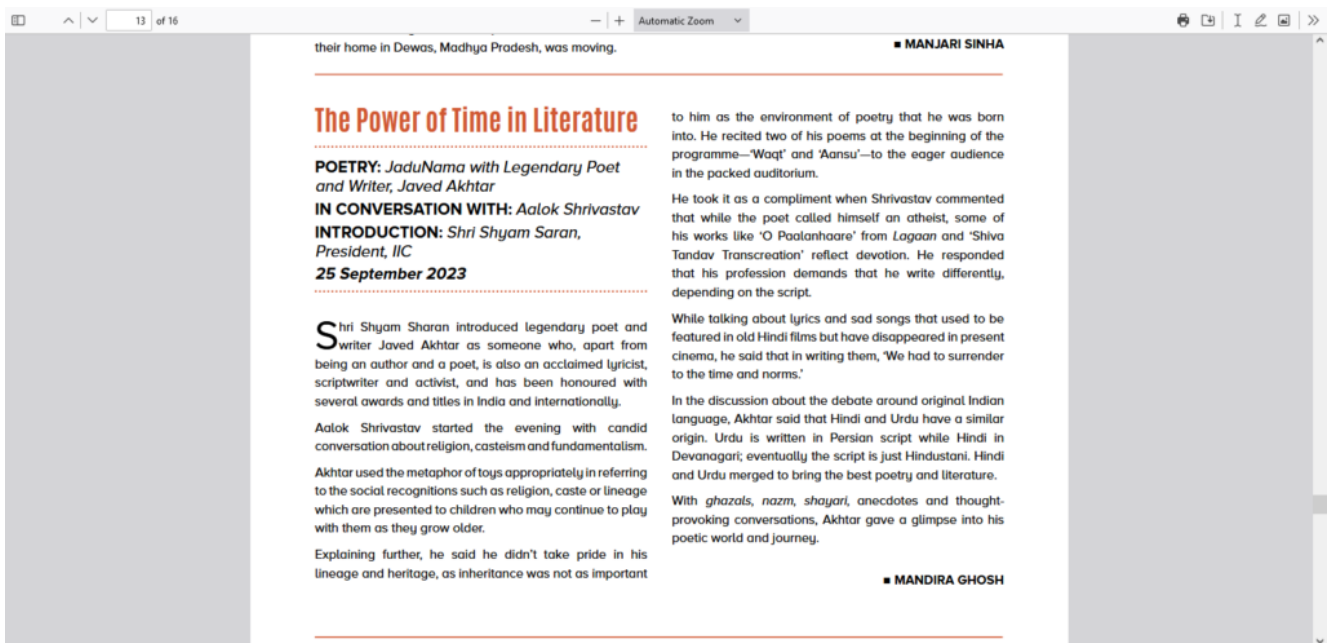
Mandira Ghosh

Note

Jadunama is about a writer, poet, lyricist, and political activist. It is also about this one man's struggle since childhood to become what he is today and to create a hallmark of success in everything he does. Named Jadu at birth, it was Javed sahab's father, Jan Nisar Akhtar's poem, 'Lamha, lamha kisi jadoo ka fasana hoga (Every moment will be the story of a certain magic)' that was the inspiration behind the name. When

the little boy was in kindergarten, everyone realised that *Jadu* was not a serious name and to have a word as close to *Jadu* as possible, he was renamed *Javed* (meaning 'eternal'), *Akhtar* (meaning 'star')—Eternal star! Not only has he remained in the limelight ever since, he continues to shine brightly like the eternal star!

Javed Akhtar (born 17 January 1945) is an Indian screenwriter, lyricist and poet. Known for his work in Hindi cinema, he has won five National Film Awards,[1] and received the Padma Shri in 1999 and the Padma Bhushan in 2007,[2] two of India's highest civilian honours.



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TRUE LIE

Mithi knew she was lying. She had no option but to lie. She lied and lied and became a mythomaniac. One day she did not want to lie. But the mania would not leave her. Her mouth emitted a lie that her heart did not consent. She became frustrated as she was continually telling lies all the time when she could avoid doing so. One day, she went to a Babaji and told him to give her a remedy. Babaji smiled and said, "when you are tempted to lie, just imagine that the truth that you are speaking is a lie. You will do alright." Next day, Mithi experimented it. Her father asked her, "Mithi did you take 200 rupees from my pocket?" Mithi replied, "YES." And while she spoke yes, she imagined it were a lie! And yes, she got rid of the habit!

STORY SAYS, "Your thoughts make it true or false."

For comments if any please write in the box given below.

ROBOTIC THEATER

Two Robots were brought on the stage along with two actors. They were given the same dialogues as the actors. They spoke the dialogues with trained expressions duly. The actors were asked to speak the same dialogue. They looked at each other brought the emotions in and when it was time to begin, one of

the actors forgot the second dialogue he was about to speak. So instead of that dialogue, he spoke another one and the other actor had to continue with the new idea as the previous dialogue had been changed.

Now, the entire presentation was changed on the part of the humans.

Next day, the programmed Robots were brought in. One of them encountered a technical error and could not utter the programmed dialogue. The other Robot kept quiet as it was commanded to speak only after listening to the dialogue of the first Robot. Now, the act came to an abrupt halt. Suddenly, both the Robots bowed down to the audiences and left the stage. They were programmed to do so ONLY after the presentation got over. But, they did it beforehand and went off stage. What made them act in spite of the mechanics?

None knows but conjectures are that there's a sixth sense programmed in them which gets activated as soon as their technical glitch occurs.

For comments if any, please write in the box below:

The Universe within the Womb / Gouri Nilakantan



Does the cold womb speak to the warm vagina, are we meant to be bound and knit into the body, so much so we do not seem to

belong, not to have any identity ever? The guess is not in the mystification nor in the pontification of the "female" in the eyes of society. Nor is it amongst the peering eyes of manhood and by keeping them as some elusive or exclusive superior race. It lies in the individuality and the recognition of the self amongst all. For once let us not see ourselves only through the wombs, the vaginas, or paling breasts but only as having separate yet same voices. This through which we can declare strongly enough to be defined as all belonging to each other.

The time to be in categories of gender has long gone, it needs to be attacked and discarded as worthless. These binaries and super binaries that do not see women as individuals first but use the safety net of phrases of gender are to be shot down as fallacies. We have been honoured enough by given powerful names by our ancestors. We have been given recognition for sounding phrases strong. Enough of gendering, enough and more than enough, it's time to think ahead, as "you and me", and "we all", "as all of us" that belong entirely to each other.

This will allow us to love unconditionally, to let go unconditionally and remain forever within the societal definitions of a "wife" "mother" "daughter" or "sister". It will thus also not negate the man as a "husband" "father" "son" or "brother" and bondages will only only grow stronger and stronger. Such singular terms of unity therefore allows one to outgrow force and coercion that often come within societal relationships. The urge here I see to all of us only as me and you and forget the male, female, alpha male, alpha female etc. The society will then accept unconditionality in loving and wanting to be loved.

For once live only for you and me and forget all expectations from each other, not because god says so, or you have enlightened and seen Buddhahood, or emerged victorious from the caves of inner meditation, but only because you truly and truly believe in the selfhood of each person. Wombs will then

create the universe with its totality and spirit of mind.
Enjoy and embark in this unconditionality of living and
letting to live.

Tete-a-tete with the Sighting Shadows / Gouri Nilakantan

Shadows of course are hazy, difficult to pin as someone true,
and further becomes even more not worth a glance, if it
belongs to mere passerby. However, for once it is important
to..

Memories of the Recitative Past



All of us are born with memories that we wish to forget and discard like faded photographs having hazy blurry images or the thrown pennings of blue inland letters and creamy pages fading with endearing attachments. We would rather regurgitate the past than carry it within us. Are we in the real sense of failing to remember or do we wish not to hear the words of the recitative past and not get the truthful recollection of the echoing sights? To be called only as a witness is easier than to bear and pour out the visions we wish not to see. The ability to see things as they are, are so difficult to break, that to escape into the light hearted day seems much easier and much more uncomplicated.

No one wants to resound pain, express trauma or grieve for a loss. The identity of the self to happily live only within the confines of the day, going from hour to hour and knocking down the doors of the minutes that dissolves then into seconds, is true serenity and peace. However, many times we need to challenge the tranquillity we have falsely created and listen to the polyphonous sounds of the dead and buried. The graves of the bygone as much as you bury, as much as you decide the deepest depth the coffin should lay, needs the embalming, only and only to cleanse your soul.

To gain the convincing reincarnation of this lost spirit, is only possible if we allow ourselves to cry, lament and mourn for the forgotten memories. Just by dismissing the bygone and not evoking the emotions of sorrow, by not shedding the salty reservoir, we are creating only adulterated personifications of what we term as today. Its reason is enough to moisten the sodden earth of the buried past, so that the watering down can reach the submerged coffins. One has to sometimes open to see the enclosed skeletons and beat one's breast to lament for the faded photographs or tethered inland letters or torn creamy papers that are screaming to be heard.

So, hear the cries within, grieve for the past, sob along with the beats of your heart and let your tears become the pulse. It will only allow the recitative past to become beautiful, melodious verses of songs of your life you will want to hear again and again.

