

CHASING THE SHADOWS

ROMIL UDAYAKUMAR TNV

“HE woods are lovely, dark and deep, But I have promises to keep, And miles to go before I sleep, And miles to go before I sleep.”

These are one of the most famous lines of poetry. Written by eminent writer Robert Frost around a century ago, these lines from the poem ‘Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening’ still influence every reader — they touche them somewhere deep.

No one can escape from that special hold it has, including young readers like Rahul K. “Frost’s words led me to believe that I have an incomplete life that is yet to be filled, something more to be done,” says the budding poet.

Some writings are like that, they gain a life of their own — become timeless.

Also, these types of deep ruminations involve a darker approach towards literature where you excavate your subconscious drives, desires, compulsions, and fears — traumas of the past. The shadow self comes out to play. The shadow is the part of the psyche that contains all the unknown aspects of ourselves. This includes repressed emotions, traumas, and denied parts of our personalities.

Death is inside the folding cot. It spends its life sleeping on the slow mattresses under the black blankets and suddenly breathes out

It blows out a mournful sound that swells the sheets, and the beds go sailing towards a port where death is waiting, dressed like an admiral.

This is a verse from ‘Nothing but Death’ by Pablo Neruda, the famous Chilean poet known among the general public for his romantic writings.



Kahlil Gibran

TNIE speaks to young poets who meditate on their subconscious, into the deepest nooks, and explore dark desires and locked-up trauma

However, this is one of those poems where he explores his darker thoughts, describing death as an entity and further elucidating it with visual details.

Neruda puts the reader in an uncomfortable position by detailing death, corpses, murder, and despair. In spite of the uncomfortable imagery, the admirable realism, pessimistic beauty, and symbolic layers give a kind of cathartic feeling to those who read him.

And the cup he brings, though it burns your lips, has been fashioned of the clay.

Which the Potter has moistened with his own sacred tears.

These lines are from ‘On Pain’ by Khalil Gibran, the leg-

endary Lebanese-American writer. He intended that to relate to the Unseen is to relate to our pain. The imagery in the poem controls the narrative yet it provides an avenue for subjective conclusions.

Explorations of the darker psyche have been there since time immemorial. In Malayalam, poets such as Balachandran Chullikadu and Rafeeq Ahammed aced at exploring these ‘shadows’, one’s hidden psyche.

Now, several budding English writers in Kerala have made their ‘shadows’ their muse. They unspool the layers within, write about their deep, dark desires, and obscure trauma that’s locked up in the innards.

“This type of approach can also seem scary at times since poetry is a form of escapism, a comfort place. Polluting it with hopelessness and dark imagery makes it sort of agonising,” says Jerald Jeyasingh, a nurse and poet. However, sometimes the writings of shadows connect much more with readers.

What if I sell my soul? What if they have a hold? I’ll be doing things that I’m told to, but I’ll have all the richness of diamonds and gold too.

These lines are from Jerald’s poem ‘Soul Gold’. “Though there is agony in ‘shadow poetry’, it can also be a form of catharsis and a reflection of the suppressed



“Pessimism is how I approach writing, but I believe it is more than that; I reflect on reality. Most poems in my collection are products of shadow poetry, my writings have adapted the shadow way — Nandana Nair, poet



This shadow way is now reflected among many new writers. However many of them caution, tread on the path carefully as unexpected results can be ridiculously dark, though awesome.

According to Nithya Mariam John, poet, translator and assistant professor, poetry expresses what cannot be said otherwise. “At times, poetry serves as a tool for writers to bring out their dark desires,” she says.

“These desires lurk behind the curtains, emerging through automatic writings — ones that were buried deep underneath, akin to Freud’s iceberg. The libido and the thanatos find expressions in poetry. A good poem always suggests but never explains. Therefore, in another sense, every poem is a shadow of an idea, an emotion, or whatever drives the creativity of the poet.”

emotions that are buried inside of me, which I somehow try to communicate,” Jerald explains.

For Abhimanyu R, poet and professor, poetry is a way to let out and encounter his deepest, darkest desires.

He writes:

Let the vultures know where, Let the maggots rule. Let me rest in your graveyard Dine with me, and pour me bliss. Farewell.

These lines by Abhimanyu deal with the confrontation of slaughter and the description of the eerie aftermath — leap towards a world of petrifying fantasy. “I don’t write poems; I prefer to say

I bleed poems,” he says.

“So I let snakes and bats wander in my lines as metaphors and similes. That is also a realm of poetry, where bleakness is celebrated.”

Nandana Nair is another young English poet whose maiden book Kaleidoscope was released recently. “Pessimism is how I approach writing, but I believe it is more than that; I reflect on reality. Most poems in my collection are products of shadow poetry,” she says. “I think my writings have adapted the shadow way.”

“Though there is agony in ‘shadow poetry’, it can also be a form of catharsis and a reflection of the suppressed emotions that are buried inside of me, which I somehow try to communicate

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DR NIJITH OMPEDATHIL GOVINDAN

CRICKET — a game that has touched millions of Indians; whose popularity exceeds even the national game hockey; one every child in India aspires to play. It is no wonder that many cricketers are deemed ‘Gods’ by the people of India.

However, we often forget that these sportspersons are not indestructible. Many players have faced musculoskeletal problems. In that regard, it is imperative to applaud a commendable effort by Rahul Dravid-led National Cricket Academy (NCA) for creating an ‘Injury Surveillance Report’ that identifies the list of most common injuries among Indian cricketers.

A first in its field, this 48-page report states that 262 cricketers (218 men and 44 women) attended rehabilitation programmes at NCA between April 2019 to March 2020.

Since cricket involves different postures for different positions (batsmen, bowlers, wicket-keepers, fielders, etc), the injury can occur anywhere from head to toe. It can be acute or sudden-onset, most often due to traumatic injury or chronic/long-standing issues due to overuse of the body.

The most common injury happens on the shoulder joint, and bowlers are more prone to it. A vast majority of them are tall, in the range of 6 feet plus, and hence they have a long lever arm making them more susceptible to rotator cuff tears, SLAP (superior labral tear from anterior to posterior) lesions, etc.

Among the acute injury of the shoulder, traumatic dislocation is the most common. It is said that Kapil Dev had bowled more than 1 lakh times in first-class matches alone. One can only imagine the extent of the damage his shoulder joint might have sustained.

The knee joint is the second most common joint to get damaged. Traumatic injuries of the ACL (Anterior Cruciate Ligament), PCL (Posterior Cruciate Ligament) and multi-ligament injuries are other common acute conditions. A majority of career-threatening ACL injuries usually occur in the initial years of returning after

COMMON INJURIES AMONGST CRICKETERS



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an index injury.

Chronic overuse results in a degenerative meniscal tear that presents with excruciating knee pain accompanied by mechanical symptoms but without any history of trauma.

The ankle, thigh and lumbar spine are other susceptible joints to be injured among the cricketers. Plantar fasciitis, Achilles tendinitis, retrocalcaneal bursitis, metatarsal and toe fractures and stress fractures of the foot are some of the common problems afflicting the ankle joint.

Hamstring strain in the back of the thigh is a tear in the muscle that most cricketers are prone to regardless of their position. It is very common among batsmen and fielders during



Pic courtesy: ICC

sudden, unexpected movements, such as sprinting, jumping, etc.

Disc diseases, lumbar spondylosis and disc prolapse are some of the major problems of the spine and are more frequently encountered by bowlers.

That doesn’t mean other joints and muscles are spared. Tennis elbow is a common condition in both bowlers and batsmen. In fact, Sachin Tendulkar was treated for it.

Small joints like the wrist and fingers are also susceptible to overuse tendon injuries, particularly in spinners. Other injuries include TFCC (Triangular Fibrocartilage Complex) and mallet finger.

Periostitis or runner’s disease is a chronic exertion compartment syndrome of the leg caused due to repetitive stress on the tibia, or shinbone. This illness, among others, emphasises the necessity of wearing appropriate footwear when playing cricket.

It is estimated that Sachin ran a distance exceeding 350 km in-between wickets! Hence, there is little surprise that cricket is associated with manifold stress and strain injuries of the musculoskeletal system.

Sports injuries might be avoidable under certain circumstances but the players need to remember that prevention is better than cure. Proper learning of the correct technique for individual sports, under a trained person, and wearing safety measures can go a long way in preventing sports injuries.

Players should do warm-ups and general stretching exercises, along with stretching specific to the game. Each sportsperson must know his or her body limits and take care not to over-exert.

After each game, a warm-down period is also crucial and they should give importance to maintaining hydration as well as good sleep. Adequate relaxation and unwinding oneself in between the training sessions are equally important.

Once injured, the player should avoid self-medication and treatment. Instead, they should immediately seek the help of a qualified medical professional. Most injuries are amenable to treatment, and with competent management, normal anatomic and biological functionality can be regained to the satisfaction of the player.

These are relevant for the common populace too. One should never delay getting help for any problem lest it turns from a minor discomfort to a leviathan.

Now that the country is in the thralls of IPL season, cricket is once again in the spotlight. We must take this moment to reflect that it is not only important to “play well” but also to “play right”.

The writer is a senior consultant of joint replacement, arthroscopy and a sports surgeon at Welcare Hospital



FLYLEAF
 VR FEROSE

(The author is a technologist based in Silicon Valley who is gently mad about books)

MAURICE Rickards defined ephemera as ‘the minor transient documents of everyday life’. Ephemera refers to something that is meant to be thrown away after being used or enjoyed for only a short time, for example, tickets or postcards.

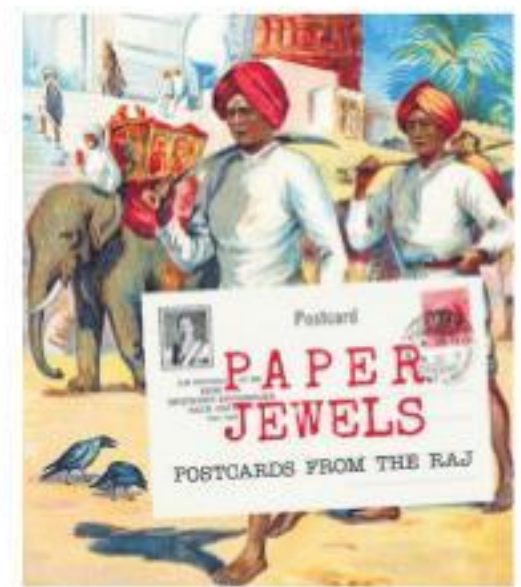
Not all ephemera are on paper. They could be matter printed on metal, wood, cloth, celluloid or plastic. They could be handwritten documents, phrases woven into ribbons or bookmarks, or painted animation cells.

Postcards and old trade cards are hugely popular categories among collectors of ephemera. Old business cards, especially those for businesses which no longer exist, are another favourite. Collecting old passports is an unusual hobby; it is both interesting and educational as you get to learn about the geography, history and politics of a bygone era.

Almost everyone has an old newspaper cover or two stowed away. Though they are worthless in the collectors’ market they are still fun to collect. Some examples: Man Walks on Moon; WAR; Gandhi Assassinated; Nixon Resigns; Kennedy Shot; World Trade Center Collapses. Being an ardent fan of Mahatma Gandhi, my personal highpoint in ephemera collecting has been getting 10 editions of his weekly journal *Harijan*, which he started publishing from 11 January 1933.

The Sub-Category of Ephemera Collecting

Most book collectors like to pick up ephemera in their quest for books because it is an interesting sub category. More recently I have taken an interest in literary ephemera such as broadsides, chapbooks, bookplates, booklets and leaflets.



Bookplates or book labels (also known as ex libris meaning ‘from the library of’) are little rectangular labels stuck inside a book carrying the signature of the author in a limited-edition book. For instance, I bought a Harry Potter first edition from a bookshop in the UK where JK Rowling’s signature was on a bookplate affixed to the page before the title page.

But the earliest usage of bookplates was quite the opposite: to denote ownership of a book! An individual booklover or a library would have a bookplate bearing their name stuck to the book. Some wealthy collectors had their own bookplates made. *The Art of The Bookplate* by

James P Keenan is one of my favourite books on this subject.

Broadsides are usually printed on one side only, in different colours, and are illustrated. Collectors keep the best ones framed. One that I’ve framed has a quotation by Nicholas Basbanes and is even numbered and signed.

Chapbooks are like booklets but smaller, and therefore handy. I own a few valuable chapbooks printed by more recent presses as a way to demonstrate how attractive a smaller format can be.

Another kind of ephemera that I acquired recently is ‘Grolier Club Notices’, a portfolio of printed announcements, notices and invitations from the Grolier Club, a preeminent bibliophile society in New York founded in 1884. It was issued in 1924 in a marbled cloth folder and holds some of the club’s scarest ephemera from that period.

Collecting Printed Ephemera by Maurice Rickards is a good reference book for starters. *Paper Jewels: Postcards from the Raj* by Omar Khan is the first book on postcards printed in the colonial era in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Burma.

Going after ephemera can be frustrating because they are not easy to find, but fun because you never know what you might find! You might buy a box of books and tucked away inside you might find a treasure. But you know what they say: Finders keepers!

KOCHI DIGEST

Rajagiri Hospital Aluva hosted the Oncopath 2.0 National Conference, a joint initiative by the Rajagiri Cancer Center and Pathology Department, to explore new possibilities and challenges in cancer diagnosis. The event was attended by over two hundred delegates, pathology doctors, oncologists and students. The event was conducted with the support of the Consortium of Accredited Healthcare Organizations (CAHO).

