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MERC TIMES



MEDIA EDUCATION RESEARCH CENTRE
UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR

Hajin Bandipora library left in ruins

INSIDE {STORIES}



Meet the girls reviving the
art of knitting
P 03



Walking with the Comrades
P 05



Little women
P 05



Hajin Bandipora library left in ruins

Sheikh Mustafa | Srinagar

While libraries have always been an important place of intellectual discourse, Hajin library of Bandipora has been sent into a dilapidated condition due to the irresponsible behaviour of the government.

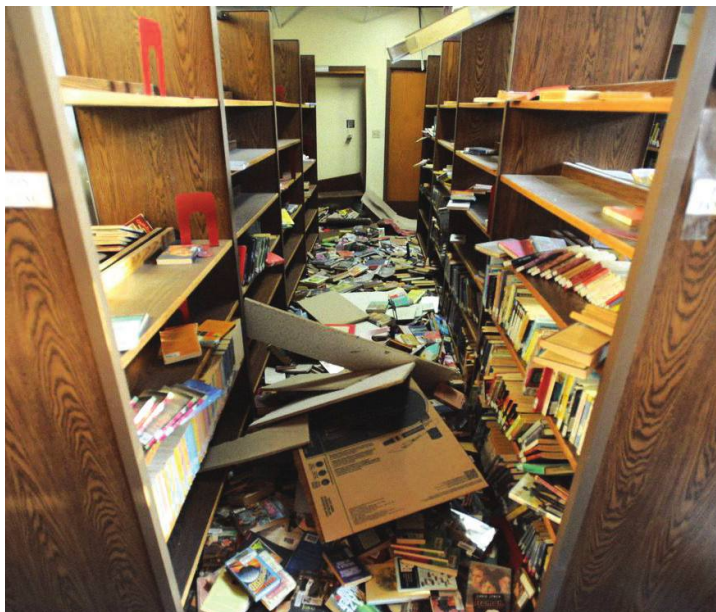
The thick layer of dust upon a dusty board leaning against the wall of a two floored building in north Kashmir's Bandipora District, which reads "Public Library of Hajin", has been left in a desolated condition to fend its fate.

Established in 1987, the library used to attract people from far-off places but nowadays, it lies in ruins because of the ignorance of the government. It boasts some obsolete books and mostly remains locked.

The library comprises of four rooms with a collection of 7300 books in a desolated condition. The main gate of the library is often locked, and thus the book lovers are forced to take alternative routes to reading. Besides, being in a weary condition, the books are out dated

and drowned in dust.

"There is not a single book in the library which correlates to the present time. Besides, there isn't a single computer which could store the information of books. It's impossible to find something relatable under such dusty conditions." Arshid Ahmad, a



also complained of the disfuncationality of the library in a robust manner.

"We want to invest our free time in religious literature but unfortunately the library doesn't serve any purpose for us." Ghulam Mohammad, a long bearded shopkeeper from Bandipora said.

Johar Ahmad, a local PG student said, "Honestly speaking, this library doesn't exist for me, I hardly see anyone there".

"We used to read a variety of books and newspapers, but unfortunately the library is in ruins right now," Mohammad Muzaffar, a local senior citizen said.

Meanwhile, when the Assistant Director Research and Public Libraries department, Zahida Bano was contacted, she said,

"I will check the matter and further investigation will be taken up."

"There is also a shortage of employees and more than 135 posts are still vacant in our department." She added.

But will the Department of Research and Public Libraries take any initiative for ensuring the smooth functioning of the said library? Only the time will tell.

local student of Bandipora district said.

Like Arshid, there are many other students who don't have availability of books at home and are dependent on government and public libraries. Some senior citizens of Bandipora

Rayees Afzal | Srinagar

KU fails to lift the Chancellors Trophy again

University of Kashmir for the third successive year failed to lift the Chancellors Trophy. The Chancellors Cricket Championship was organized by Directorate of Sports and Physical Education, Jammu University. The championship kicked off on 10th of December and continued for five consecutive days at Jammu University at A and B playgrounds respectively. Various universities from across the valley participated in the tournament and Cluster University, Srinagar along with KU managed to reach the finals. Cluster University managed a decent score of 113 in 10 overs but in reply KU got off to a slow start and lost wickets on regular intervals, thus taking their team towards a big loss.

Chief Guests K K Sharma,

Advisor to Lieutenant Governor and International Footballer, Arun Malhotra along with VC Jammu University, Dr Manoj K Dhar presented the winning Trophy and the Runners up Trophy to Cluster University and Kashmir University respectively. Haseeb Shah was declared as the Player of the Tournament.

Haseeb Shah said, "I am very disappointed with the result of the game but satisfied with the performance of the players. They all worked as a team and throughout the tournament they were very co-operative."

While talking to the coach of KU's cricket team, Amjad Qadir Bhat, he said, "Despite not getting enough time to prepare for the tournament we still made a mark and we just missed by an inch, we are looking forward for upcoming tournaments and hope to get a big win."



Lodging preferences of KU students

Every year thousands of students get admitted in the University of Kashmir. These students come from different and faraway places to appear in the entrance test examination and only the selected candidates get chance to study here. Moreover, few of them get accommodation in the University hostels. The students who do not get space in the hostel have to look for rented rooms.

Yasir Rather takes up a vox pop among KU students to know their preferences and experiences of hostel and outside accommodation.

Sheikh Mustafa, PG student of MERC

"It is more fun living in a rented room than in the hostel, we can cook food of our own choice and we are not bound to any rules as the students in hostel are. Students preferring rented rooms need to have patience and responsible behaviour. Managing time for cooking, washing clothes, study, reaching campus on time and other home like responsibilities is all one should be able to deal with. It is literally not that easy to manage all the things together."

Sajid Nazir, 2nd semester PG student, Chemistry department

"I got my seat in Kashmir University in the very first attempt but failed to make it in hostel. Now, my mornings start by making tea and evenings making dinner as I reside in a rented room at Habak Chowk. I have to do everything on my own and I wish to get the hostel accommodation."

Saqib Rehman, PG student, IT department

"Hostel students are lucky but we are super heroes. We don't get stuck anywhere, we don't depend on others. We get to know a lot of things that are important for good survival. Life is not all about education, it is more than that. The students living in lodging learn everything, be it education or other chores of life."

Syed Abbas, PhD Scholar, Department of Political Science

"Hostel is a good place to live in. I'm living in scholar's hostel since three years. The best thing about hostel is that you get cooked food and other basic facilities. Although, you are bound with some restrictions but it is good to live in a hostel. Renting room is a bit expensive thing."

Saima Mir, PG student

"Many students have been seen going for rented rooms these days. I am from Baramulla and I did not apply for hostel accommodation. Hostels get closed in the winter and if I have to stay here to continue my studies in the library, I would still have to rent a room."

Despite not getting accommodation in the university hostel, students look happy just because living in a rented room helps them to learn living independently.

Meet the girls reviving the art of knitting



Sumaiya Mir | Srinagar

Omaira and Beenish, two young and determined girls from Kashmir took the art of knitting and made it a success. While talking to MERC Times, Omaira answers few questions about her journey.

Q. How did you get interest in the knitting and how did the idea of becoming entrepreneur hit you?

A. I always had this curiosity of knowing and learning everything. My aunt knew the art of knitting and she was the one who taught me the basics of chain crochet. Rest I learned by myself from YouTube and other sites. Beenish and I were teachers in a private school and shared this common interest. Beenish had got some orders and asked me if I could help her. At that point, we thought why don't we start something of our own and go digital, so we used Instagram and Facebook as a platform.

Q. How was the response?

A. We were overwhelmed by the response we got. Everyone started appreciating us because the things which we were creating were new for Kashmiris. Our unique ideas and creativity was something which took us forward. We were only 2 girls when we started and we had to do everything by ourselves. As our business started growing we started involving other people and today at least 15 girls work for us. Even boys have come forward and have learned this art.

Q. Knitting is often linked to uneducated girls, how did you choose this path?

A. Mainly in Kashmir people have this mindset that the art of knitting is for girls who are weak in studies. But we both are educated with Masters degree. We are proud of what we do. This art has gained us recognition and we have also won many awards.

Q. What are the difficulties you face?

A. Internet shutdown is the biggest problem here in Kashmir and our work is completely dependent on it. Due to recent shutdown in valley since August 5, our business has suffered a lot.

Q. Any moment you want to share?

A. Coming from middle class families, we were no big shots. We are self-made; we never took any financial help from anyone not even from our parents. And when Gyawun featured us it was a moment of great pride and happiness. After that we had back to back interviews and everyone knew who we are and what we do.

Q. Do you have any message for youth?

A. It is very important to utilize your talent. Showcase it and don't think what people will say. When you are determined to do something even God helps you.

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Wings of Fire

Book Review

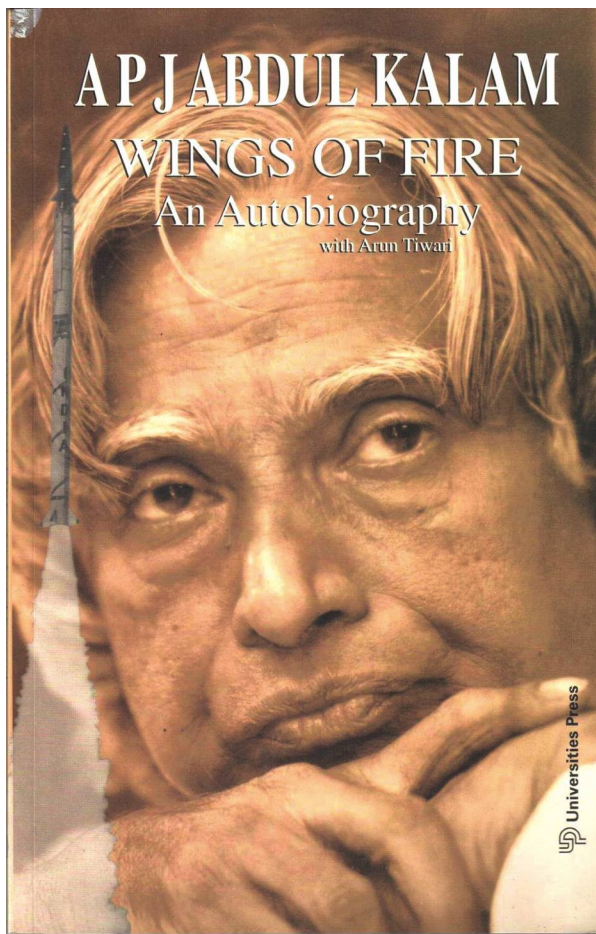
An extraordinary story of an ordinary man with remarkable drive and talents

SS Irfan

Wings of Fire is an autobiography of India's former president, A P J Abdul Kalam. The autobiography is penned down in 180 pages by Dr. Kalam and Arun Tiwari. It was published in 1999 by Universities Press. It was one of the bestselling books and translated into 13 languages including Chinese and French.

Avil Pakir Jainuladdeen Abdul Kalam was an aerospace scientist who was elected as 11th President of India from 2002 to 2007. His other popular books include India 2020 and Ignited Minds. He was honored with the Padma Bhushan in 1981 and the Padma Vibhushan in 1990 for his remarkable work with ISRO and DRDO. While as Arun Tiwari is a scientist and had been a colleague of Dr. Kalam.

The book is about the early life of Dr. Kalam, and his effort, hardship, fortitude, luck and chance that ultimately led him to lead the Indian Space research, nuclear and missile programs. It unfolds the story of Dr. Kalam from his childhood in seven sections.



Dr. Kalam by narrating his life journey evokes the reader to identify one's inner fire and potential. The book recollects many anecdotes and stories from his childhood, school and college; the time spent at the Langley Research Center, NASA and Wallops Flight Facility.

The book is full of insights, personal moments and life experiences of Dr. Kalam. It gives us an understanding of his journey of success. His journey of ups and downs is a gentle reminder to those who blame their life for twists and turns. The book is highly motivational and inspiring, though the readers from non-engineering background may find it a little tedious due to its technical language in few chapters.

Favorite quotes from the book, "It is very easy to defeat someone, but it is very hard to win someone."

"We are all born with divine fire in us. Our efforts should be to give wings to this fire."

Overall, it is a great book and I would recommend everyone to read it and get the message that how great things in life can be achieved from simple things. I will give it 4 stars out of 5.

FOOT
FOR
HIGHER



The media is the right arm of anarchy. Dan Brown

Ratings don't last. Good journalism does. Dan Rather

WHOEVER CONTROLS THE MEDIA, CONTROLS THE MIND. JIM MORRISON

the general population doesn't know what's happening, and it doesn't even know that it doesn't know. — Noam Chomsky

"JOURNALISM WILL KILL YOU, BUT IT WILL KEEP YOU ALIVE WHILE YOU'RE AT IT," HORACE GREELY

"JOURNALISM IS PRINTING WHAT SOMEONE ELSE DOES NOT WANT PRINTED: EVERYTHING ELSE IS PUBLIC RELATIONS."



Walking with the Comrades | Book Review

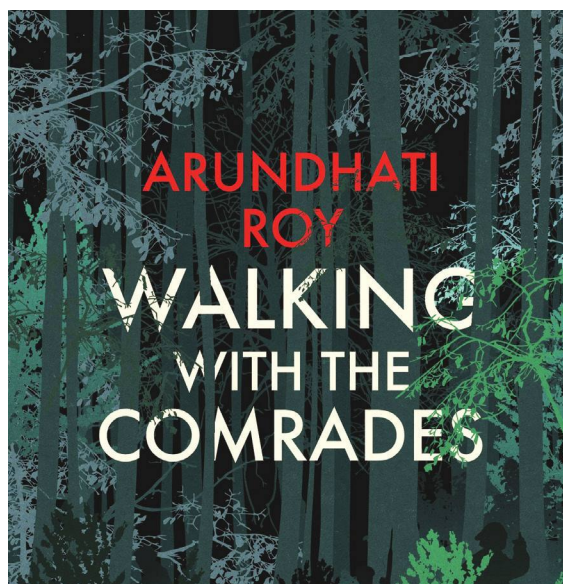
A riveting account of the face-off between the Indian state and the Maoists

Faisal Akhoun

Walking with the Comrades is a non-fiction account by Arundhati Roy in the forests of Dandakaranya with the Naxals and Maoists. It was published in 2011.

In this book, Arundhati Roy tries to analyze the functioning of Naxalism and Maoism from their locally driven strategies to countering the new laws which are made to displace them from their culture and possession. The book tries to make its reader understand that this conflict has two faces one is about preserving one's own culture and another is about displacing masses for commercial welfares of others. Roy mentions, "India is transforming its economy it has heavily relied on commercial giants, giants who are ready to go to any extent."

Roy focuses on how these Naxals and Maoists, who are running a parallel government and are at a full-fledged war with politicians who barely represent them, being neglected for a decade due to a geography which is inaccessible for the civil government



and has led to poverty, diseases and illiteracy forcing local people to take up affairs in their own hands.

Roy has hinted in the book that these people aren't illiterate to the core but they are well aware of the strategies at the disposal of security forces and due to their continuous engagement with them, they have learned

the meaning of words like booby traps, retreat, cordon, search and advance.

Roy mentions that this conflict is looming because these tribes are sitting on the lucrative resources such as bauxite, iron ore and other minerals which mean nothing to them. Roy quotes India's Home Minister, P. Chidambaram once saying, "We should mine these resources immediately."

Roy quotes in her book, "The Maoists don't pay attention to things like State Boundaries. They have different maps in their heads, their own paths."

This book can be considered as one of the concrete manifestation of Naxal and Maoist movements because the author of this book has herself spent couple of weeks with these armed rebels walking, eating and sleeping alongside a bunch of armed women.

Roy believes that keeping the commercial interests at bay Indian politicians should take a humanly approach while dealing with India's most isolated guerillas. This bold, beautiful and realistic book is a must read for all.

The God of Small Things | Book Review

Lush, lyrical, and unnerving; a story of an Indian family in tragic decline

Shahid Nazir

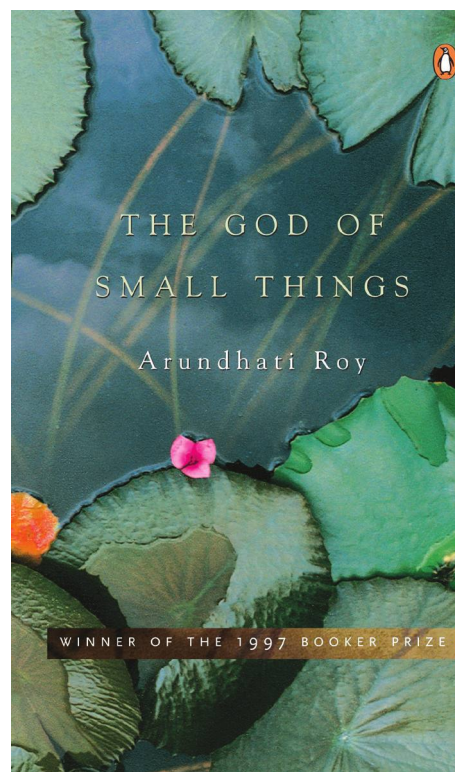
The God of Small Things is the debut novel of an Indian writer, Arundhati Roy. It was published in 1997 by IndiaInk and received stellar reviews in major American newspapers. It also won the Booker Prize in 1997.

This book is heart rendering story about seven years old, Estha and Rahel, two egg-twins. They, along with their mother, Ammu, live in their maternal grandparents' house in Ayemenem, Kerala, following Ammu's divorce. Their mother works in the family's pickle factory in spite of which, she and her kids are denied any rights by her Oxford returned brother, Chacko, who considers them nothing less than millstones around his neck. Margaret (Chacko's ex-wife) brings their daughter, Sophie, to Ayemenem on a visit from London. The ill-fated visit ends with the demise of Sophie for which Estha and Rahel have to pay a heavy price. They are the biggest victims

because their childhood is snatched. The story reveals history's cruel way of taking revenge from people who break the 'Love Laws'. The laws that lay down who should be loved and how much.

Arundhati Roy is wondrously gifted in the art of language. The book has its own unique language with rhythmical analogies to every situation that gives a complete lyrical experience till the last page. The shift between places and time is seamless and delightful. Her characters touch the soul and melancholy washes over as you cry even when the kids laugh.

I completely loved the author's way of expressing the sensitive thoughts and dilemmas of a human mind as a child, adult, mother, and a lover. The story gave me reassurance about vulnerability to be loved, to dream and to always stay happy. I loved the book's language apart from its touching story. It is one of the most beautiful books of our times. It is a must read for every sensitive and passionate reader.



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Little women

A treasured American classic and peerless coming-of-age story for girls

Book Review

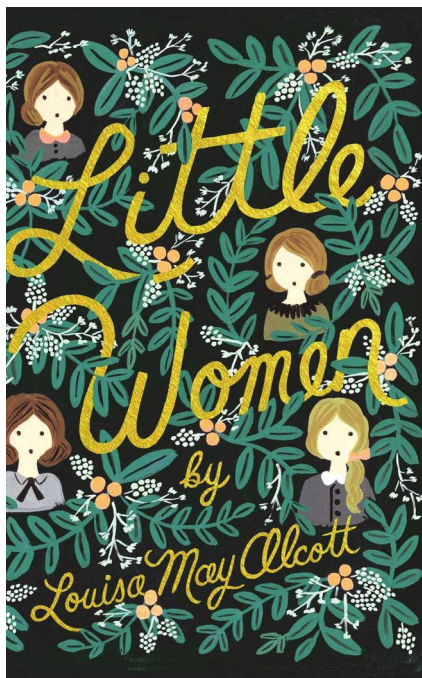
Mysara Hassan

Little Women is a coming-of-age novel written by Louisa May Alcott. It was published in two volumes in 1868 and 1869 respectively. It is loosely inspired by Alcott's own biography.

Louisa May Alcott was an American novelist, short story writer and a poet, best known for the novels "Little Men", "Little Women", "Jo's Boys" and "Eight Cousins".

The novel follows the lives of the four March sisters and details their passage from childhood to womanhood. It is based on the lives of the author and her three sisters. It can be classified as an autobiographical or semi-autobiographical novel.

Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy are four sisters who are a part of a poor yet loving family. The sisters live with their mother, Marmee, in Concord, Massachusetts. With their father off to war, their mother is the only one left to encourage and look after the girls. As they go through love and loss, they truly do learn to become 'little women'.



The awakening of Jo's literary vocation is pulled taut by two apparently conflicting desires: making a good living from one's art,

and relying on that art as a mode of personal expression. The poverty of the March family is what Jo hoped to lessen by selling her writings. However, Beth's death brings havoc in the family.

Jo's character imparts critical context about the structural barriers limiting women and is against marriage. Towards the end, Jo finds that the death of Beth has changed her and now she is open to love.

This book is the tale about the birth of a female artist at a time which is hostile to women and narrating the stories of a women's life from a female perspective. Alcott's writing is elegant yet poignant and haunting at moments. It was a refreshing read that made me feel for the sisters.

It is an amazing book filled with happiness, loss, love, and courage and makes you feel warm. There are not many exciting events to keep the reader hooked throughout. However, I found myself scanning the book and not actually reading it at times because of its slow plot. Also, I found the characters a bit too perfect to be real at times.

India Misinformed: The True story

Book Review

A book exposing deliberate misinformation rampant in print and online media

Sumaiya Mir

India Misinformed: The True Story is a book written by the team of Alt News, a fact-checking website that debunks fake information. It is edited by Pratik Sinha, Sumaiya Shaikh and Arjun Sidharth. It was published in April, 2019. The book identifies the purveyors of fabricated news and exposes the propaganda of machinery stories.

The propaganda of misinformation and hoaxes disseminated from print, graphics and the internet has altered the landscape of India. It has led to multiple cases of lynching, mob violence, defamation and riots, and continues to pose a serious threat to Indian democracy.

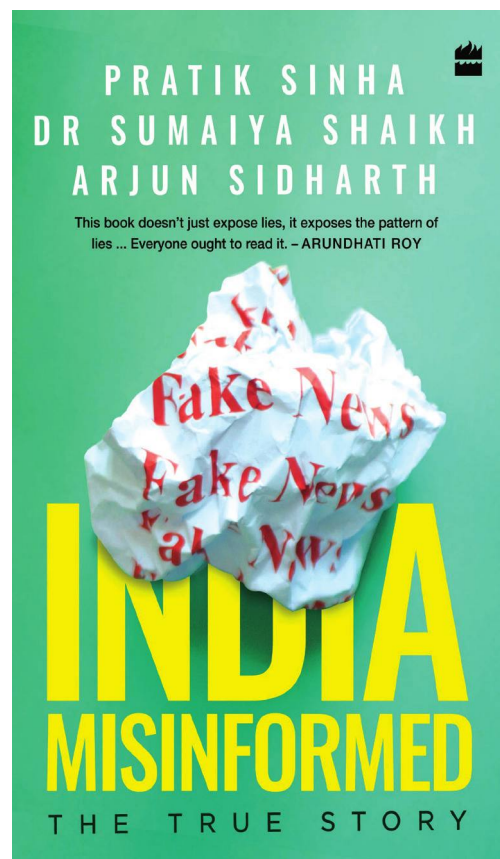
This book deals with 82 incidents of fake news and has given a detailed account of those incidents with main focus on news which spread communal discord. There are some fake news mentioned in the book that one might be considering to be true till he/she reads the full book. It also talks about some

blunders done by the mainstream media.

Fake news from Kashmir also gets some space in the book. One of the incidents of hoax news mentioned in the book was propagated by 'The Times of India' in January 2018, which claimed that the roommate of Manan Bashir Wani, a PhD scholar of Aligarh Muslim University, who had joined Hizbul Mujahideen, to be missing. Baramulla police via tweet denied the allegation. Such reputed and reliable news network carrying this fake news jeopardized that student's life.

The research done is as fearless and fair as it is meticulous. This book helps you understand the height of fake news menace, realize the evil it portends, thereby insulating us against those who are propagators of falsehood.

As a journalism student, I recommend this book to all the members of journalism school as well as to people from all walks of society. It will make them more alert regarding the fake news and will make them more cautious before sharing any piece of news or information next time.





Photograph

An unusual love story of a struggling street photographer

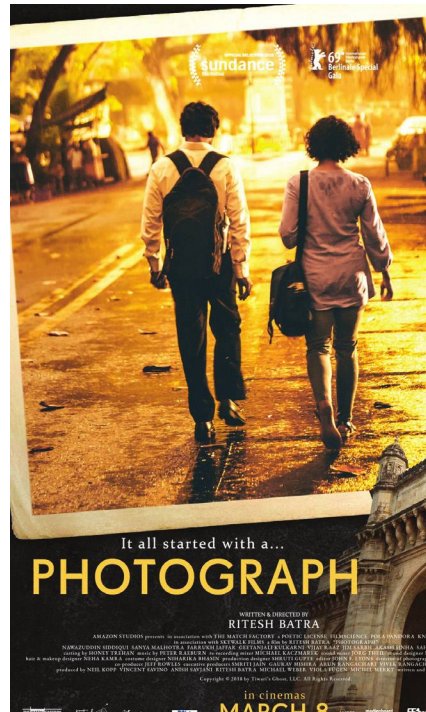
Rayees Teli

Photograph is a 2019 Indian romantic drama film written, co-produced and directed by Ritesh Batra. Starring Nawazuddin Siddiqui and Sanya Malhotra in the lead roles, the film follows a street photographer who tries to convince a stranger to pose as his fiancée so that his grandmother stops tempting him to get married.

As "Photograph" begins, we see Rafi (Nawazuddin Siddiqui) who takes photos in front of Mumbai's Gateway monument. He sells his services to tourists by promising that "years from now, when you look at the photograph you will feel the sun on your face, the wind on your hair, and you will hear those voices again." If they do not have a picture, he tells them, "It will be all gone."

Miloni (Saniya Malhotra) and Rafi meet when she visits the Gateway and agrees to let him take her picture. She is called away by her family before he can put it in an envelope for her.

Rafi hears that his grandmother has stopped taking her medicine until he makes some progress on getting married. So he impulsively sends her a photograph of



Miloni as proof that he is seeing someone. Unfortunately, this is such exciting news that his grandmother (Farrukh Jaffar) decides to come to see the girl on her own. Rafi then has to try to find Miloni and persuade her to pretend to be his girlfriend.

Movie Review

Siddiqui and Malhotra are well suited to the gentle tone of the film. Both are quiet expressive in scenes where everything is conveyed through posture and eyes. There is a fairy tale quality to the story. In a city of more than 18 million people, Rafi is able to find Miloni. Later in the film, he even gets some supernatural advice. Even Rafi's crowded sleeping quarters are lit to seem almost magical.

You need patience with Photograph. It takes a while to warm up to this plaintive world of Batra's and the pace is a little agonising at points. Though, our lead pair communicates with glances and sparing words, you're not quite convinced that these two are soul mates.

With regard to acting, there are not many complaints. Nawaz as always is a treat to watch and his silences speak volumes. Sanya is overtly restrained at first, but holds her own by the middle of the film. Farrukh Jaffar, who plays the role of the s grandmother, is enjoyable as she is the comic relief as well as the one who provides wisdom in the film.

Photograph attempts to embody themes of longing and nostalgia and leaves you feeling rather wistful at the end. I give it 3 stars out of 5.

Article 15

A gripping crime thriller, highlighting the burning social issues in India

Movie Review

Saqib Jameel

Article 15 is a 2019 Bollywood crime movie, directed by Anubhav Sinha and starring Ayushmann Khurrana. The movie is a mixture of brutalities of system, the reality of caste based politics and the hypocrisy of the police department in India.

Ayan (Ayushmann Khurrana) is a young IPS officer posted in Lalgaon, a village in north of Uttar Pradesh, where three girls go missing. Two of them are found dead and there is no trace of third one. Ayan is clearly at odds with the mindset that set accosts him right from the beginning at Lalgaon. The film fully depicts the brutalities of the caste system in rural India.

Director, Anubhav Sinha, has given this film both wit and good spirits. Dialogues are also written by him and those stand out to be nifty. The film is solid not only for what it is saying but also for how it is saying. The movie asks a vital question, "Sab barabar huwe toh Raja kon banega?" (If all

will be equal then who will be the king?) and itself provides a magnificent answer to it, "Raja banana hi kyun hai" (Why is it even necessary to choose a king!).

There isn't any solid flaw in the movie but at some points it is a bit slow. Direction is strong, dialogues are great and the screenplay is up to the mark. Article 15, unlike other recent Hindi cop movies like Singham, Dabangg, Simbha, is full of effective content and comes up with a very precious message about a social issue that has been acting like a parasite to Indian society from centuries. It has some breath-taking scenes like the one of a manual labor emerging from an open filthy sewage, extracting lumps of waste clogging the drain.

The movie is an outstanding effort of highlighting an issue that barely gets spotlight in contemporary cinema which is more inclined towards commercial stuff. It is one of those movies that spark a conversation. It is a must watch for its strong storytelling and an excellent content.



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The Pursuit Of Happiness

A true father-son story, valiantly struggling to step up from the bottom rung of a ladder

Arbeena

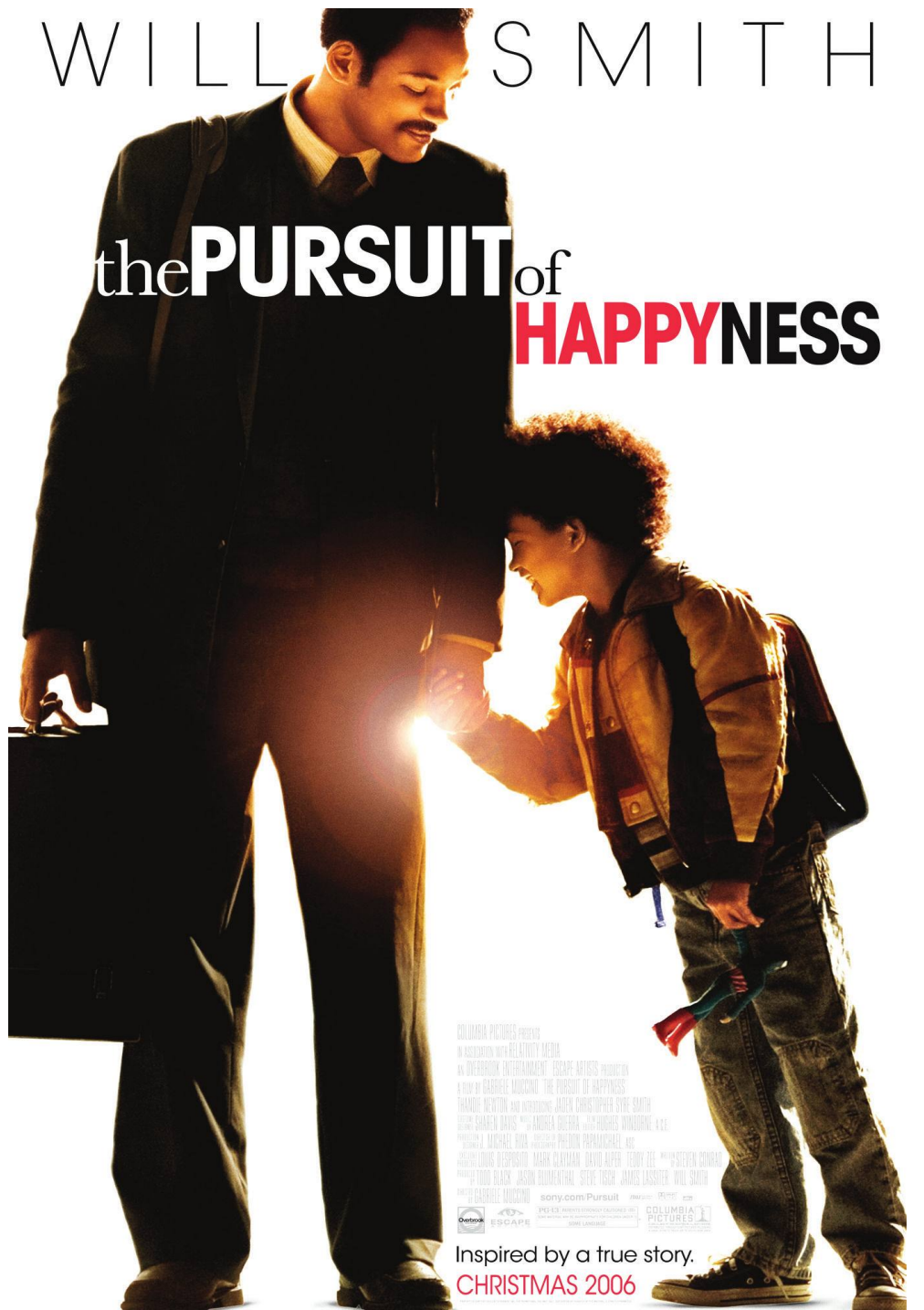
The Pursuit of Happiness is a 2006 American autobiographical drama movie based on an entrepreneur, Chris Gardener's nearly one year struggle of being homeless. It is based on his memoir published in October, 2006. The movie has been directed by Gabriele Muccino and produced by Will Smith, Todd Black and James Lassiter.

Christopher Paul Gardener is an American businessman and motivational speaker. During the early 1980s, he struggled with homelessness while raising his toddler son. He became a stock broker and eventually founded his own brokerage firm, Gardener Rich & Co in 1987. In 2006, he published a memoir which was made into a motion picture, The Pursuit of Happiness, starring Will Smith. The plot is based on a true story, though some scenes have been modified and added to the real story.

The movie features Will Smith as Chris Gardener, a man who loses everything but eventually gets everything with his efforts and hard work. In the movie, he is a hardworking, caring and loving father who struggles financially to provide for his wife and son. His wife leaves him and fate takes him to a lifestyle he has never thought of. He turns homeless and while he had to take care of his toddler son he works as a salesman. Then he finds an unpaid six months internship position at a brokerage firm. He struggles to get contracts for the firm while trying to make an honest living for his son. His life is the one that you would think you will never be able to handle. However, his talent and skills along with his charisma and personality earns trust of several people who sign contracts with the brokerage firm. Ultimately, he gets the one paid position and his life changes dramatically from that very moment.

This movie is highly touching, inspiring, heartwarming and realistic and keeps engrossed till the end. It is a great family movie.

It comes with a bundle of life lessons. The movie teaches that the road to happiness is full of setbacks. It gives the message that we should be the protector of our dreams and never run away from our



responsibilities in life. We should always take our loved ones with us in our journey and prove ourselves with our talent and never stop losing hope in the time of darkness.

However, one of the negative things that come from the movie is that in his struggle of earning money, Chris easily lets his wife to go. He never bothers to contact her again even after getting hired for the job. His wife becomes totally unimportant to him. It shows the unworthiness of a family in the materialistic world.

The cinematography, acting, costumes, sound, music and location are commendable. Overall, it is a wonderful and a must watch movie.

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