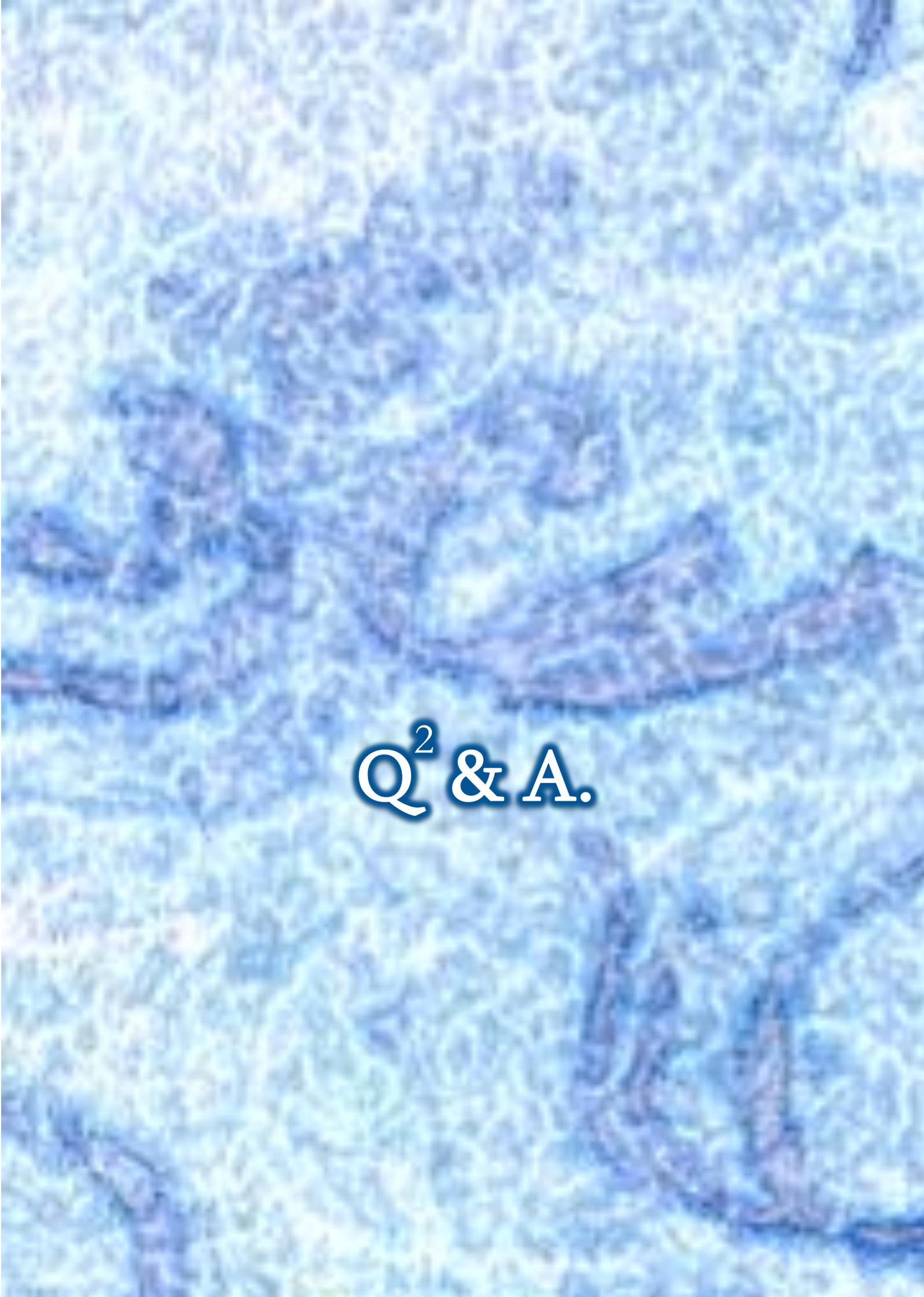




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Raw Whispers.



Q² & A.



May we ask questions in life.
May we question ourselves.
May we question our goals.
May we question injustice.
May we question preconceived notions.
May we ask questions about life's meaning and
one's meaning in life.

Thank you all for supporting Raw Whispers and its vision. Truly happy to have reached the 10th edition. Hence, the 10th edition is dedicated to questions and the search for meaning in life. Each endeavour we pursue in life has implications for many other beings, may we be mindful of the effects of our actions and may we generate compassion for all beings.

-Rinchen.



Voices and Visions.

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Q square Questions.

How to get over a creative block?
-Afnan.

Is water wet?
- Niangthianmuang S. Ngaihte



What's in your Brains?

Rigzin Lachic Wangmo le interviewed by Rinchen.

Lachic le is the founder and proprietor of Dolkhar Ladakh and Tsas by Dolkhar. She has led many innovations in the field of IT and sustainable development.

How do you think incorporating traditional architecture and local elements is more than just a material takeaway for both locals and tourists?

We decided to incorporate local materials and techniques of architecture not because of the specific materials and their qualities but because we designed Dolkhar as an extension of Ladakh itself. Designing structures in the context of where they exist was fundamental for us as it ensures a significantly lower environmental impact, supports the local economy, and reinforces the identity of the space we create. What we want people to take away from this aspect of their experience at Dolkhar is the awareness of the direct connection between the choices they make and the impact those choices have.



How did you decide upon the names Tsas and Dolkhar for your restaurant and resort respectively? Moreover, what does their symbolic value mean to you?

Every year when I would come back to Ladakh for my summer holiday my grandmother would ask me whether my education would help me give back to the people of “our land”. I spent all my life outside of Ladakh, first studying in different parts of India and then working in Tokyo and then in a startup in Delhi, and somehow I never quite felt satisfied with my life. It was only after the sudden demise of my grandmother that her question came back to me: it made me introspect and I realised that my purpose lay in going back to “our land”.

I named “Dolkhar” after my grandmother in aspiration of sustaining the space in a way that she would have imagined and nurtured it.

Tsas translates to ‘a kitchen garden’ in the Ladakhi language and that is very simply the essence of the restaurant. Almost all the ingredients used at Tsas are either grown in our kitchen garden or sourced from the kitchen gardens of other local farmers.

Often society doubts women’s ability to deal with construction work. Did you face any challenges in that context?

In 2010, when I was in college, I volunteered at SECMOL to teach



English to a batch of students, and that's where I met Tsewang Gyaltzen, who at the time was just graduating as SECMOL's first batch studying earth construction . I remember having a long discussion with him about vernacular architecture in the kitchen at SECMOL and I told him then that if I ever had to construct something in Ladakh, it would be with him.

Seven years later, I gave him a call with an idea and that's really how it all began.

I started construction work at the age of 26, so the challenges I faced were not only as a woman but also as a young person.

When I would meet with labourers, workers and vendors for the first time after discussions over the phone, they would inevitably ask where my parents were or if they needed to speak to someone else, or if I had to take permission from my parents before purchasing!

Although funny, it was refreshing to also see that Ladakh is a relatively easier place for women to get work done.

I've also had people tell me that I'm too soft spoken to handle construction, but I also don't believe there is only one way of getting work done. The construction world seems to have a reputation for harsh and shrewd workforce management but I've learnt that people simply want to work in places where they are treated right.



So, I did feel, that as a woman, maybe there is something different that I brought on board into construction and now I can confidently say that maybe that change and balance is required in this a male dominant workplace!

Another thing I did when I began to work was to ensure that the women labourers were paid the same wage as their male counterparts. I've noticed that there is always a discrepancy in the wages while I've seen women work as hard.

What advice and insight would you like to share with aspiring entrepreneurs, specially those who wish to enter the tourism industry?

I think every entrepreneurial journey is unique. It is a lot of trial and error but as long as you have a clear purpose you're working towards then things should be fairly straight forward. I'm not saying it is an easy process though, building anything meaningful requires hard work.

As for tourism, I do strongly believe the world requires sustainable practices. If you want to build something that lasts, you have to consider the impact it has on the planet.



What does being vegan mean to you? Did the tenets of Buddhism play a role in your decision to make Tsas a vegan restaurant?

Tsas is plant based restaurant. In Ladakh however, given the terrain and lack of vegetation in the past, plant based diets were not necessarily possible. I do believe that given our core values of sustainability it became apparent that our restaurant had to be plant based too but it was not a judgment on the existing meat based diets but a showcase of the possibility of a fulfilling diet that was local and sustainable.

I do believe that all practices at Dolkhar and Tsas stem from love and compassion for Ladakh and the planet and the fact that I grew up in a buddhist family that carried these values with them had a great impact on both me and this space we have created. I have, over the course of my life, so far, picked up on value systems that were admirable across cultures and religions and all of them together have inspired this creation.

All the dishes at Tsas have been thoroughly thought through. What was the process of arriving at the various gastronomic delights?

The food at Tsas is also a reflection of the fundamentals of Dolkhar



and it was only after the Tsas team spent many months in pursuit of capturing the essence of what really made Ladakhi food: ingredients, techniques and all, that we arrived at a conscious, sustainable and relevant business model.

We then integrated the knowledge we had accumulated and our love for European haute cuisine to create not just food but meaningful, avant garde experiences.

Sometimes people hold the notion that climate change and resource depletion are inevitable and refuse to pay heed to sustainable means. How has the process of creating Tsas and Dolkhar brought to the fore ways in which sustainable methods have tangible effects on mitigating resource depletion?

With the increasing global population resource depletion is in fact, inevitable. In context of the environment and sustainability we look primarily at energy sources, and then at food and agricultural practices when we talk about resource depletion. All of these factors have been carefully considered as constraints while we put together both Tsas and Dolkhar.

For instance, using local materials minimises our energy usage and therefore, our larger carbon footprint, we do not support any large scale agricultural practices, our restaurant has a zero waste kitchen, we are a plastic free property and the list goes on.



Again, resource depletion is inevitable but that doesn't mean we stop using natural resources, it just means that we stop over-harvesting and innovate around the use of more traditional resources.

We want out spaces to reflect the array of alternatives and possibilities that exist and more often that not, when people realise the impact these changes can have and role they can play as individuals they do "pay heed to sustainable means".

If you were to give any advice to Ladakh's youth vis-a-vis preservation of culture whilst running a business, what would it be?

Setting up a business comes with great responsibility towards one's community (your local economy, the environment) and it must be thoroughly thought out consciously- no matter the field of work. I believe it is important to think beyond individual gains and realise the impact of your actions on a whole.

Having said that, you could introduce into your business cultural artefacts, maybe use traditional art, architecture and music. Maybe make aspects of your business inclusive for the local population. At a preliminary glance, this will probably look like cultural preservation.



However, I feel, preservation of culture can only happen when there is deep love and admiration and therefore, a strong will to preserve something that you find great value in. Once you find that value, you carve your own ways of introducing, into your business, dimensions of your culture.

Lastly, what is that you want guests to learn from Tsas and Dolkhar such that they may be inspired to work towards a more sustainable and compassionate world?

At Dolkhar or Tsas, we aren't teaching but we are hopeful. We are trying to put together experiences that bring forth our values of conscious, sustainable, and contextual travel. I believe, if we have an agenda or we try to control how our guest must feel after staying with us, we will inevitably take away from their experience.

Your
song?

White Flag
by Dido.

Find Your Love
by Drake.

Complicated

by Avril Lavigne.

You wish you
knew
by Zayn.

You came, you
saw, you
conquered by
Ronnets.

In my life.
by The Beatles

Butter
by BTS.

Beneath
your beautiful
by Labrinth.

*Too many
ingredients at once in
life? Savour the sour
colours.*

*Too cool for
school? Wait, till
you find yourself
in a totally
different zone.*

*You're either in love or
have someone in mind
whom you'd like to fall
in love with. Embrace
the beauty of this
stage, because the
future may be truly
rosy, with a few
thorns.*



Edifice of youth.

Studying, but the road keeps getting longer.

Enduring, but strength is sometimes breaking.

Being, but sometimes you wish you were disappearing.

Living, but the heart keeps getting colder.

Walking, I reached the edifice of youth,

The building which should have been vibrant was in ruins,

After each journey, compelled to digress .

Yet, since all is in the head, no need for stress.

-Rinchen.



What's in your Brains?

Adisha Bansal interviewed by Rinchen.

Adisha is Writer, Director & Post Producer of Project Polunin: Story of an Indian Ballet Dancer. She is a filmmaker with a vision.

Hi Adisha, in 3 lines can you describe your vision, work and work ethics?

I look to people for inspiration; often it's not what they do but why they do it, that captures my interest. In my work I try to see how far I can take adaptability and re-contextualisation before it stops making sense. Since I'm usually working with a large number of people, being sensitive to everyone's time and goals is definitely one of my biggest priorities on set.

As a director/ filmmaker there are many levels at which you become a source of inspiration to those on whom you look for inspiration. That being said, how does that pressure lead to both strength and doubt; if it does at all lead to either?

I don't think that's at the forefront of my mind when I'm creating something. If I am stressed it's generally to do with how a certain piece would be perceived.



Even with Project Polunin, I was telling the story of a dancer without being one myself and you don't want to be insensitive in your narrative treatment to a community that is already so underrepresented.

So for me the pressure comes from not being able to portray what I'm visualising or to fail in accurately putting forth the voice of the subject.

What are ways in which you influence how your audience perceives the content of your work? For instance, in Project Polunin you've highlighted the talent of male Indian ballet dancers and one automatically not only appreciates their struggle but also the fact that their struggle often goes unnoticed in mainstream media. What do you keep in mind when you visualise a story such that your audiences can take the story with them?

I think there are two main factors - intent and treatment. The issues I inferred from learning about Sergei Polunin's life, resonated at a baser level with male ballet dancers globally. So the intent was to highlight their struggles most succinctly.



The tool then becomes treatment. How in a single flashback of a few seconds you try and show emotions like loss of a regular childhood and possibly establishing the loneliness that leads your mind to conjure up its own demons.

Treatment within itself has the whole film language, using dynamic camera movements that take you through the journey, to the barebones set design that doesn't let the viewer get distracted from the subject. It's all about the how. When do I keep my subject and camera at eye level and when do I look down upon them with pity making them look all the more vulnerable?

'A single flashback' as you said, sometimes conveys half a lifetime and that perhaps is the beauty of filmmaking. What is it that brought you to pursue this art? And what advice would you give to aspiring filmmakers who may be hesitant about making a 'risky' career choice?

There wasn't any particular moment that can be pinned, I feel like my whole life I've been subconsciously working towards it. However, I do remember when I was 9 and I joined a boarding school, one of the first things my dad told my new principal was how I spent most of my time at home using MS Paint on the computer. This was 2009, fast forward 13 years and I still spend most of my time behind a computer, trying to tell stories via this medium.



I honestly don't believe filmmaking is a risky career choice. There are a lot of job opportunities available, both in terms of variety and scope of learning. There may have been a time when studying this discipline was unconventional but with access to knowledge about the field and increased usage of digital mediums globally, this field in some part forms the basis for all jobs today.

And here's your final question Adisha..

Fast forward 13 years.. ' you say. You speak as if only the setting has changed. Your passions remains the same..

Fast forward the next 13 years, what do you think you'd say to your current self (the self in 2022)?

I think I'd just tell myself to keep learning and being sensitive to the art around me. You can never know when inspiration will strike.

Also to, 'Dare more boldly and venture on wider seas' but more importantly accept that not everything that I can do and will do, will be fantastic and that's okay.



Q & A.

On suffering's turn

This life is woven

Don't let it burn

Don't be frozen

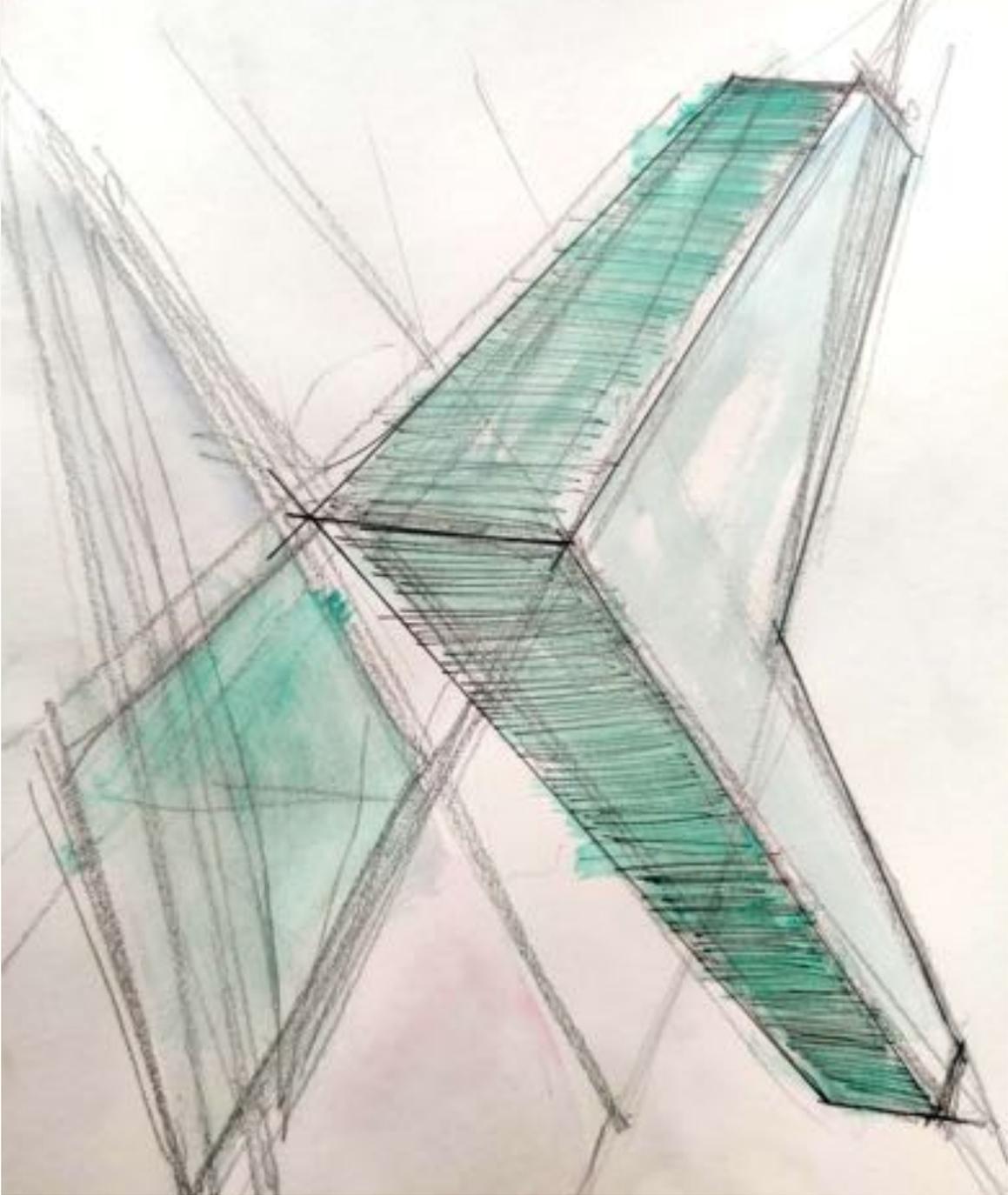
Life is a bittersweet illusion

You can't change what's bitter

And the good things are transient?

Well then, isn't that some kind of a solution..

-Rinchen.



-Samiya Din.



What's in your Brains?

Afnan interviewed by Rinchen.

Afnan is the voice behind 'Arachne's' Tapestry' and an MA English student at EFLU, Hyderabad. A visionary writer and East Asian literature and music enthusiast; she has written beautifully for Raw Whispers as well.

Hi Afnan, what is brewing in your brain right now?

I just got done with the second semester of masters. As part of recharging, a list of books to read for pleasure are brewing right now.

Any books that you'd recommend from that list, or books you've read before?





This is the list as of now. I will be better equipped to recommend from them only after reading them. But out of the books I read this year, I really recommend "Sister Outsider" by Audre Lorde and "Clear and Muddy Loss of Love" by Please Don't Laugh.

What genre do they fall under? And what is something in the books that stood out to you?

Sister Outsider is non fiction. Intersections of race, gender, sexuality, class. Healing, resistance and poetry.

Clear and Muddy Loss of Love is a historical fiction of baihe (wlv) genre.

In what ways do you feel literature addresses race, gender, sexuality, and class through a lens that is different from other mediums? Or do you think all mediums coalesce in a sense while addressing the aforementioned topics?

I feel like we should not limit creative expressions on these topics to just one medium. We need a diversity of media to ensure accessibility and to broaden these areas with a multitude of ideas

Are there some nuanced ideas concerning the aforementioned topics that you think need to be highlighted more often?

Intersectionality. It's disastrous and reductive to see identities in isolation. Acknowledging the intersections



will visiblize the different configurations of oppression and privileges they produce.

Talking of intersectionality, Do you any genre of music addressing intersectionality. Also, what kind of music are you into?

I don't think a single genre can address intersectionality. It's more like certain artists and certain songs. But issues of intersectionality can be observed in different genres. For example, kpop as a genre has a certain rank in the entertainment hierarchy owing to its origin from the east and its classification under popular culture. But the kpop industry participates in a lot of cultural appropriation from Black, Middle-Eastern, Indian and Native-American cultures and using racial slurs in their songs. The marginal status of kpop idols does not give a pass to appropriate from other marginal cultures for aesthetic.

In response to your reply: Right. These days kpop is on the rise like never before. Many people hold the idea that kpop is popular merely because of good looking idols and catchy videos, do have views to the contrary? Also, what are your views on the recently declared hiatus by BTS?

What appears on the surface as good looking idols and catchy videos are in fact, two significant objectives of kpop as a genre. One is, presenting alternate forms of gender expressions that constantly collapses established gender norms. Catchy videos are part of the different aesthetics, musical and visual, that kpop music videos bring to the table. But there are other factors that attract people to kpop. The fandom culture for one.



Fandoms are organized and goal-oriented in kpop. You see people of diverse social backgrounds coming together (mostly virtually) to support the artists they like. The marketing strategy of kpop is to build a closer bond between the fan and the idol through fanmeets, and platforms like vlive and weverse. This ensures the regularity of communication. Another selling point of kpop is the intricate storylines/ lores each group builds for its music. It's open to the interpretation of fans. There is a lot of multimedia allusions. So there is a section in every ...fandom dedicated to theorizing the music videos and storylines. Underneath this glittery exterior, there are aspects of kpop that must be approached critically.

Regarding BTS, it was clarified that the group is going on an off-period, rather than a hiatus. So the members will be active in terms of their solo careers rather as a group. They had warmed us to this big news, but still, it came as a shock. The proof album and festa content were like gifts before breaking the big news. Even if the group is going inactive for a while, we can still listen to their old music. Plus, I'm very excited to see what the members have for us in their solo projects. It's an opportunity to witness their individuality.



An Ode to Bardo.

Bardo, the break in continuity,
The intermediate states we never think will come our
way

Why fear a change
That will usher a dance
Of a new life
New strife

Since life is an illusion
Best to revel in the confusion

Why stress

When you're neither here nor there
You get to go everywhere

-Rinchen



Thank you!

Open for submissions for Edition 11.

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