The Lysias

A Bittersweet Return

By Eman Anwar

The latest decision of the government to open educational institutions from the 15th of September was greeted by mixed reactions. Although the number of COVID cases are unprecedentedly low in Pakistan, the threat of a second wave is imminent. After over six months in quarantine, students will be approaching their learning environments with strict SOPs. Will the happy reunion many of us have pictured with our friends, teachers, and the simple white building which feels like a second home, meet our expectations? In other words, if school does reopen, what will be the new normal?

The essence of Lyceum is community. Those assemblies in the back shed brimming with students, the game zone littered with friends playing cards, and the jam-packed corridors at rush hour were instances that brightened our days. There was even a happy to chat bench, symbolizing the spirit of camaraderie that our school upholds. From sharing lab coats to sharing food, companionship binds us together. However, social distancing protocols will mandate changes to these traditions. Wearing masks, sanitizing at every possible occasion, and keeping a suitable distance will have to become part of the new routine.

So what necessitates the authorities to forgo safeguards and finally open doors to students? While some may have become habitual of the comfort of their homes, online studies do not suit every student. Although teachers have tried their
The Woes of Karachi’s monsoon rain

By Rayyan Ikram

In the last month, Karachi experienced the worst rainfall it has ever witnessed in close to three decades. The rains ravaged through the city for two days leaving behind catastrophes that continued the following week. Streets were submerged as water levels rose, and houses and buildings were left flooded. The resulting electricity outage left people in a much worse state, not being able to get help they required, as the city descended into chaos and crisis. As floods of water gushed through the streets, it left them jammed with traffic making it almost impossible for relief teams to reach citizens who required help. This catastrophic rain left 41 people dead and resulted in several people being separated from their families. This situation exposed not only the mismanagement on behalf of the government in terms of managing drainage and a crisis but also the failures of DHA and CBC in assisting the people who live in their areas. It was yet another scenario where Karachi was left on its own to deal with a situation that could have easily been diffused.

In the utmost to simulate a normal classroom with continued entreaties for cameras, microphones and participation, it is, nonetheless, a simulation. The online examinations are far from ideal, with some students feeling more pressured by the submission process than the actual test. From submitting assignments on Edmodo instead of printing them out frantically in the library and sleeping through break instead of queuing at the canteen for a plate of chicken tempura, there is a lot lacking in this new online environment.

Besides the academic outlook, these are the final years of our school life. This chapter should be filled with long-lasting memories. First years must be struggling with forming friendships which entered our lives so naturally last year. How can they experience the rustic charm of Lyceum without sitting on a moora or visiting the turtles? Community service societies and exciting school events have been put on hold. However, we can still hope to live these moments. By fragments, we shall eventually return to a semblance of normalcy.

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Q: How did both of you come to love debate and public speaking?

Areesha: Personally, I think debate is more than just an activity. I have been doing public speaking since the 5th grade, and today it makes up who I am.

Anam: I joined parliamentary debate when I was in Grade 8. I was quite reserved, but always really loved public speaking. Ever since, it's not only been super fun, but it helped me develop my confidence, meet new people, and learn a lot about the world.

Q: Tell me a little bit about why you decided to apply to become Chairs for the Debate Society.

Areesha: When I started at parliamentary debate, I did not know anything. As we started doing more tournaments and gained experience, I realized that this society brought me to where I am today and I should give a shot at leading it.

Anam: I really enjoyed debate in AS; I'd always planned on applying for Chair, because I really couldn’t imagine being this passionate about any other society! It’s something I genuinely love doing.

Q: How has quarantine been for you guys as debaters/students. What are some challenges you face?

Areesha: There are some obvious pros and cons. I live very far from Lyceum, and would usually get home very late after sessions. Debating at home, that's the best part of it all. A con is that it is hard to interact with the juniors because all I have as their impressions are their voices. I think a huge challenge is electricity.

Anam: Quarantine has been strange. We've fallen into a rhythm now but it’s definitely called for more responsibility and takes a lot of initiative. By far the biggest challenge is stable connections. It's harrowing to get interrupted in a session because of internet issues. However, the biggest advantage is being able to have more competitions. In just a month, we managed to attend a national and an international one with teams from all over the world, teams we would normally not be able to compete against.

Q: What are some things that came off as apprehensive initially but don't intimidate you now that you've come this far?

Areesha: I was always afraid that we wouldn't have a lot of people in Parliamentary Debate. Previously, we had around six people in the society, with me being the only social science kid there! This time around, we have over twenty people and I could not be happier.

Anam: I was a little worried of having to interact with the new AS solely through the internet. But hey, we're Gen Z! If anyone's worked out a way to fully express themself through technology, it's us.
Growing up, Julie struggled to find a sense of identity, and was ridiculed immensely by society. She has had to face a plethora of hardships throughout her stressful life, including being disowned by her own family, being fired for coming out, and even battling a rape case through the courts. The backlash she received for simply wanting to attain justice, was so severe and harsh, to the point where she had to flee from her own home and take refuge in another city because her life was at risk. On the night of August 10th, Julie was arrested and manhandled by the police, and in 2016 was even brutally beaten by Jajji Butt in Sialkot. To this day, she fears for her life as she receives vile threats every day. All this injustice and animosity occurred, simply because she was driven to stand up for what was right. Other transgender friends of hers stated that she spoke out against the unfair arrest of her friend Rosy, which ultimately led to her own arrest. She was detained in the men’s jail, and was prohibited from meeting her lawyer or family. However, after these heinous events, the public was quick to call out the police for their blatant transphobia, violence, abuse, and mistreatment of the country’s transgender community. Together with the support of her vocal lawyer, social media outrage, and peaceful protests from her supporters, Julie was finally released on Monday from Adiala Jail. She released a statement claiming that she was grateful for the countrywide social media outcry, and how every effort made was fruitful in granting her bail, and serving her justice. Even though Julie has not been cleared of the charges against her, and will undoubtedly be criticized and shunned due to the stigma surrounding the topic of trans rights in our society, she will not give up. After all, Julie, the country’s transgender icon herself says, “I am here, I am standing and while I am alive I will fight for my rights and the rights of my community.”

**Fall**

*a short story*  
By Umm-e-Abeeaha Khan Yousufzai

She stepped into the coffee shop, the bells over the front door chiming behind her. The warmth was a welcoming hug after her four-kilometer jog in the autumn chill. She walked over to the counter, getting into line behind a woman trying to keep her baby from eating her hair, as she tried to wrestle her credit card out of her purse.  

“Good morning, how may I help you today?” said the barista, flashing her a smile.  

She ordered the same drink she always did, "A Venti iced Americano with extra ice and the shots poured over the ice, two pumps of vanilla and some cream!"  

As she waited for her coffee, her gaze drifted to the many people scattered around the café. Two students lounged in the low chairs, and she was fairly certain that they were playing truant. A middle-aged man sat by the ceiling length windows, having a heated conversation, his glasses perched on his nose. Two women sat in a velvet loveseat—one of whom had hair that matched the brick red of the paper that covered the walls—a young child of maybe eight twirling before them.  

Grabbing the paper cup, she made her way out, the delicious smell of coffee and fresh pastries wafting out with her. Her gaze turned to the magnificent oak that stood before her, as a leaf silently fell, dancing through the air and finally settling near her feet. Peace.
Taylor Swift’s surprise decision to release her eighth studio album, Folklore, was met with a fairly positive reception; to her fans, it was akin to a silver lining in these uncertain times. The album, apart from being her most lyrically mature work yet, has masterfully managed to encapsulate the raw emotion that she seems to aim for. With masterpieces like “exile” in collaboration with Bon Iver, and “the last great American dynasty”, presumed to be some of the best songs ever written, Folklore has diverged from her more recent works back into the Red era. The overall sound is nothing short of atmospheric, almost hazy and relaxed in its vocals and instrumentals; Taylor ventures into a combination of indie-folk and alternate, atmospheric rock but she does it on her own terms, with gut-wrenching lyrics and an even more complimentary, yet juxtaposed and refreshingly minimal instrument selection. Despite many critics complaining that the album is too mellow, it is important to admit that there is a certain bravery attached to forsaking a genre of music that had granted her immense professional safety these past few years, in fact, for the last decade, her career has been defined solely by catchy pop tunes. Folklore tells a story; from the point of view of a regretful teenage boy, a woman resigned to her fate, of nostalgia and longing, of wishing for something more, for something different, but also, for something larger than life. She is saying a lot, but this time, she is saying it softly, with simple piano riffs and minimal production. Folklore, appropriately, flows like one long folk song, but in a manner that invites listeners to become a part of something homely and grandiose at the same time.

Released on Zee5 as a web series, Churails is quite possibly one of the most revolutionary productions of Pakistani media. It explores in detail the treatment of women and the expectation for them to be the “best versions of themselves.” Everything—from the shots used, to the cinematography—is brilliant. The bold hues and filtered red lights add a sense of mystery to the scenes, and make them that much more sensory. The score fits with the scenes like perfectly-assembled pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, making Churails a true artistic masterpiece.
Touching upon prevalent social issues such as harassment, forced marriages, abuse, abortions, societal pressures and the idea that "boys will be boys", the show mirrors society in a heartbreaking, yet unavoidably realistic way. While it does fall short in its representation of colourism and racism, and often rushes through storylines with no real pay off, it is fairly audacious in its depiction of same-sex relationships and the plight of the transgender community. Amazingly enough though, the truly vulnerable moments of the show are those which are silent, showing the suffering of all women, irrespective of status, through just their gazes and body language.

Churails may not be the most perfect representation of all of society's problems, but it is a necessary and game-changing first step, and will be remembered for years to come.

Humans of Lyceum

Emaan Abrar Ali

Being part of Lyceum during these times has been a particularly interesting experience. Especially since I have recently transferred from Dubai. Schooling in U.A.E is very different from Pakistan. Despite not expecting the transition to be smooth given the various different approaches to learning, due to the added COVID-19 crisis and the rather textbook view on learning here, I find everything quite boring and tiresome. Though I do not really mind the online learning as I have already experienced it in U.A.E, the online science practicals have been torture. I'll be honest when I say that moving back to Pakistan I did not expect much from the "Online School System" over here. However, I was pleasantly surprised to find that “Virtual Lyceum” has been extremely well conducted. I love school and sports and was originally a part of my old school’s football team for two years. I also competitively trained in swimming. Even though I'm a bit slow in understanding everything due to the difficult mode of studying, I am very enthusiastic about all my subjects and love a good challenge.

Manahil Asad

Throughout my early teenage years, I struggled with being overweight. It was a great challenge for me to reach my fitness goals, but when I did, being active and athletic became my passion. Since I had so much free time during quarantine, I found myself in the kitchen trying out different dessert recipes every day which eventually resulted in ‘Where’s My Dough’ - the baking venture I started 3 months ago. Even though I have to hustle to manage classes, my baking business, and the gym; I believe nothing that's worth having comes easy. In fact, I thrive on challenges and constantly set goals for myself.

Being a Lyceum student means that I have the privilege to study in one of the finest institutions in the country. I am excited to acquire the essential skills, knowledge, and leadership capabilities that will help me go out in the world and make a positive impact in society.
Honestly speaking, I did not have many expectations before starting my A Levels. A few of my peers mentioned that it would be too tough, mainly focused on academics. However, my experience with 'Lyceum online' has been good so far. Even though the main focus is on academics, I do not find it overbearing or strict at all. College life online has been an interesting experience, better in some ways because I do not have to commute for an hour and can study in the comfort of my own room but sometimes it is difficult to get myself into the focused mindset of studying at home. Despite the fact that we weren’t given the opportunity to officially meet our teachers and fellow classmates, I’m still looking forward to going to see our campus in person, very soon.

The 2020 United States presidential election is scheduled to take place on Tuesday, November 3, 2020, making it the 59th presidential election of the USA. Joe Biden and Donald Trump will be competing for the Presidential spot. Voters will select presidential electors, who in turn will vote on December 14, 2020, to elect either Joe Biden for President and Kamala Harris for Vice President or to re-elect Donald Trump and Mike Pence, respectively.

Biden has pronounced Harris as his Vice President pick on August 11th 2020. Harris has been widely debated about as a pick for Vice President, since she is also a lawyer and was previously a Senator who advocated for abolishing the death penalty.

She has voted against increasing the defense budget and criticized Trump’s policies, stating that she does not want the American Military to be involved in many other countries abroad, although she has also voted against amendments to reduce the size of the Department of Defense’s budget. Furthermore, Harris has been actively vocal about the reported violation of human rights in other countries, including the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the Kashmir dispute, and reports of Uighur Muslims being imprisoned in China.
Karachi Wonders - post lockdown exploration ideas

By Tarfa Siddiqui

Karachi is the economic hub of Pakistan and yet, most of its fame lies in its diverse choice for entertainment activities targeted towards its youth. Lockdown has kept most of these activities inaccessible to us hence, here’s a list of places that are a must visit once it’s finally over!

1. Faraar - Escape Game
Karachi’s first escape game Faraar, offers a fun experience that involves solving puzzles with friends, acting as detectives and looking through clues to unravel a mystery.

2. National Museum of Pakistan
Set foot into a journey that takes you through the diverse history of Pakistan, exploring artifacts from dates as ancient as 3300 BCE. You may come across old architectural gems from the British Era of Karachi as you make your way through the infamous Saddar area.

3. Super Space
Dive into a fun, dark-themed, indoor amusement park named SuperSpace, with multiple activities to try such as a mirror maze, laser tag, rides, obstacle courses and many more enjoyable experiences!
The Pious Prejudice of Pakistan

By Huda Rizwan

The past month has witnessed what can be accurately termed as the climax of prejudice against minorities in Pakistan. It is unrealistic, delusional, even shortsighted to think that this country could ever be based on the protection of the vulnerable when we as a society are aided and abetted by the government in the hatred and resultant violence against minority groups in this country.

The mistreatment of minority groups does not start with the burning of temples, it begins with our collective refusal to view other human beings as equals, it begins when we consider the Muharram leaves as holidays, expressing disdain when they fall on the weekend, it begins when children belonging to minorities are expected to desensitize themselves to slurs from a very young age, it begins at home and in school and eventually, it leads to sectarian violence.

When an 'Anti-Shia' rally led by a presumably banned, terrorist organization chanted sectarian slurs that resonated louder than the cries of women advocating for bodily autonomy, it became apparent that the problem is not reserved for isolated cases, rather it is rooted in decades of systematic oppression and prejudice. When Atif Mian, an Ahmedi politician, was forced to resign from the government simply because of his religion, very few people even deigned to bat an eyelid. This is the country of the infamous Blasphemy Law, where it is considered rational to book a three year old child under such allegations, where a Christian woman, Asia Bibi was forced to leave the country she grew up in for fear of her life.

Considering all these instances, it is still not completely unwise to hope for a better world, but change can only come through systematic re-education and awareness, and it seems almost radical to advocate for such an initiative in a country that continues to turn a blind eye to the suffering of its own people.
The mistakes made by Britain in promising Arab land to non-Arab groups decades ago have had dire consequences and continue to impact to this day innocent civilians of Palestine. Residents survive with only four hours of electricity within a day, whilst clean water and proper food are seen as a luxury rather than a necessity.

To add to the unlivable conditions, Israel bombed Gaza for seven consecutive nights in August as a radical move aimed for the suppression of the Palestinian resistance. Israel has bombed Gaza several times since the Israeli-Palestinian conflict erupted in 2007.

For decades, the residents of Gaza have been helpless victims of the repressive Israeli occupants.

Suffering from policies of a government which actively commends increased settlements on their land, the people of Gaza remain helpless and unheard. Media coverage and influencers around the world have continued to desert the Palestinian cause as political conflict between Arab and Jews, and the brutal human rights violations by Israel have been hugely overlooked by the UN or the international community due to increased US support, which to this day is uniting Israel with Arab powers instead of providing the Palestinian people with national self determination.

It is impossible to predict when the citizens of Gaza will wake up in a safe and peaceful land they can call their own.