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Phaage

INK THAT NEVER DRIED

by- Anushka Shukla

We are all unfinished stories, a truth about life.

In our world, perfection is a mirage that is all shiny, enticing and always out of reach, and we forget that being human is not about being complete. The ink of our lives never fully dries; it stays warm, smudgeable, ready for new strokes, ready for mistakes, ready for revisions, but we grow up with the belief that we must turn into a perfect portrait, being flawless. We try to straighten every line, correct every flaw, erase every doubt. It is in this desperate attempt of being perfect that we slowly lose the very humanness which makes us feel alive. Being imperfect, being uncertain, being incomplete, that is our natural state, our truest form.

This is beautifully echoed in Indian mythology through the figure of Ardhanarishvara, the combined form of Shiva and Parvati. The Gods themselves are shown, not as perfect or complete in isolation, but as halves that complement each other. Shiva is shown not as finished or complete alone; he carries contradictions with grace and that is how he is a symbol of a healer, ascetic, and lover, fierce and compassionate. Even the moon he wears is incomplete, forever waxing and waning, reminding us that being incomplete is a part of existence. In many ways, we are like that moon that is never whole, never fully certain, but that incompleteness is not a flaw; it is a reminder that life is movement, not a destination.

The epics we respect, the Mahabharata, the Ramayana do

not end with picture-perfect conclusions either. They end with questions, wounds, moral dilemmas and a strange sense that life goes on beyond the pages. The characters are flawed, undecided, torn, which is familiar to humans and that is why we relate to them.

However, modern India tells a different story. Everywhere we look, on social media, in advertisements, in academic or career expectations, we are told that perfection is the ultimate achievement but when Dove launched its Real Beauty campaign, celebrating skin with pores, stretch marks, wrinkles and asymmetry, people around the world felt relief.

Suddenly, someone says what we secretly believed but were afraid to admit "*Perfection is overrated.*"

Imperfection is real, and real is beautiful.

Much like the unruled strokes of Madhubani art, which get their uniqueness precisely because of their imperfections, our lives too gain depth through incomplete lines and unexpected colours.

No one remembers a perfectly predictable painting. It is the uneven shades and accidental touches that make art come alive.

So why do we expect our lives to be anything else?

Being incomplete means making choices, choosing one thing and letting go of another. Life constantly asks us to choose between moments, people, priorities.

Sometimes we miss an exam to go on a trip that shapes us. Sometimes we skip a friend's outing to complete urgent work.

Sometimes we choose comfort over challenge, sometimes the reverse. Sometimes, for reasons unknown, we choose wrongly but every choice we make is a doorway to something, and every choice we do not make is a doorway to something else.

This is being human; we never get to walk all roads. We select one, and the others fade behind us, not because we were supposed to finish everything, but because we were supposed to experience something. The beauty lies in the fact that we do not know what awaits us on any path. That uncertainty can be terrifying, but it can also be thrilling.

Our lives resemble unfinished books with torn pages and scribbled margins. Some chapters we close too quickly. Some we stay in for far too long. Some never got proper endings. Some people walked out mid and yet, when we glance over our shoulders after years, the chapters that shake us most profoundly are always the messy, unresolved, imperfect ones because completion is final.

Completion is silent. Completion leaves no space for growth, regret, or redemption.

Incompletion holds possibility and forms rooms in the mind we revisit, rewrite, and reinterpret. The ink is never dry on those memories, and perhaps that is why they continue to matter.

If life were simple, finished, and certain, it would be unbearably boring.

Imagine hearing music composed totally of perfect notes-no pauses, no drops, no unexpected pitch, no silence. It wouldn't be music, certainly it would be called noise.



A melody needs imperfections to breathe.

Similarly, our lives need the offbeats like the failures, the missed chances, the impulsive decisions, the regrets, the reconnecting to have rhythm. We are like bridges that are being built as we walk. The planks appear under our feet only after we take the step. To expect a fully constructed bridge before walking is to misunderstand the nature of life itself. supposed to walk into uncertainty, making the path as we go.

The most beautiful part about incompleteness sometimes is how life brings back people or dreams we feel we have lost. A message reignites an old connection. An unexpected passion returns.

A dream that we once abandoned comes up when the time is right

It feels magical, for these are the moments that remind us that nothing is ever complete. The story wasn't over; it had merely paused. The ink was waiting, not drying. Life finds a way to stitch together chapters that we thought were separate and then it all makes sense that incompleteness is not failure; it is an invitation.

Ultimately, being human isn't about perfection, it's about embracing imperfection. It is about accepting that some questions will remain unanswered, some relationships unlabelled, some dreams unfulfilled, some moments unresolved. We don't have to complete everything. We don't have to know everything. We don't need to become flawless. If we did, we'd cease to be human. Our imperfections are not blemishes; they're fingerprints.

They make us one of a kind. They make us relatable. They make us alive.

So let the ink of your life stay wet. Let your story stay open. Let your decisions, your emotions, your connections stay flexible, for the beauty of being human does not lie in having a perfect, completed story but in being an unfinished masterpiece constantly growing, constantly learning, and maybe there lies the most beautiful truth of it all, we live not so we may complete ourselves, but so that we can find out who we are.



DRAFTS FOLDER

by- Gunita

Every person has a dream. People start thinking about their dreams when they are little, with dreams being simple things like becoming a doctor, a princess, or a singer. Anyone a child admires, they want to become like and follow in their footsteps.

But when did these simple dreams start seeming unattainable? Like when did becoming a singer feel worthless, being a doctor mean simply earning more rather than saving lives; and becoming a superhero? Just something only seen in fiction. Where did those raw and unfiltered emotions go, which helped form these dreams in the very first place?

As you grow up, you start putting all your dreams away in a drafts folder. And over time, you go from "I will accomplish this someday,

but that day isn't today" to "These things are far too unrealistic. I need to forget about them and focus on building my career and earning money".

You ignore that voice in your heart that still rages, demanding justice and attention for those dreams. You suppress the part of you that sinks down every time you see a successful singer on TV, a child who could successfully fulfil her dream, while you stand here wondering if this is the person you really wanted to be.

And then you slowly start to think, "When did money become more important than my hobbies, the things I enjoy? When did I start shelving my dreams away in the drafts folder, following the pre-established path of success? When did every activity I do become just another CV pointer?"

Because the day you chose the commerce stream, trying to convince yourself to solidify

a safe and stable future instead of these lofty and precarious dreams, you had already lost a part of yourself. A part that raged to sing, a part that raged to dance. A part that had so much creativity, even the largest safe couldn't hold it all.

Buried deep in your studies, all you could do was daydream about a reality where you became what you wanted to be. Free. Happy. Enjoying every second of your life, checking off every last dream in your drafts folder.

What if we rethink our perception of dreams? What if, instead of putting them off, we actually, unapologetically, pursued them the best we can do? What if we stopped being so afraid of failure and just moved ahead, no matter what speed bump came our way?

Perhaps, the real courage lies in reopening that drafts folder,



brushing off the forgotten dreams, the ones you and I buried under practicality and pressure, and giving them space again. Not recklessly, but honestly.

Because one day, you would want

to look back and realise that you did not abandon those dreams; you grew into them at your own pace. And instead of regret, you want the quiet pride of knowing that you honoured at least a few of the promises you made to your

younger self.

Because maybe, the drafts folder was never meant to be a graveyard of dreams — maybe it was just a place waiting for the right moment to hit “publish”.

HALF-WRITTEN GOODBYES

by - Ayushi Darsh

The memory begins in a classroom that smelled faintly of crayons, chalk dust, and the calm chaos of three-year-olds learning how to exist. Our teacher called my name and then, to my surprise, the same name again. Two identical names. Two confused kids looking at each other. That's how it started.

When she made us sit together, I didn't think much of it. I was simply trying to settle into nursery life, figuring out where to place my tiny self in a world that suddenly felt big. I remember turning towards her and saying something small, probably something silly. She smiled, and somehow that tiny moment opened a door neither of us knew existed.

Day by day, we realised we had more in common than our names. We liked the same things, drew the same way, and laughed at the same nonsense. Soon, every school hour became its own little ritual, sitting together, whispering about whatever came to our minds, turning even the slowest lessons into something we could survive together.

Outside the school, our friendship grew even more. I visited her house often, always carrying books we never ended up reading. Instead, we sketched,

and exchanged signatures at the back of each other's notebooks because we thought it looked cool, made messy birthday cards, watched random YouTube videos, and ate the snacks her mother sent to her room. Those afternoons felt endless in that innocent childhood way, soft, unhurried, unaware of how temporary things can be.

Back then, I wasn't the loudest person in the room. I was more observant than talkative, someone who preferred staying out of the centre. But with her, it was different. I didn't need to think before speaking or explaining my thoughts. Everything felt easy and effortless; She knew a version of me that did not show up anywhere else.

Then life shifted in slow, almost invisible ways. Lockdown arrived and suddenly our world shrank into screens and routines that didn't feel like ours. At first, we tried — a few calls, scattered conversations, sending each other random things to fill the silence. But as months passed, the effort thinned. It wasn't intentional; it was just two people adjusting to different rhythms, different moods, and different kinds of days.

By the time school reopened, we had changed quietly, separately. The closeness we once slipped into so easily didn't fit the same

way anymore and neither of us knew how to bridge the gap without forcing it.

After our 10th boards, the distance became natural, not painful, not dramatic, just... there. A slow fading, not a breaking. There wasn't a moment that ended us. No argument, no misunderstanding. Just time moving forward and the two of us moving with it. Sometimes friendships don't collapse. They simply dissolve into the background of growing up.

When we passed each other in the corridors, we shared polite smiles, the kind you give someone who once felt like home but now feels like a familiar street you don't walk down anymore. It didn't sting, but it carried a strange weight. A gentle reminder that something we never meant to lose had quietly slipped into memory. Time passed and we moved to different routines, different people, different versions of ourselves.

Then one day, after my 12th boards, I was scrolling through my mother's old phone and found a photo of us, two little girls with messy hair and big smiles, arms around each other like we genuinely believed nothing could ever separate us. The memory felt both warm and strange. It made something inside me pause, the way a forgotten scent can



suddenly pulls you back into a moment you didn't know you missed.

I saw her again a few days later at our 12th farewell, across the field, laughing with her group, dressed up like everyone else.

For a moment, I felt myself freeze, the same way I did when I saw that old photo. I don't know how long I stood there, staring long enough to feel the invisible wall between us, the one built quietly over the years of almost and maybe. A part of me kept waiting for her to look up first, to take even one step towards me. Another part whispered, "Does she not remember?" It's our last day. But I didn't move either. Maybe it was ego. Maybe hesitation. Maybe the fear that if I walked up to her, the past wouldn't return the way I wanted it to.

So, we didn't talk. We stood metres apart, pretending the distance didn't matter, even though it did, quietly, deeply in that unspoken way childhood friendships linger.

Later that night, I opened my phone again, the farewell still fresh in my mind. I found myself typing a message:

"Hey... how are you? I don't know why we stopped talking. I'm sorry if I ever did something."

I stared at it. It felt too small for everything we were, too heavy for everything we weren't anymore. My thumb hovered over "send" for a long time.

And then, I didn't send it.

Not because of fear or pride, but because in that moment it felt like maybe this was how some stories end — not with closure, not with a restart, but with acceptance.

Sometimes people drift, not because they stop caring, but because they grow into different lives. Sometimes silence isn't a wound; it's just distance. Sometimes the chapter closes gently on its own.

When I think of her now, it isn't with regret. It's with a quiet smile, the kind that belongs to memories that once felt like

home. Life moves forward. People change. But some things stay preserved exactly where they belong, still gentle and untouched.

Maybe that's the quiet truth about growing up, that we are often living in moments that feel completely ordinary while they are happening, never realising they are only temporary. We don't recognise the "last time" when we are in it, whether it's a conversation, a shared laugh, or a friendship that once felt permanent. And maybe that's what makes it all so meaningful. Because in the end, many of the moments we hold closest were never meant to last forever. They were simply borrowed time, understood only after they have quietly passed.

THE UNSPOKEN DRAFTS

by -Parth Raut

In our everyday world, we overthink so much, keeping everything inside. We don't say anything to anyone because we worry about how society reacts. But I could suddenly hear others' thoughts and drafts, the ones that others hide, the ones they never dare to speak.

I drafted something that was never meant to be said,
It lived in my mind and stayed there instead,

In a world so untrue, I can read every draft in my head,

Someone drafted their wish,
someone their dreams,
Someone with foolish thoughts,
someone with hidden interests,
Someone with envy, someone admiring someone
Someone drafted a crush, liked them, but said it to no one,
Someone judging someone,
someone drowning in pain
Someone satisfied with life,
someone wanting to end the chain
Someone believing in the divine,

Someone with atheism stuck in their mind.

Everything drafted, but never published,
Everything silent that society never furnished,
Looking at the crowd, I stand amazed,
This quiet world has crafted countless drafts
Never meant to be conveyed.



DRAFTED BELIEFS

by - Riddhima Rawat

My best friend and I used to make promises to each other. We promised we would help each other pack for holidays, and we promised we would get back gifts from that trip. We promised we would always have each other's back, even in arguments out of our control. We understood each other better than most people.

Then came a day when a guy claimed he knew me better. She didn't doubt his conviction; She knew he was wrong. And when she let him know that, he, like most people who wear cruelty as a proud mask, resorted to words that the said mask empowered. The words crushed me, and I wasn't in a position to respond. So, I simply waited for her to handle the rest, grab him and push him off like she always promised. My mind skipped his words, and my gaze settled on his shirt; no hand in sight. He went away.

His mask had won.

But I just stood there, disappointed because she didn't do what she promised.

"Your promise stands broken. You were all I needed today, and you failed to be present. I saw your hands, but they never moved. "How dare you break your promise? How dare you break me?"

She was scared.

"How dare you undermine my friendship? How dare you think so little of me?"

We never spoke again.

We believed in everything we said and did with commitment. When we made those promises, they were made out of sincerity. We didn't think sincerity ever failed. I didn't think it was possible not to

follow your morals all the time. Fighting for what you believe is the only way to live, or so I thought when I heard stories of others being in situations I would have dealt with differently.

Over the years, I made a promise to myself to always speak; speak when I see injustice, no matter how small or insignificant.

Then came a day when a man raised his voice at someone who didn't deserve it.

I wanted to intervene but my mind wasn't strong enough to pull my feet off the ground, and I stayed silent while my throat burst screaming for voice.

All my years of keeping that promise went in vain, knowing that my silence that night let down the girl I always wanted to be.

How did I become the person I disliked?

That was when I realised why, all those years ago, she couldn't move. I realised I was wrong. A bad day, however, was all that it was. I failed to stand for what I believed, and I promised myself I'd never do it again.

I kept breaking my promise. and eventually forgot I ever made one.

Then came a day when Cloudflare went down.

My friends and I started an elaborate discussion about how it's so inconvenient. Till yesterday I could talk endlessly on how people have forgotten to think for themselves. I wished I could show someone how against I was about intelligence that was so obviously artificial. All that was in my head were environmental loss and deprivation of the creative human mind.

Yet it took me only one non-working server to realise every problem lands me at the doorstep of the hell that AI is now.

How did I become the person I disliked?

How and why is it so easy to forget the precepts I myself set in stone?

How and why is it easier to remember them and still find myself stuck to the ground?

Why do I only ever wish to have spoken after I've already betrayed my own values?

Why do I only ever wish to have done it after I've already acted in ways I swore I wouldn't?

Have I only penned ideals I never step into, letting them live on my tongue but not in my life?

I close my eyes, and her face lingers in the abyss. I plead every night for the apology I've always owed her and for failing to enact what I uphold. I wish I didn't stay silent, and I understand why she did. I open my eyes, for the tears building up inside needed to break free.

The next assignment looks at me from the side of the table. The tools in my computer, waiting to complete the work sooner, blink harder.

And suddenly I am left unspoken again because I became the person I disliked.



UNSENT MESSAGES

by - Tanisha

We all, at some point in our lives, must have experienced this needing to say something to someone, but holding it back, or composing a message but never hitting 'Send'. These are the words we could never share, the emotions we failed to express. My personal 'Drafts' Folder is already quite full. Every draft is a small narrative, a memory of a friendship, or an emotion that simply refused to be articulated. These silences are not voids; they are packed with the purest versions of my feelings. I vividly remember my best friend from school. We spent hours together. Once, when she was deeply upset, with tears welling in her eyes, I desperately wanted to say something big and profound, perhaps how vital her laughter was, or how lonely I felt without her steady presence.

I typed a message on my phone: "You are the strongest person in

this world; never give up hope. I am always here for you." But my finger stopped short of the 'Send' button. I was afraid my words would fall flat or that she might misunderstand the intensity of my feelings. That message remains in my drafts to this day. My silence at that moment still stings a little. Our friendship moved on, but that particular truth remained locked in the draft.

This phenomenon isn't limited to friends. Sometimes, when I return home and see how hard my parents work, my heart swells with the desire to hug them and say: "Thank you. You both mean everything to me."

Yet, when the moment arrives, I usually just nod and ask, "What's for dinner?" That deep gratitude, those three essential words, always get stuck in my throat, like an unsent letter. It feels as if the emotion is so vast that

speaking it or typing it out would somehow diminish its true value.

Today, when I look at my drafts folder, I see my past self reflected there. The words I didn't speak, they are all still alive inside me. These drafts are not just incomplete messages; they are the honesty, the fear, and the love I lived in that moment

Perhaps we keep them in the drafts because sending them finalizes the moment it pins the butterfly to the page. As long as they remain unsent, they stay eternally 'possible,' a soft, untarnished memory of who we almost were. But as the folder grows heavier, I can't help but wonder are these silences the anchors that keep us safe, or the weights that keep us from moving forward? Maybe some truths are better left in the quiet, but I often look at that 'Send' button and wonder which ones are still waiting for the courage to breathe.

THE STORY THAT ISN'T OVER: WHY HISTORY IS ALWAYS

by- Mridul

Think about your email drafts: a great idea for a club, a tough conversation you backed out of, a brilliant essay that is 90% finished. That "Draft Folder" is where things go to wait incomplete, protected from the final moment of being judged or completed.

We often think of history the same way, expecting a textbook to give us a complete story. But this is where we go wrong. History is not a finished book. It is a giant, communal Draft Folder, always open, constantly revised, and demanding new ideas. The past is incomplete because each generation is free to reinterpret it.

One of the biggest reasons history remains a draft is simple: we

continue to uncover new voices and new facts. Every old letter, every newly discovered diary, or every government file that gets declassified is like a new paragraph that changes the whole chapter. More importantly, the people telling the story change. When a marginalized group or a new generation asks different questions, the entire historical story shifts. The old facts remain, but their meaning changes completely.



Take the Partition of India in 1947. For decades, the main historical "draft" focused heavily on the major political leaders, treaties, and high-level decisions. The story was told as a massive political event of independence and border drawing.

But recently, the "draft" has been radically revised. Historians now focus intensely on oral histories, the stories of the millions of ordinary people who actually lived through the violence, displacement, and loss. These personal accounts of immense suffering and impossible choices have corrected the official, cold

draft.

The history of Partition is now less about political maps and more about human trauma. The facts of the event didn't change, but the focus did. The new perspective forced the old "complete" history to become an updated, and far more painful, draft.

When history is presented to us as a final, unchangeable copy, it is often used to shut down debate and justify the way things are today. It tells us, "This is the final truth, don't ask questions." But the constant incompleteness of history is its greatest strength. It

guarantees that the important conversations about justice, trauma, and identity will never end. Our job as students is to treat every historical lesson, every chapter, every monument, every traditional view not as a final word, but as a working draft. We must reject the comfort of a settled narrative.

The past is not a destination we have reached; it is a document we are still writing. When you approach history, don't look for the period at the end of the sentence. Look for the blinking cursor, reminding you that the story is waiting for your next edit.

DUST OFF THE CANVAS

by - Aaditya Bhatnagar

In a world where our devices have replaced people reading, writing, and creating art, it is apt to say that these small screens have now become a canvas for our expressions. Opening new chats have replaced making new paintings, trying to master human connection over texts, hoping that using the brush is as easy as picking it up.

Yet, much like every artist, some masterpieces are left to collect dust even before the paint dries, even when it seemed to be a smooth ride. Maybe you just don't feel that spark anymore, that small whisper in the ear that drives you to continue working. You just think you'll pick it up again some other day when you feel like it, ignoring the sinking feeling that you never will, because it would never be the same again.

But every once in a while, a spark ignites twice. A gnawing feeling

that you can't rest easy without completing what was started, at least until it rests on a better note. You pick up the brush again, wipe the dust off the canvas, and prepare to finish the masterpiece, but- can you?

You looked over everything that had happened back then with a newer, more detached perspective. Yellow, green, and brown strokes, beautifully splashed across the white dry paper. But now you also see the little sad blue swirls, disrupting the warmth of the painting. The purple spots of jealousy popping where they don't belong. The angry red paint accidentally spilled over the happy yellow. Even the trusty brown seemed to be chipping off.

You suddenly wonder, why are you here? Why are you putting in so much effort? Why couldn't they? Why couldn't they keep in touch? Ask you to stay? You would have. You don't need to start again. You don't have a reason to, right? Even if you reach out now, it won't last. It's probably best to

keep it buried forever, ignore the ache, and move on. The piece was started in a different time, with a different mindset. Back then you did not need to justify why you stood in front of it for hours, worked on it like it gave life to you. It just felt natural, like an extension of your very being. Now, it just makes you feel scared. Scared- because you're afraid it might ask questions you don't want to know the answers to.

"Why did you leave?", "Why did you let the spark die?", what could you even say? You stopped caring? Stopped looking forward to their next messages? You didn't think they were important enough? None of that was true! You still cared, you always did. But if you really cared, why should you wait for someone to justify it for you?

Why should something happen for you to take control of how you live? Even if the fire never lights again, if you are turned away, you need to try, because if you don't, you know you will not be at peace with yourself ever again.



You don't realize, when the world stops between the silence, that they were caring too, they were waiting for you too. And when you return, they don't ask the

questions you feared. They just look at you, and the time forgone is time forgotten. The paint was as fresh as ever, and the spark was alive again. Maybe the courage to

initiate again was all you needed, no whys or hows. Silence has no reason to be, so why should there be a reason for it not to?

THE INNINGS THAT NEVER HAPPENED

by - Kanav Bajaj

Let me take you all to my first heartbreak. It was July of 2019. 10 July, 2019 to be precise. It was a gloomy evening. I was at home watching TV when suddenly it happened. I was not ready for that. That throw, that direct hit, that run out. I can never forget that (Ohh, so you guys really thought it was a girl). It was that painful moment of seeing my idol, MS Dhoni, getting run out against New Zealand (NZ) in the semi-final of the Cricket World Cup 2019.

For those who didn't live through the trauma, here's a quick recap (And before you guys start calling me crazy). India was to chase 241 in 50 overs to advance to the Finals. But New Zealand bowlers were lethal with the new ball, blowing away India's top order to leave them at 5/3.

A win seemed distant at that time for India. Then we witnessed a fantastic partnership between Jadeja and Dhoni. With 38 needed off the last 18 balls, it was anyone's game to win.

With Jadeja gone, it was all up to Dhoni to finish the game for India (and for the uninformed, Dhoni is arguably the best finisher the world has ever seen). But then... Dhoni hit the ball and called for two runs, but as fate would have it, a bullet throw from Martin Guppill found Dhoni just short of

his crease. The innings and the dream ended right then and there.

There were literal tears in Dhoni's eyes as he walked back to the pavilion. I remember staring at the screen, in shock, trying to make sense of a heartbreak I didn't expect from a sport.

Back then I did not really understand why it hit me so hard, but now I think I do.

That run out wasn't just a random cricket moment. It was a metaphor.

An inning that never happened.

We all have our own unfinished innings. The colleges we almost chose, the dreams we paused midway, the risks we didn't take and the words we typed but couldn't send.

Life is full of moments that stop just one step before the line. And we don't realise how much unfinished moments shape us until years later.

As a result, we keep thinking. What if I had done that? What if I had chosen differently? What if I had hit send on all those messages that were left unsent?

And believe me, I have asked myself all these questions. But the truth is these 'what ifs' exhaust us more than we realise. We cannot go back to the past and edit it.

For days after the semi-final, I kept coming back to that moment. At one point, I even thought of taking a break from cricket (dramatic, I know). But you can't quit what you love. You stay, you feel the pain, you accept it, and you move on.

Then I realised, some innings never happen, not because we failed, but because life had other plans for us. Some messages remain unsent not because they weren't good, but because they help us understand who we are.

We are shaped by what we don't do as much as what we do.

The friendships that didn't last, the conversations that never happened, and the talents we never gave ourselves a chance to discover.

These are our Dhoni run-out moments. No matter how many times we replay them in our minds, they remain unfinished.

And the surprising part is that there's beauty even in these unfinished innings. Because these moments leave space for who we can still become.

That evening in 2019 wasn't just a heartbreak; rather, it was a reminder that not all stories reach their final edits. Some remain incomplete and they still matter.



That run out, that incomplete moment, became one of the most unforgettable moments in Indian

cricket history. Maybe that's the thing about life. Not every inning reaches its final ball, but every

unfinished one leaves us changed.

CONVERSATION THAT ENDED ON LAST SEEN

by - Samiya

Some conversations end because everything that needed to be said has finally been spoken. And then there are the other kinds, the ones that fall silent mid-flow, mid-thought, almost mid-breath. The kinds that keep you staring at a chat window long after the typing bar disappears, confused about how something that felt natural enough to continue suddenly slipped into silence. These are the conversations that don't end with a conclusion, but with a quiet pause that somehow becomes permanent. Not because there was nothing left to say, but because saying nothing was easier. We don't talk enough about these quiet endings, the slow dissolutions of friendships that once felt grounding, comforting, almost essential. There wasn't a fight. No betrayal. No dramatic exit. Just two people who once talked endlessly, slowly drifting into separate directions. One more day without a message Then another. And at some point, the

silence grows so large that reaching out feels strange, almost intrusive. And so the conversation stays frozen on "last seen," on blue ticks, on what could've been. These faded friendships leave behind a different kind of ache: not sharp enough to name as heartbreak, not dramatic enough to mourn aloud, yet deep enough that you can almost feel their absence in small moments. You see a meme you know they would have laughed at or something funny happens, and the first instinct is still to reach for their name. But it doesn't blink the same anymore, and that chat window has gotten colder. What was once a daily ritual becomes a memory preserved through screenshots and the occasional "Saw this and thought of you" that you never actually send. And maybe this is why endings without closure have a much heavier feeling. They leave too much room for imagination. Too many questions echoing in the quiet places of the mind. The usual talk of friendships is about solid, dependable, and almost

unbreakable bonds, but the truth is far more delicate. Friendships survive not just on shared history, but on shared effort-on showing up, even in small ways. When that effort fades, so does the bond. It happens gradually, in silence, just like sand slipping through fingers without ever being noticed until the hand is empty. Sometimes the drift happens because life gets louder: work shifts, new groups form, priorities change. You meet new people, they meet new people, and the space once reserved for each other slowly gets filled. Other times, it happens because of emotional exhaustion, when someone becomes a reminder of an older version of yourself that you're trying to grow out of. Or maybe the friendship relied too heavily on convenience, and the moment life became slightly inconvenient, the connection faltered. But more often than we like to admit, it's nobody's fault. People outgrow each other just the way trees outgrow their shadows. Organically. Silently. Without blame.



INDIA'S DREAMS IN THE DRAFTS FOLDER

by - Ayushi Garg

"Long years ago, we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom."

These were the words of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, as he announced the birth of an Independent India.

During the entirety of the Independence movement, the founding fathers of our freedom struggle envisioned a nation where their sacrifices would be worthwhile, where the mind would be without fear and the head held high; where knowledge is free and where the world will not be broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls.

And it was on these basic ethos, of democracy, secularism, justice, equality, liberty and fraternity that they created our Constitution.

These brave men and women came together from all corners of the country, each with their own dreams for an Independent India, to unite for a common motive.

And during this revolution, it was their hope that we would be the generation to convert their dreams into reality.

The question is, have we lived up to their hopes, or do their dreams still collect dust in the drafts

folder?

For once, let us truly analyse our 'progress'.

Gurudev or Rabindranath Tagore envisioned a country free from colonialism, social inequality, and intellectual stagnation. With the help of Shantiniketan and literature, he wanted to foster scientific temperament, an appreciation for art, and a universal humanism in his countrymen. But global university rankings?

They tell a different story; very few Indian universities consistently feature in the global top 100, unemployment is at an all-time high and Indian graduates consistently face challenges in market readiness, curiosity and employability.

At the same time, our regional art forms languish in obscurity, and local literature has all but disappeared. Artisans of Rogan, Kaavi, Chitrakathi and Toda live in abject poverty today, while censorship of modern literature and integrity of media continue to be seen as 'talking points' for group discussions. Most importantly though, there has been a horrific rise in mob lynchings (such as the cases of Ramnarayan Baghel, Mohammad Athar Hussain), a sign of the increase in herd mentality within the citizens and the fall in independent and critical thinking.

Similarly, the Nightingale of India, Sarojini Naidu was a staunch proponent of true independence (Swaraj), which she believed, was incomplete without the empowerment of all its people,

particularly women. This included education, equal access to opportunities and equitable political representation.

But is that truly the scenario today?

Female foeticide claims thousands of girls yearly (Pew Research Center analysis estimates at least 9 million female foetuses were aborted between 2000 and 2019), with the sex ratio at birth being as low as 929:1000, higher education sees just 28% female enrolment (far lower in STEM, despite better performance of females in higher education), and women hold under 15% of Lok Sabha seats. Worst of all, even after 77 years of Independence, we still need a bill of reservation to guarantee 33% of the seats to 50% of the population. The result? Half of the population is still treated as inferior, in mindset, in opportunity, in safety and in dignity.

So tell me, have we truly done justice to the woman known as the Bhartiya Kokila?

Bhagat Singh, one of the most passionate, outspoken, young men in the freedom struggle martyred himself for a united India free from colonial rule and communal division. His concept of patriotism was inclusive, bringing together people of all castes, and communities to work towards national salvation. His ideas were supported by Dadasaheb and Mahatma Gandhi, who also advocated for a



nation free from caste and religious divisions. And yet, even today, temples like Pudukkottai and Karur still deny access to certain castes; minorities still remain the biggest victims of lynchings and violence, and new lines are drawn over linguistic disunity every day.

Politicians fracture the Indian body politic on lines of religion and community, they politicise individual identity, and exploit the common people for their own thirst for power. They foster fanaticism and religious extremism within communities, promote hate speech and end up violating not only Bhagat Singh and Bapu's dreams, but also the concept of fraternity that is fundamental to India.

Another important perspective to consider here, comes from the North East, where bravehearts like Rani Gaidinliu, Kanaklata Barua, U Tirot Sing, Kushal Konwar, and Gopinath Bordoloi sacrificed themselves for national unity and freedom.

Tirot Sing fought for tribal sovereignty and control over ancestral lands, and yet, thousands of such cases remain open in Indian courts. They force tribes to stay away from their own homelands, and directly violate their wishes. In some instances, the land is illegally occupied or sold to large corporations in the name of 'development', taking away their homes and livelihood, without ever giving them adequate compensation.

Similarly, Gopinath Bordoloi who actively campaigned for Assam's integration with India, while promoting Assamese identity and development remains unknown to most of the populace.

Is this truly how we've decided to repay these visionaries? By forgetting their sacrifices, directly insulting their treating our own people as outcasts?

Every day, we see new instances of individuals like Angel Chakma becoming victims of racial discrimination by their own people, being treated as traitors and outcasts within their own country and facing slurs like 'chinki' and 'momo' purely because of their complexion.

Even when things become as dire as a full-fledged war, like in Manipur, it gets downplayed, and consequently, never catches the nation's attention. And as always, it is the people whose needs get ignored in the end.

Finally, we call the honey-voiced Bengalis, a Bangladeshi; we make tall claims about the 7 sisters having 21 brothers, even ask them to defend the country and yet relegate them to 'chinki'; we call the turbaned Sardar a Khalistani, and the honest Muslim a Pakistani. We abandon everything diverse, and treat it as a threat to our safety. And yet, we have the audacity to be proud of India's unity in diversity.

With such behaviour, can we truly claim any progress? Are we truly united and equal as Indians?

Are we even deserving of the sacrifices that were made for our rights?

It is high time that those dreams that lie in the drafts folder make their way to policy tables and media discussions.

The founding fathers did not bleed for a nation fractured by prejudice, inequality, and forgotten promises, they forged a tryst with destiny that demands redemption now. As India's youth, it is now our job to harness the winds of change and delete this drafts folder. We must actively work for policies that uplift artisans and academics, empower every woman and tribe, shatter caste barriers, and embrace every Indian as the heartbeat of our diversity.

The midnight hour has passed, but the pledge endures. In 2026, as we stand 79 years into freedom, let us awaken not just to life, but to the full measure of liberty, justice, and fraternity.

