

UNSENT  
LETTERS

LOVE IN ALL  
FORMS

*“you, my darling, bring me joy*

*i see the way you look at me”*

*“you teach me to be me*

*to not be afraid*

*to let the world see through”*



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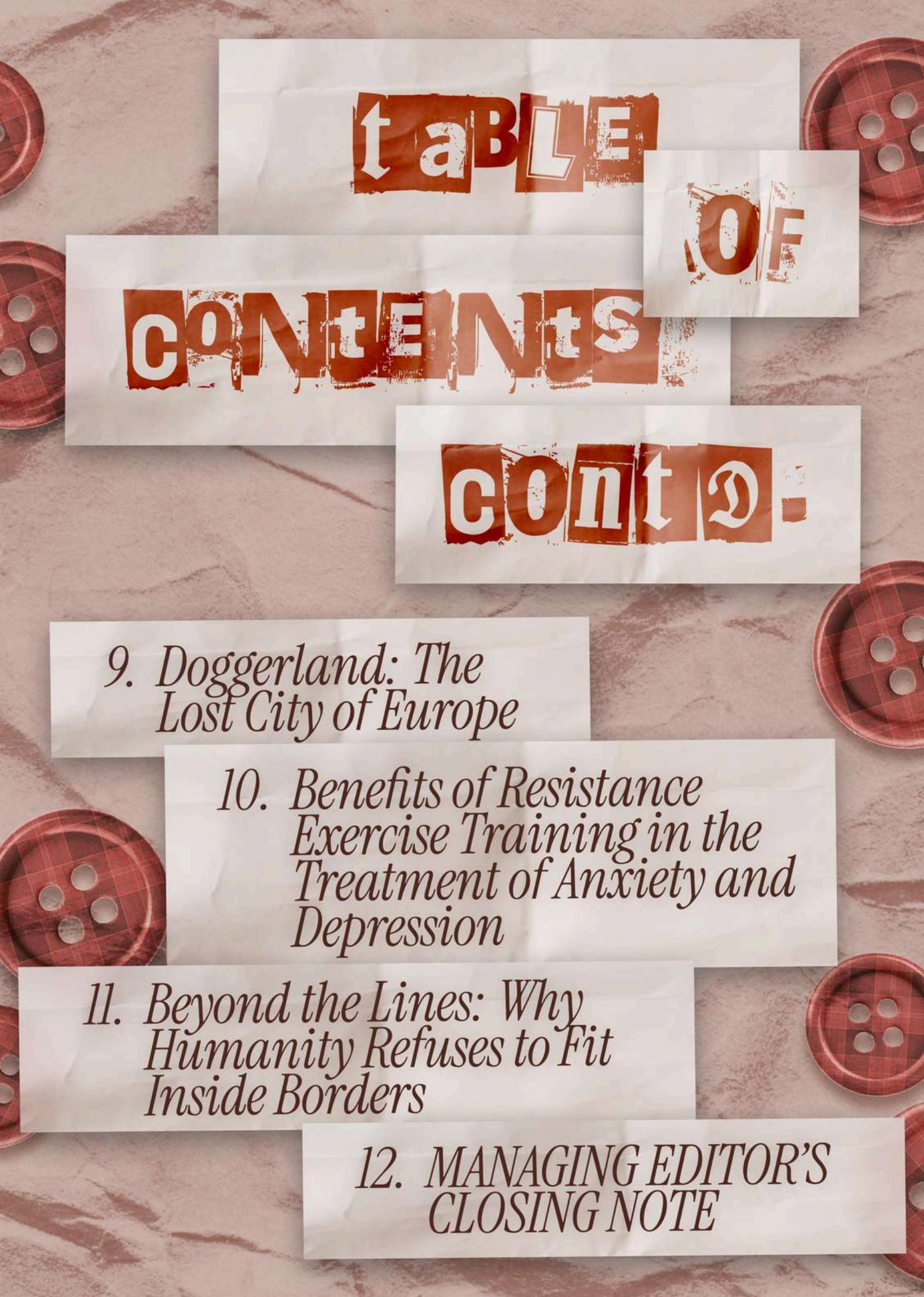


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*“Happily ever after is not a  
fairytale. It's a choice.”*

**Fawn**

**WEAVER**

# EDITOR'S

# NOTE

February. The month of love. Storefronts turn red, bouquets become currency, messages are polished, filtered, and delivered. But love is not always spoken at the right time. It is not always reciprocated. It is not always ready to be heard.

This edition talks about the love that is not spoken out loud, and may never be heard. The unsent letters.

An unsent letter is not a failure of courage. It is simply a record. A memory. It is evidence that something was felt deeply enough to be written down, even if it was never actually delivered. It captures the in-between moments of human connection.

When you think of love, you may think of romance. But that is only one form. There is platonic love that gets us through ordinary days. Familial love that shapes who we are, long before we understand its impact. Self-love that develops slowly and often painfully. Even love lost, betrayed, or unanswered. Not all love stories end in conversation.

This month, our writers examine love from scientific, historical, psychological, and artistic perspectives. From the interdependence of black holes and galaxies to the ethical complexities of genetic engineering. From submerged civilizations beneath the North Sea to the neurological effects of resistance training. From the mythology of Valentine's Day to the ripple effect of a single gift. Each piece, in its own way, is a letter to something larger. To curiosity. To progress. To memory. To growth.

You will also find literal unsent letters within these pages. Words addressed but not delivered. Emotions preserved without expectation of reply. They remind us that expression does not always require an audience to be valid.

As you read this edition, consider the letters you have never sent. The appreciation you assumed was understood. The closure you are still waiting for. The kindness you withhold from yourself. Perhaps love is not defined by what is received.

Perhaps it is defined by what we are willing to feel, to articulate, and sometimes to release quietly.

**HAPPYREADING,**  
Saanjh Balpande,  
Editor-In-Chief

# *Love Through The Years*

*By Hari Rathan*

Every 14th of February, the world's hearts flutter and the scent of roses fills the air. People gift their bouquets and handwritten letters to their lovers, friends, and family conveying their affection on this special day. Love is an abstract concept, mostly known in myths and legends with the stories we pass down, often narrating the pain that lovers had to go through to reach their happily ever after.

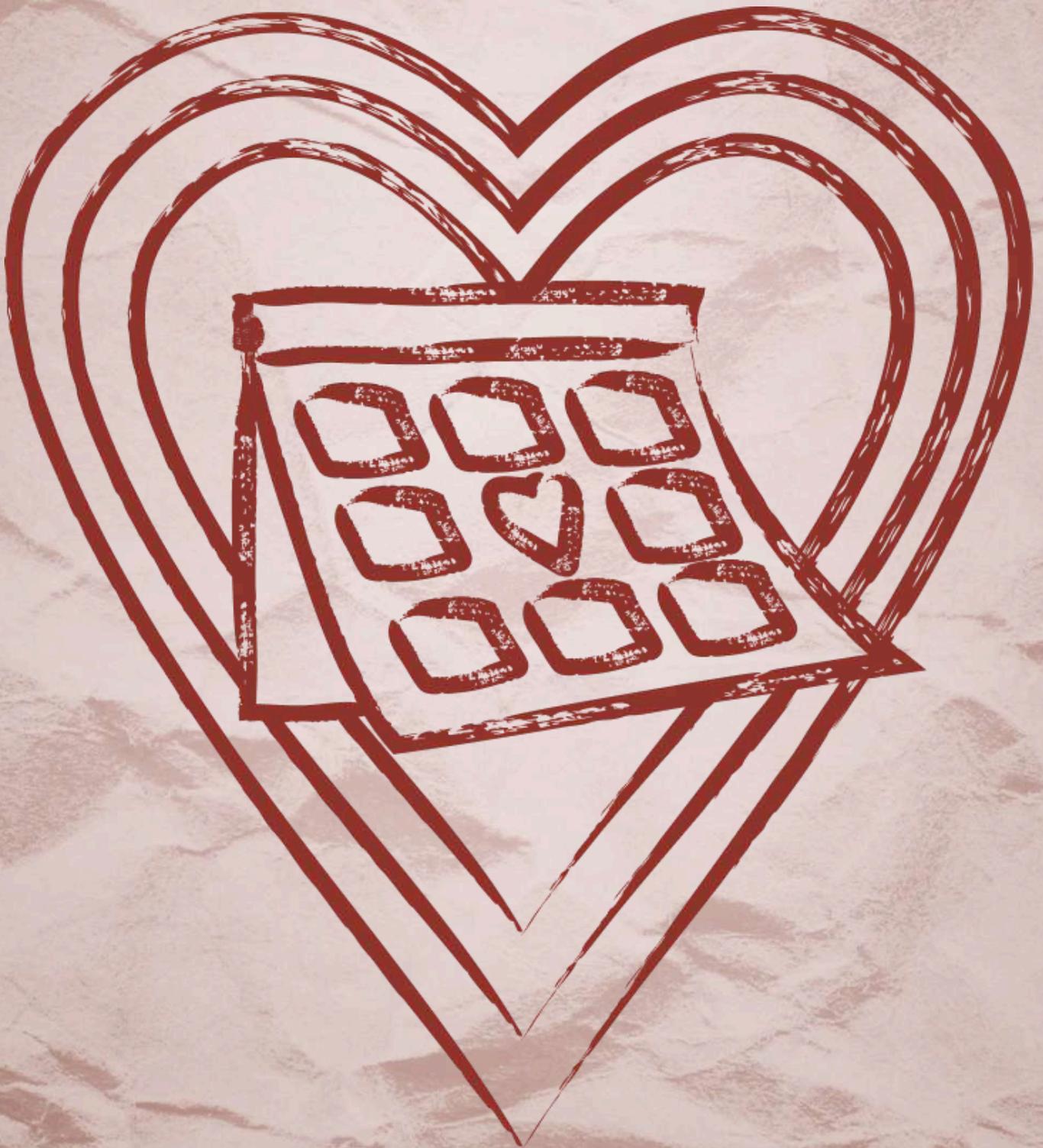
It is believed that the celebration of Valentine's day originated in the third century. Historians claim that there is no certain story on the origins of the occasion, however the commonly believed one is linked to a Roman priest known as Saint Valentines. St. Valentine was a priest who married couples in secret, against the emperor's orders. This was because it was a time of war, and hence, men were meant to be in battle, rather than getting wedded. St. Valentine's risky move led to his execution on February 14th, a day that soon became a celebration of love and its powerful stories of resistance.

Now, when celebrating Valentine's day, we think of roses, hearts and the blossoming colour red. These are our hand-crafted generic customs. They are the backbone of what we call displaying love. We have commercialised the act of giving, to the point where these things don't seem to be enough or presentable of the extent of love from one lover to the other. "The grander it is the better" is the main belief. This commercialised approach meant that spending a specific quantity of money meant more than the actual gift. And this ponders the question: "Was there meaning to the gift or was it out of obligation?"

The most impactful love stories emerge from the crucible of rivalry and animosity. Their love transcends boundaries, echoing through time as the greatest love stories ever told. Helen of Troy and Paris, their love ignited a war that spanned decades. Their affair, fueled by passion, led them to abandon their names and flee together. Cleopatra and Antony, akin to the divine pair Isis and Osiris, were destined soulmates. In grand stories of love and fate, these pairs remain immortal.

# Love Through The Years

Love has developed new meanings, from its past meaning of defying the odds to be with the one that you love, a move that presents your care, to its new meaning: being with those you care about, and presenting your appreciation with less abstract methods. However, this doesn't change the power of human's most powerful emotions, rather it adds elements that strengthen it more than ever. Saint Valentine may have started the tradition, but it was through the years of love that this day came to be.



# *The Ripple Effect: How A Single Gift Can Spark A Wave Of Change*

*By Alexander Bonardi*

We've all experienced the joy of receiving a well-chosen gift, the warmth of knowing someone cared enough to find something special. But the impact of a gift goes beyond the initial smile. Sometimes, a single present can set in motion a chain reaction, creating positive change that ripples far beyond the recipient.

**More Than Material Possessions:** Gifts are often thought of as material items, but their real worth is found in the feelings and memories they evoke. A present can spark passions, revive long-forgotten dreams, or just bring peace during trying times. A child who receives a new book may develop a passion for reading and embark on a lifetime learning journey. Making a donation to a cause that a person is passionate about might strengthen their belief that positive change is possible.



## **The Power Of Empathy:**

The act of giving itself is transformative. It requires stepping outside ourselves and considering another person's needs, desires, and values. This act of empathy strengthens our social bonds, fostering connection and understanding. A thoughtful gift shows the recipient they are seen, heard, and appreciated, boosting self-esteem and fostering a sense of belonging.

## **Beyond The Individual:**

The impact of a gift can extend beyond the immediate recipient, creating a knock-on effect that benefits entire communities. A scholarship empowers a student, their success potentially uplifting their family and inspiring others. Supporting a local food bank provides nourishment for many, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and compassion.

## **Gifts That Keep On Giving:**

The most impactful gifts are often those that empower individuals and communities to create their own change. Educational tools, skills development programs, or microloans can equip people with the resources they need to build better lives. These gifts, while seemingly intangible, can have a lasting and reframing effect on individuals and societies.

# The Ripple Effect: How A Single Gift Can Spark A Wave Of Change

## The Gift of You:

Remember, the most valuable gift isn't always something material. Sometimes, the greatest impact comes from giving our time, talents, and attention. Volunteering, mentoring, or simply offering a listening ear can create ripples of positive change that resonate long after the moment of giving. So, the next time you consider a gift, remember the potential for its impact. Choose something that sparks joy, fosters connection, and empowers the recipient to create positive change, both within themselves and the world around them. Let your gift be the pebble that starts a wave, carrying its positive influence far beyond the initial splash.



# *Unsent Love Letters*

*By An Anonymous Student*

Dear Love, There are so many reasons why I should just forget about you. So many reasons that I should just go on with my life. But sometimes, I can't choose who I love. I wish there is a manual that came with it. Sometimes I feel that I loved you at the wrong time. And the wrong place. But who am I to be the judge of that? After all, you have betrayed me too many times.

You see, I am a person who values my words when I give them away. It is one of my blemishes that I take my words too seriously. So when I promise something, especially to someone I hold dear, heaven and hell will have to move before I break that promise. You see, my therapist pointed out, and I believe her, that sometimes I need to live in a gray area. Things are not always black and white. But anyway, the reason I mentioned this is that, you know, how I feel for you. That I care deeply for you. And I remember your words when you said (too many times) that you will always choose me. I believe that you love me. Sounded so damn good. It still does.



But at my lowest point, my darkest hour, you ran away and left, as if I were a stranger. You treated me like a pariah. Instead of trying to get clarity, you abandoned me because.....? I don't know. You never said anything about it.

All I know was you disappeared. And I looked for you. Everywhere. And I hoped that we will find each other again. I tried to reach out to give us another try. I was hoping for communication. But every attempt of mine was shut down.

# Unsent Love Letters

I punished myself every day because of this. Rewinded everything I can remember in my head, trying to make sense of what could have happened, what could have been the reasons for your incognito. It made me a sour person, it made me lose hope in good, and it made me restless inside. I know I am naive. But I thought you liked that? I felt used. But most of all, I felt betrayed and not worthy of anything good. After all, how can I believe in anything good if the only thing that I believe was good, the only thing I prayed for, was also taken from me?

I know the journey is just starting. Until then, I will try not to provoke you by forcing more communication. I have learned the meaning of a silent response - it has your picture of it in the book.

Xoxo



# *Love In Monochrome: Han Youngsoo's Timeless Street Photography*

*By Demira Govind*

Han Youngsoo was a renowned street photographer known for capturing the essence of everyday life in South Korea throughout the 1950s and 1960s. His photos frequently captured tenderness, affection, and connection between people placed against busy Cityscapes. His paintings beautifully capture the emotions and dynamics of human interactions. The monochrome images he takes capture spontaneous moments of love and romance, highlighting intimate relationships between people in public settings.



# Love In Monochrome: Han Youngsoo's Timeless Street Photography



# Love In Monochrome: Han Youngsoo's Timeless Street Photography



Han Youngsoo's images offer a glimpse into the daily lives of ordinary individuals and the connections they establish within the dynamic urban environment. He uses his perspective to examine the distance between people, both physically and emotionally, expressing feelings of desire, intimacy, and the shared human experience of love. Despite the era in which they were created, Han Youngsoo's images still appeal to viewers, highlighting the enduring and widespread essence of human relationships and the distances that separate us. Han Youngsoo's work is renowned for his skill in capturing spontaneous moments of affection and passion in public settings. The images show couples walking together, exchanging glances, and chatting quietly. The photographs elicit a strong response from viewers by depicting the core of human connection and the deep emotions experienced in Relationships.



# Love In Monochrome: Han Youngsoo's Timeless Street Photography



# Love In Monochrome: Han Youngsoo's Timeless Street Photography



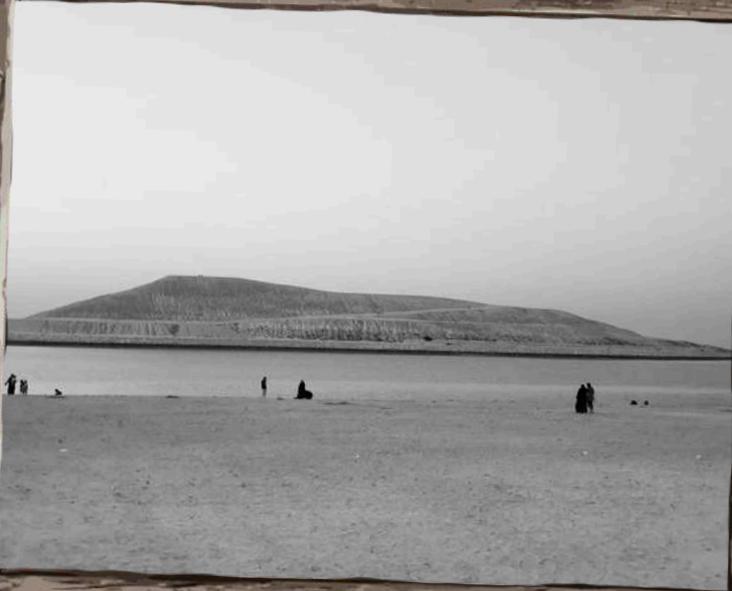
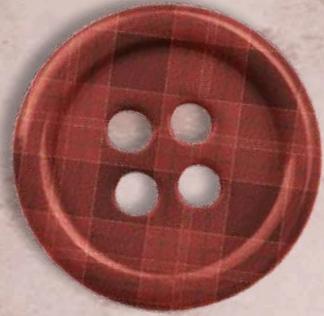
In a world that frequently appears fragmented and isolated, Han Youngsoo's images urge us to reflect on the closeness among humans. They inspire us to appreciate the beauty and importance of our relationships with people, especially in busy urban environments. Han Youngsoo depicts intricate expressions of love and the basic aspects of humanity through his photography. His photos demonstrate the lasting impact of human relationships, motivating us to pursue and value significant moments in our lives.



# Love In Monochrome: Han Youngsoo's Timeless Street Photography



# Love In Monochrome: Han Youngsoo's Timeless Street Photography



# *My Love*

*By Reema Koki*

February always makes love feel visible. It is everywhere. In store windows, in group chats, in quiet glances exchanged across classrooms and cafés. But the kind of love I have been learning about recently does not announce itself. It does not arrive in bouquets or grand gestures. It arrives in silence. In the way I speak to myself when no one else is listening.

For a long time, I thought self-love was something dramatic. A sudden transformation. A confident version of me who had everything figured out. I thought it would look like certainty. Like never doubting myself again. Like waking up one morning completely healed.

It did not happen that way.

Healing began quietly. It began the day I noticed how harsh my inner voice had become. How easily I forgave others for being human, yet refused to extend the same grace to myself. I could understand someone else's exhaustion, someone else's mistakes, someone else's bad day. But when it came to me, I called it weakness. Laziness. Not enough.

I used to treat myself like a project. Something to refine. Something to optimize. I measured my worth in productivity, in achievements, in how useful I could be to other people. If I performed well enough, maybe I would earn rest. If I became impressive enough, maybe I would finally feel secure.

But healing has been teaching me something far less glamorous and far more difficult.

It has been teaching me gentleness.

Self love, I am realizing, is not self indulgence. It is not ignoring your flaws or pretending everything is fine. It is accountability without cruelty. It is looking at your habits, your fears, your insecurities, and choosing to respond with curiosity instead of condemnation.

It is drinking water even when you are busy. It is stepping away from your desk when your head feels heavy. It is saying no without writing a speech in your mind to justify it. It is allowing yourself to rest without turning rest into guilt.



# My Love



There are earlier versions of me who were just trying to survive. The version that wanted to be impressive. The version that stayed quiet to avoid conflict. The version that carried too much and called it strength. I used to look back at those versions with embarrassment.

Now I try to look back with compassion.

They did what they could with what they knew. They were learning. They were adapting. They were trying.

Healing is not linear. Some days I feel steady and grounded. Other days an old insecurity resurfaces without warning. A comment lingers longer than it should. A memory tightens in my chest. The difference now is that I do not immediately attack myself for it.

Instead, I pause.

I ask what this reaction is protecting. I ask what it needs. Reassurance. Distance. Time.

There is something powerful about becoming a safe place for yourself. About creating an internal space where you are not constantly on trial. Where you are not cross-examining every flaw. Where you are allowed to exist without auditioning for approval.

Self-love is choosing to speak to yourself the way you would speak to someone you care about deeply. It is replacing “why are you like this?” with “what happened?” It is replacing “you should be better” with “you are still learning.”

It is small. Repetitive. Almost invisible.

But so was the love that shaped me growing up. The packed lunches. The reminders. The quiet sacrifices. Love is often built from consistency, not spectacle. And I am beginning to understand that I deserve that same consistency from myself.

I am entering this season differently. Not with a list of ways to reinvent who I am, but with a commitment to treat who I already am with care. To notice when I am overwhelmed. To celebrate little progress. To forgive slow growth.

To understand that worth is not something I earn through exhaustion. It is something I carry, even on the days I feel unremarkable.

Maybe self-love is not about becoming extraordinary.

Maybe it is about accepting that being human is already enough.

And if this letter ever finds a future version of me, I hope she reads it gently. I hope she recognizes how hard I was trying to learn tenderness. I hope she continues choosing it.

Quietly.  
Steadily.  
Warm.  
Soft.

# *All The 'I Love You's That'll Never Be Heard*

*By An Anonymous Student*

I have a small box of unsent love letters, quietly cushioned under my bed. The box is nothing remarkable. It is not carved wood or lined with silk. It is thin cardboard, slightly bent at the corners, softened by time and the weight of things I was not brave enough to say aloud.

I wrote about ordinary things. The way sunlight used to fall across the kitchen tiles at five in the evening. The echo of laughter in stairwells. The comfort of familiar streets that did not require directions. I wrote about people I never confessed to, about friends I was too proud to thank properly, about family members whose sacrifices I understood only in hindsight. I wrote "I love you" in careful handwriting, as if neatness could make it less frightening.

None of those letters were sealed. None were stamped. They were folded once, then twice, then tucked away. I told myself I would send them when the timing felt right. The timing never did. Then came airport terminals, departure gates, the slow shrinking of a skyline through airplane glass. I carried the box with me, as if love, when contained, could pass through customs unnoticed.

Here's one poem I wrote two or three years ago, before I left home. I found it again in that same small box under my bed. It will probably be the only entry I ever let see the light of day.





# All The 'I Love You's That'll Never Be Heard



## Entry 1

I fumbled with these words  
Run through one too many pages  
Penning my thoughts meant baring my soul  
But the emotions swept over me

So I wrote my heart out  
I told you what it felt like  
When you said my name  
The way it rolled off your lips  
I loved the feeling

You keep me grounded, you know that?  
You pull me back when I get ahead of myself  
You teach me to be me  
To not be afraid  
To let the world see through  
Was never really one to let myself go  
But I've found new meaning  
You give me purpose

Loving you makes me whole  
I want to keep doing it  
Keep loving you  
Keep feeling all these emotions  
They bring me joy  
You, my darling, bring me joy

I see the way you look at me  
You're shy and I know it  
You spend half the time looking away  
But when our eyes meet  
Something happens and we feel it  
Can't look away, can't pull back

# All The 'I Love You's That'll Never Be Heard

I want to feel this way every day  
Feel this way all the time  
To catch your gaze  
Hold it steady  
Fix your eyes on me  
Look deep into your soul  
Let you see all of me

Let me love you  
Don't hold me back  
Don't fight me on it

I'll love hard  
I may come on a little too strong  
But just know  
It's all love  
Nothing but.



# *The Question Of Which Came First: Black Holes Or Galaxies?*

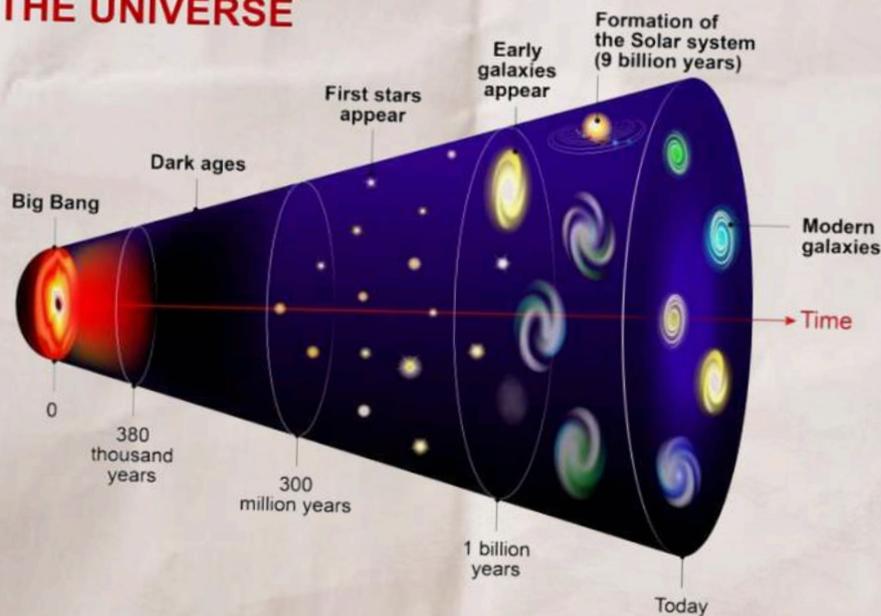
*By Lojana Abdelwahab*

According to the Big Bang theory, everything in our universe came to life from an explosion. It evolved through dynamic processes and continues to do so today.

Stars were one of the first astrophysical objects to be created, forming from a series of fusion reactions occurring in dense regions of gas. When enough were created, different collections of stars formed galaxies. However, in order for the gas particles to accelerate at enough speed to trigger a fusion reaction and birth a star, as well as bring the stars together, a large gravitational pull is required, which is provided by what we now call black Holes.

Black holes are one of the biggest mysteries to confront astrophysicists. Once a star in a galaxy collapses into itself and dies, a black hole is created, and from that moment onwards, no object can escape its inevitable gravity. However, they would not have been created if galaxies did not contain stars that could die out first.

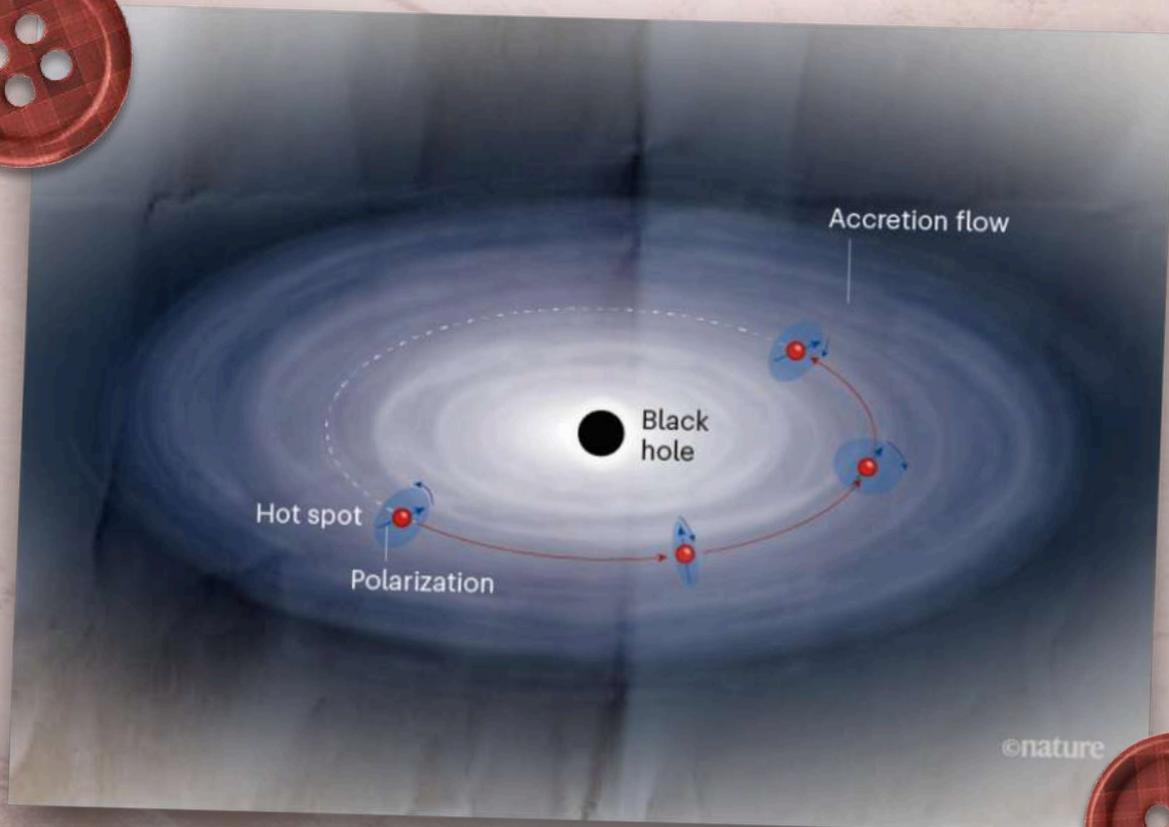
## **EVOLUTION OF THE UNIVERSE**



# The Question of Which Came First: Black Holes or Galaxies?

At the beginning of time, stars fused at a very low rate. A potential of a galaxy existed, but it could not quite come together due to the relatively slow movement of stars. When the stars reached the end of their lives, black holes formed and rapidly established galaxies. Black holes naturally shift to the center of a galaxy to benefit from the energy that the galaxy provides, thus establishing an infinite symbiotic relationship and ensuring the survival and thrival of both structures.

Even now, multiple feedback mechanisms between black holes and galaxies ensure the regulation of our universe. Black holes allow the smooth dispersion of heat from stars. This provides a balance to a galaxy, allowing it to have enough energy to form more stars and continue to move at a steady speed without heating to a point of disintegration.



Most scientists believe that black holes and galaxies did not form after one another, but instead, have always co-existed. Evidence showed that a certain percentage of galaxy mass has been consistently trapped in black holes, which has allowed this explanation to be concluded.

Space and time often do not work in the logical way that the human mind does, and the interconnection of galaxies and black holes is an opportunity to marvel at the impeccable constructive power and timing of the universe, to be able to have everything at the right place, at the right time.

# *Designer Babies*

*By Valeria Santos*

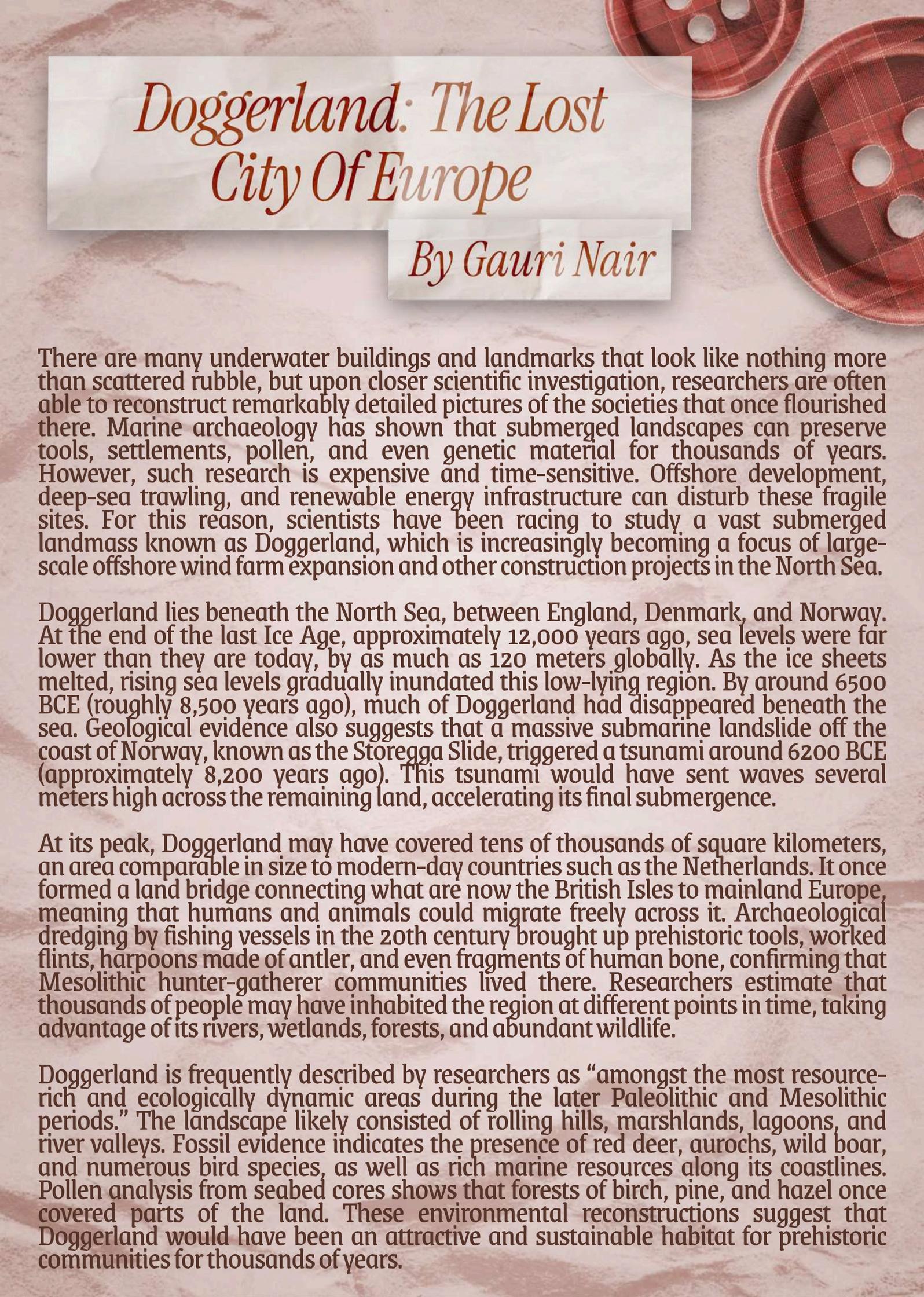
The concept of “designer babies” has sparked a lot of fascination and controversy in recent years. The idea of selecting desired traits in the desired offspring through genetic manipulation is slowly translating to reality, thanks to the advances in genetic engineering technologies such as CRISPR- Cas9. These technologies have the potential to modify the DNA in human embryos, allowing the prevention of diseases and customising traits within their offspring. However, with the pursuit of these technologies, there are a host of ethical, social, and biological risks. The newfound idea of “designer babies” has raised a considerable number of ethical considerations. One of the most significant concerns is creating greater inequalities in society. If only the wealthy can afford gene editing, this could create further discrimination between the genetically modified and those who are not. Another issue could be the issue of consent, as the unborn child does not have a say in undergoing genetic modification.

The international community has responded to these concerns with regulatory oversight, with some countries having enacted strict laws against the use of gene editing technologies, when it comes to heritage changes. However, the lack of global regulation could allow research that is banned in one country to occur in other countries. This leads to a patchwork of ethical practices

The gene editing technology, CRISPR, is a naturally occurring defence mechanism in bacteria which is meant to target and edit genes in living organisms with precision. The technology has the potential to correct genetic defects in addition to enhancing desirable traits in embryos.



In conclusion, the debate over designer babies poses a lot more ethical dilemmas posed by rapid technological development. While the idea to eradicate hereditary diseases is a noble goal, the path is met with social and ethical challenges. The future of genetic engineering heavily depends on the balance of genetic engineering and principles of social justice.



# *Doggerland: The Lost City Of Europe*

*By Gauri Nair*

There are many underwater buildings and landmarks that look like nothing more than scattered rubble, but upon closer scientific investigation, researchers are often able to reconstruct remarkably detailed pictures of the societies that once flourished there. Marine archaeology has shown that submerged landscapes can preserve tools, settlements, pollen, and even genetic material for thousands of years. However, such research is expensive and time-sensitive. Offshore development, deep-sea trawling, and renewable energy infrastructure can disturb these fragile sites. For this reason, scientists have been racing to study a vast submerged landmass known as Doggerland, which is increasingly becoming a focus of large-scale offshore wind farm expansion and other construction projects in the North Sea.

Doggerland lies beneath the North Sea, between England, Denmark, and Norway. At the end of the last Ice Age, approximately 12,000 years ago, sea levels were far lower than they are today, by as much as 120 meters globally. As the ice sheets melted, rising sea levels gradually inundated this low-lying region. By around 6500 BCE (roughly 8,500 years ago), much of Doggerland had disappeared beneath the sea. Geological evidence also suggests that a massive submarine landslide off the coast of Norway, known as the Storegga Slide, triggered a tsunami around 6200 BCE (approximately 8,200 years ago). This tsunami would have sent waves several meters high across the remaining land, accelerating its final submergence.

At its peak, Doggerland may have covered tens of thousands of square kilometers, an area comparable in size to modern-day countries such as the Netherlands. It once formed a land bridge connecting what are now the British Isles to mainland Europe, meaning that humans and animals could migrate freely across it. Archaeological dredging by fishing vessels in the 20th century brought up prehistoric tools, worked flints, harpoons made of antler, and even fragments of human bone, confirming that Mesolithic hunter-gatherer communities lived there. Researchers estimate that thousands of people may have inhabited the region at different points in time, taking advantage of its rivers, wetlands, forests, and abundant wildlife.

Doggerland is frequently described by researchers as “amongst the most resource-rich and ecologically dynamic areas during the later Paleolithic and Mesolithic periods.” The landscape likely consisted of rolling hills, marshlands, lagoons, and river valleys. Fossil evidence indicates the presence of red deer, aurochs, wild boar, and numerous bird species, as well as rich marine resources along its coastlines. Pollen analysis from seabed cores shows that forests of birch, pine, and hazel once covered parts of the land. These environmental reconstructions suggest that Doggerland would have been an attractive and sustainable habitat for prehistoric communities for thousands of years.

# Doggerland: The Lost City of Europe

Because the site now lies beneath up to 40 meters of water in some areas, conventional archaeological excavation is extremely difficult. Teams at the University of Bradford and other institutions are therefore turning to advanced technologies. Archaeo-geophysicists are using seismic surveys, originally developed for oil and gas exploration, to map buried river channels and ancient shorelines beneath the seabed. By analysing subtle variations in magnetic fields and sediment layers, researchers can identify areas that were once dry land or human settlement sites.





# Doggerland: The Lost City of Europe



One particularly promising field of study is sedimentary ancient DNA (sedaDNA). Traditionally, ancient DNA research relied on intact biological material such as bones and teeth. However, scientists have recently discovered that genetic material can survive in microscopic fragments preserved within sediments for thousands of years. By extracting sedaDNA from seabed cores, molecular biologists can identify traces of plants, animals, and even microbial life that once existed in the region. This allows for detailed reconstructions of palaeo-ecosystems and provides insight into climate change, biodiversity shifts, and human-environment interactions during the Mesolithic period.

Computer simulation experts are also contributing by creating digital elevation models of the submerged terrain. Using bathymetric data and sea-level reconstructions, they can model how the landscape changed over centuries as rising waters encroached on settlements. These simulations help answer important questions: Did communities gradually migrate as coastlines shifted, or were some displaced suddenly by catastrophic flooding events? How did changing resources affect human adaptation and survival strategies?

The urgency surrounding Doggerland research is partly driven by Europe's rapid expansion of offshore renewable energy. The North Sea is now one of the world's largest hubs for offshore wind power, with hundreds of turbines already installed and thousands more planned as European nations pursue net-zero carbon targets by mid-century. Offshore wind capacity in the North Sea is projected to increase several-fold by 2050. While this transition to green energy is critical for addressing climate change, large-scale seabed construction, including turbine foundations, cable trenches, and substations, can permanently alter or restrict access to archaeological sites.

As a result, interdisciplinary teams of archaeologists, geologists, geneticists, and climate scientists are collaborating to document as much as possible before industrial development accelerates. Doggerland represents not only a lost landscape but also a key chapter in human prehistory. Studying it offers insight into how early societies responded to dramatic climate shifts and rising sea levels, an issue that remains highly relevant today. In many ways, Doggerland serves as both a window into the distant past and a warning about the environmental transformations of the future.

# *Benefits Of Resistance Exercise Training In The Treatment Of Anxiety And Depression*

*By Mohammad Ali Khan*

Resistance exercise is a form of physical training that involves working against an external load in order to increase muscular strength, endurance, and hypertrophy. This includes traditional weightlifting with free weights and machines, as well as bodyweight exercises such as push-ups, squats, and pull-ups. In recent years, resistance training has been studied not only for its physical benefits but also for its psychological effects. A growing body of clinical research suggests that it can play a meaningful role in reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression across different age groups.

Resistance exercise is a form of physical training that involves working against an external load in order to increase muscular strength, endurance, and hypertrophy. This includes traditional weightlifting with free weights and machines, as well as bodyweight exercises such as push-ups, squats, and pull-ups. In recent years, resistance training has been studied not only for its physical benefits but also for its psychological effects. A growing body of clinical research suggests that it can play a meaningful role in reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression across different age groups.

A widely cited analysis conducted by researchers affiliated with Harvard Medical School and published through Harvard Health Publishing examined 33 randomized controlled trials involving more than 1,800 participants. The results indicated that individuals with mild to moderate depression who engaged in resistance training at least two times per week experienced statistically significant reductions in depressive symptoms compared to control groups. The effect sizes were comparable to those observed in some first-line psychological treatments for mild depression. Importantly, benefits were observed regardless of participants' baseline health status, suggesting that resistance exercise can be effective even without advanced athletic conditioning.

Beyond neurochemistry, resistance training also improves body composition by increasing lean muscle mass and reducing body fat percentage when combined with appropriate nutrition. These physical adaptations can influence self-perception and body image.



# Benefits of Resistance Exercise Training in the Treatment of Anxiety and Depression



Individuals experiencing body dissatisfaction or distorted body image often report improved confidence after consistent strength training. Research indicates that structured resistance programs can enhance body appreciation and reduce negative self-evaluation. This shift in perception is not solely aesthetic. It is tied to measurable improvements in functional strength, posture, and physical capability, which reinforce a sense of competence.

Stress regulation is another documented benefit. Chronic psychological stress is associated with elevated levels of cortisol, the body's primary stress hormone. Persistently high cortisol levels are linked to anxiety, sleep disturbances, impaired concentration, and metabolic disruption. Studies show that regular resistance training can help regulate hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis activity, leading to improved hormonal balance over time. While acute exercise temporarily increases cortisol, consistent training lowers resting baseline levels and improves stress resilience. This physiological adaptation contributes to reduced feelings of chronic tension and anxiety.

Resistance training also requires sustained mental focus. Executing compound movements such as deadlifts or bench presses demands concentration, motor coordination, and controlled breathing. This cognitive engagement can interrupt cycles of rumination, which are common in anxiety and depressive disorders. By shifting attention to form, repetition counting, and controlled effort, individuals experience a temporary reduction in intrusive or repetitive negative thoughts. Over time, this pattern can contribute to healthier coping mechanisms and improved cognitive flexibility.

Achievement and measurable progress are additional psychological drivers. Strength gains are typically quantifiable through increased load, repetitions, or improved performance metrics. Tracking these improvements can enhance self-efficacy, which refers to a person's belief in their ability to execute tasks and achieve goals. Higher self-efficacy is strongly correlated with reduced depressive symptoms and improved emotional resilience. When individuals observe tangible progress such as increased muscle strength or reduced body fat percentage, it reinforces a sense of agency and personal control.

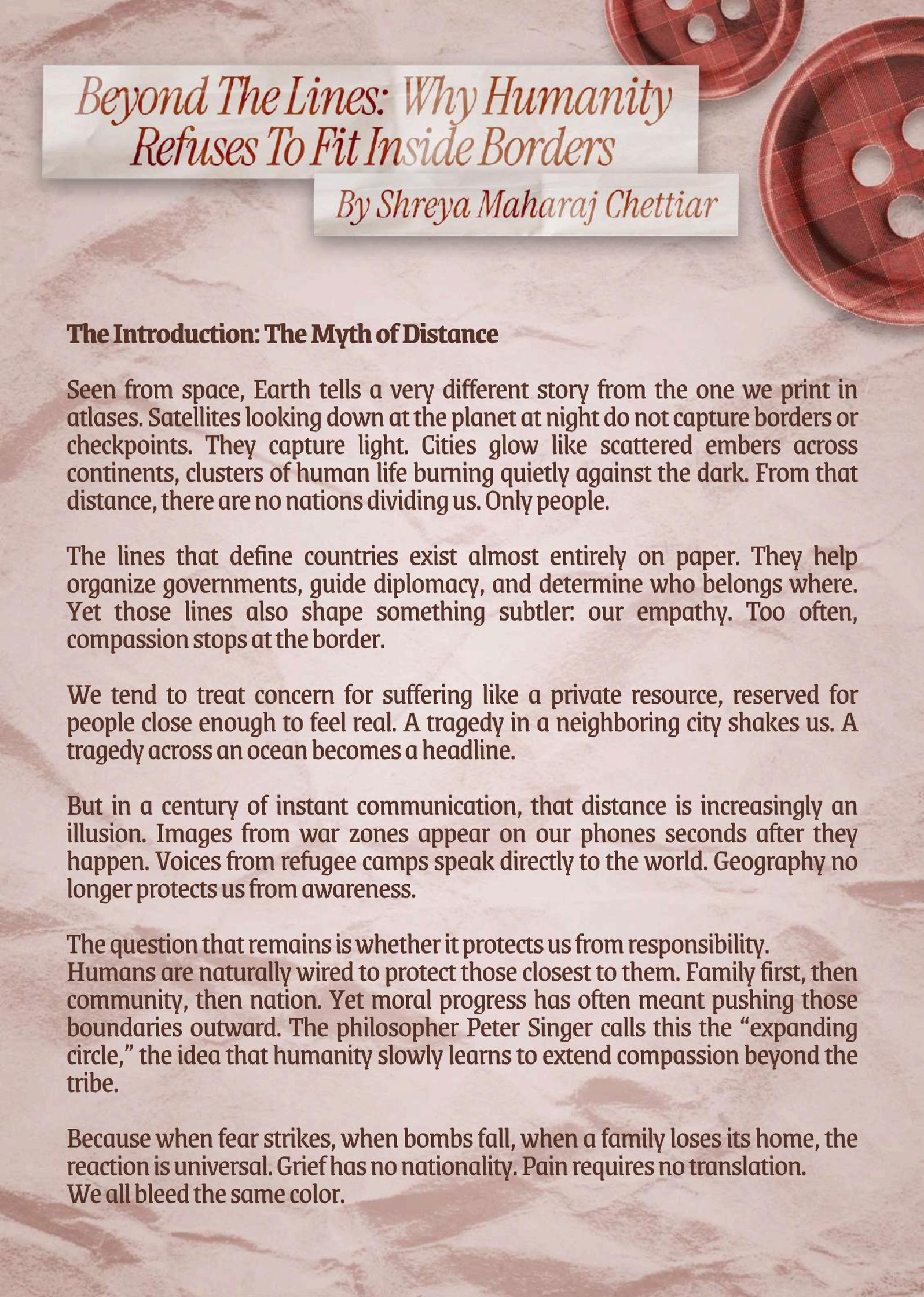
Social factors also play a role. Gyms and training environments provide opportunities for structured social interaction. Group classes, training partners, and coaching relationships can foster accountability and peer support. Social connectedness is a protective factor against depression, and individuals who engage in shared physical activity often report greater motivation and adherence. For those experiencing isolation, consistent participation in a training environment can create a sense of belonging and community.

# Benefits of Resistance Exercise Training in the Treatment of Anxiety and Depression

Epidemiological data further support the mental health benefits of resistance exercise. Public health studies indicate that adults who engage in muscle-strengthening activities at least twice per week, as recommended by the World Health Organization, report lower rates of depressive symptoms compared to sedentary individuals. While resistance training is not a replacement for professional mental health treatment in moderate to severe cases, it is increasingly recognized as a valuable adjunct intervention.

Overall, resistance exercise affects mental health through multiple pathways, including neurochemical regulation, hormonal balance, cognitive engagement, improved body composition, goal achievement, and social interaction. The convergence of these biological and psychological mechanisms explains why structured strength training programs are now being integrated into broader strategies for managing anxiety and depression.



The background of the page is a textured, light-colored surface, possibly stone or paper, with several large, red, four-hole buttons scattered across it. The buttons are positioned in the upper right and lower right areas. The text is overlaid on this background.

# *Beyond The Lines: Why Humanity Refuses To Fit Inside Borders*

*By Shreya Maharaj Chettiar*

## **The Introduction: The Myth of Distance**

Seen from space, Earth tells a very different story from the one we print in atlases. Satellites looking down at the planet at night do not capture borders or checkpoints. They capture light. Cities glow like scattered embers across continents, clusters of human life burning quietly against the dark. From that distance, there are no nations dividing us. Only people.

The lines that define countries exist almost entirely on paper. They help organize governments, guide diplomacy, and determine who belongs where. Yet those lines also shape something subtler: our empathy. Too often, compassion stops at the border.

We tend to treat concern for suffering like a private resource, reserved for people close enough to feel real. A tragedy in a neighboring city shakes us. A tragedy across an ocean becomes a headline.

But in a century of instant communication, that distance is increasingly an illusion. Images from war zones appear on our phones seconds after they happen. Voices from refugee camps speak directly to the world. Geography no longer protects us from awareness.

The question that remains is whether it protects us from responsibility. Humans are naturally wired to protect those closest to them. Family first, then community, then nation. Yet moral progress has often meant pushing those boundaries outward. The philosopher Peter Singer calls this the “expanding circle,” the idea that humanity slowly learns to extend compassion beyond the tribe.

Because when fear strikes, when bombs fall, when a family loses its home, the reaction is universal. Grief has no nationality. Pain requires no translation. We all bleed the same color.



# Beyond the Lines: Why Humanity Refuses to Fit Inside Borders



## The Expanding Circle of Care

Human beings evolved to care first about what is closest: family, tribe, nation. Biology favors the familiar. Yet moral progress has often meant expanding that circle outward.

The philosopher Simone Weil argued that compassion must never end at the frontier of one's own country. Genuine moral responsibility, she believed, demands the ability to see a stranger's suffering as morally significant as our own.

In practice, this expansion is rarely easy. Distance dulls urgency. A war in a faraway region can feel abstract, a tragedy filtered through statistics rather than lived reality. The temptation is to look away.

But indifference carries its own consequences. In a deeply interconnected world, crises rarely remain contained. Migration, economic shocks, humanitarian emergencies, and political instability ripple outward, reshaping societies far from the original conflict.

The modern global system resembles an ecosystem more than a collection of isolated islands. When one region destabilizes, the entire network trembles.

## The Quiet Power of Attention

Not caring may feel like neutrality, but it is also a choice. Silence can quietly reinforce the status quo.

Diplomacy itself often begins not with treaties but with recognition. To recognize the humanity of another nation's people, even during conflict, is to resist the temptation to reduce them to caricatures or enemies.

The French statesman Charles de Gaulle once drew a sharp distinction between patriotism and nationalism. Patriotism, he said, is love for one's country. Nationalism begins when that love turns into hostility toward others.

History suggests that sustainable peace requires something subtler than loyalty to territory alone. It requires what some diplomats describe as intellectual hospitality: the willingness to understand a perspective that may challenge one's own.

## From Observer to Participant

In the digital age, borders remain politically real but socially porous. Ideas cross them instantly. Images from a protest, a refugee camp, or a flooded city travel across continents in seconds.

That immediacy creates a new responsibility. Awareness alone does not end conflict, but it can shape public pressure, humanitarian response, and international cooperation.



# Beyond the Lines: Why Humanity Refuses to Fit Inside Borders



Small actions ripple outward. A donation to an aid organization, a public conversation about a neglected crisis, a willingness to read a perspective outside one's national narrative. None of these acts redraw the map. Yet each of them reshapes how humanity relates to it.

Even thinkers who challenged nationalism understood the tension between belonging and universality. The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche once described himself less as a citizen of a single country and more as a participant in a wider European culture, skeptical of the instinct to barricade nations against each other.

Identity can anchor us.

But it does not have to confine us.

## **The Conclusion: A Border the Map Cannot Draw**

Maps will always contain borders. Nations require them. Laws depend on them. Diplomacy negotiates around them.

But the human experience has never stayed neatly inside those lines. A child in Kinshasa laughing in a crowded market. A family in Caracas gathering around a worn dinner table. A student in a quiet town thousands of kilometers away scrolling through news from a conflict zone late at night. These lives unfold in different places, under different flags, but they share the same fragile architecture of hope and fear.

The truth is both simple and uncomfortable. Geography can divide governments, economies, and armies. It cannot divide the human body. We all bleed the same color.

Empathy, then, becomes more than sentiment. It becomes a kind of quiet diplomacy practiced by ordinary people. Every act of recognition pushes the boundary of who we consider "us."

And perhaps the most dangerous border in the modern world is not the one drawn on a map.

It is the one we draw in our minds between lives that matter and lives that do not.

Because the moment we begin waiting for politics, distance, or nationality to decide who deserves our compassion, we have already surrendered something far more important than territory.

We have surrendered our humanity.

managing

EDITOR'S

NOTE

If there's one thing this issue has taught me, it's that we're all just slightly disorganized atoms trying to find our place in a universe that's constantly expanding, or in some cases, imploding.

We talk a lot about "love" as if it's this perfectly curated aesthetic, something you can just gift-wrap and hand over on a Tuesday. But looking through these pieces, it's clear that love isn't a Hallmark card. It's a riot. It's a rebellion. It's the stuff that happens when we stop auditioning for approval and start actually living.

It turns out the universe might be just as dramatic as our group chats. In "The Question of Which Came First: Black Holes or Galaxies?" by Lojana Abdelwahab, we learn that black holes and galaxies exist in a "symbiotic relationship," holding each other together. Maybe we're the same; we need the dark, heavy stuff to anchor us so our own light can actually form into something recognizable.

We're all just trying to maintain our own equilibrium. Whether it's the physical resistance of "a controlled load" in "Benefits of resistance exercise training in the treatment of anxiety and depression," or the emotional resistance of choosing to stay soft when life has been a bit of a nightmare, we are constantly in flux. As the anonymous writer in "My Love" (Reema Koki) so perfectly reminded me: "Healing began quietly. It began the day I noticed how harsh my inner voice had become."

We all have that box of things we didn't say. In "All the 'I love you's That'll Never Be Heard," another brilliant anonymous student writes about "unsent love letters" tucked away under the bed. It's a brutal, honest reminder that sometimes, the most profound things we feel are the ones we carry in silence.

But silence doesn't have to be a burial ground. It can be a workspace. Like the photography of Han Youngsoo explored by Demira Govind in "LOVE IN MONOCHROME: HAN YOUNGSOO'S TIMELESS STREET PHOTOGRAPHY," there is a profound intimacy in the "spontaneous moments" that happen in public while the rest of the world is busy rushing around. We have to be the ones to notice it.

So, here is my challenge to you: stop waiting for the "grand gesture." Stop waiting for the manual on how to be a human.

As Alexander Bonardi writes in "THE RIPPLE EFFECT: HOW A SINGLE GIFT CAN SPARK A WAVE OF CHANGE," you are the pebble. You are the one who starts the wave. Whether you're like Valeria Santos navigating the ethical minefield of "Designer Babies" or Gauri Nair documenting the submerged history of "Doggerland," you are uncovering parts of the world, and parts of yourself, that were hidden until you showed up to look at them.

In the words of Hari Rathan from "Love Through The Years," remember that love is not about the price tag or the commercialized "backbone" of roses. It's about the power of your own story.

We are all just ancient stardust trying to learn how to be gentle with ourselves. Read these pieces, let them wreck you a little bit, and then go out and be the gravity that holds your own galaxy together.

**UNTIL NEXT MONTH,**  
Shreya Maharaj Chettiar,  
Managing Editor

*Thank  
you  
for  
reading!*

*Graphic Design By:*

**LUCAS  
GLADUN**

**FAVOR  
KAIRO**

