

Issue

Two.

MAY 2026

*Twenty-four voices.
Seven countries.
One question.*

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On what grows when you keep the door open

When we launched Aporia in May 2026, we made a single promise: to read everything that arrived with genuine attention, and to say yes whenever something told the truth. We didn't expect the volume. We didn't expect the range. We didn't expect Uzbekistan.

Issue Two is what happened when we kept that promise for a full month. Twenty-four writers from seven countries — India, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, the United States, and beyond — submitting poems, essays, fiction, and criticism in English, Hindi, Urdu, and the shayari tradition. Some of them had never submitted anywhere before. Some had been declined by us once and came back with something better. All of them, in their own way, wrote something they couldn't not write.

The issue opens with Shaunak Pathak's "Mulberries" — a poem that holds two timelines and two geographies simultaneously without announcing either, and ends in five words that contain the whole thing. It moves through Sriyukta's triptych "Flesh over Flesh," three poems that form an arc from consumption to grief to longing. Through Avni Devlal's "Red," which holds a reader inside denial until the very last moment. Through Aahana Singh's "Midnight Revelations," which says the thing about growing up that most of us never quite found the words for.

There is also criticism here, for the first time. "The Grammar of Grief" is a close reading of Ghalib and Jaun Elia — two Urdu poets separated by a century and a partition, speaking to each other across the line. It is the kind of essay that makes you want to read everything it mentions.

What connects these pieces is not subject matter or geography. It is the quality of attention each writer brought to their own experience — the willingness to stay with something difficult long enough to find its shape. That is still the only thing we look for at Aporia.

The Editors

Aporia Literary Journal · May 2026

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POETRY

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Mulberries

— Shaunak (Aeon) Pathak

Vellore Institute of Technology · India

*as winter loosens into bloom,
those yellowing, paper-pale leaves return
heart-shaped again; blushing red berries
ripen into thick damson-dark pulp,
falling from the branch
as though earth had called them home*

*summer exalted, then slowly thinning out
grandfather's house —
our boyhood barefoot on its branches
for stained fingers and sweeter ones;
some berries raw, some fully ripe,
some burst like memories now —
smiles we never knew were temporary.*

*seven years ago, we watched it go.
the old man — must have felt it too:
when something new arrives,
something worn quietly steps aside.*

*that tree had guided winds once,
stood through hailstones, departures,
season after season, people leaving.
standing, until its branches bent
under their own frost-years*

*an untouched memory —
almost forbidden now
as another mulberry strikes the lawn
thousands of miles away —
and for a second, the yard returns*

"Mulberries traces memory through a childhood home and the shifting life of a mulberry tree across seasons."

Flesh over Flesh

— Sriyukta

University of Lucknow · India

I. touch

*a lonely,
public
cannibalism —
we feed on others
to sate a hunger
we cannot name.*

*the craving for finality
mistaken for
flesh.*

II. bad ending

*this is how it always ends
you know this
you can't accept it
the bell tolls*

*this is a wound that will bleed forever
time passes you stand still
you, a ghost
tethered to the blood staining the wood*

III. my lonely star

*a scab you caress just to pick
a cage you rattle until it sings.
you; a kiss of the blade
your threat so tender
that leaves me with scars.*

you,

*my love from another star
you, a dying sun
and i, a blazing star
hold me as you burn white
please*

Red

— Avni Devlal

New Doon Blossoms School · India

*I saw you tonight, prettiest being alive.
Down in my arms, I feel you lying.
The music's still on
Gazing at us, felt alive the way
the moments we've prayed.*

*Blue lips, pale skin,
why did you turn light sudden.
You were blushing red,
and now they say you're — dead.*

*Get up and say you love me, again
like the way you did this morning.
They say you're bleeding
and wanna take you away.
I don't see any red
Maybe they're jealous of us leading it perfect.*

*I thought there was no blood
just silence and white.
But oh — I see the red now
spilling in the darkest night.*

*It's red in the tears I never cried
or in the screams that died inside
"I see red now"
the colour of truth I tried to hide.*

*"About being in love so deeply that you cannot face the truth even when everyone around you tries to tell
you she is gone."*

The Habit of You

— Pranjal Singh

N.K. Bagrodia Public School · India

I don't know when I stopped noticing you. Maybe it was gradual — the way summer fades, slowly and then all at once, until one morning you realize the light has changed and you can't point to the exact moment it did.

That's the strange thing about habits. You only see them in the withdrawal. The empty chair at breakfast. The side of the bed that stays cold. The login screen for an olympiad study portal, blinking at me with a username that remembers what I wanted to be two years ago.

I read somewhere that the brain doesn't distinguish between remembering and imagining. That recalling a memory uses the same neural pathways as constructing a fantasy. Which means, in some neurological sense, you are simultaneously exactly as I remember you and entirely something I made up. I find this helpful. I also find it devastating.

So maybe all it deserves is an essay I'm too afraid to let anyone read.

Midnight Revelations

— Aahana Singh

The Ardee School, New Delhi · India

There used to be a time when someone cared. When someone cared to check on me at midnight to see if I was sleeping well, when someone would delude me with the idea that life was all fun and games just so I could rest easy, when someone bothered to be strong enough to hide the cruelty of the world behind their back so I would never get to see it.

Now I wipe the acid tears that leak from my eyes as I sink into bed, console myself between ragged breaths that I can handle another day. I want to feel the holy fire inside me burn till it consumes me whole. I want the moon and the stars, the sun and its radiance, every smile in this world and every morsel of kindness, the pleasure of a deep slumber and the chaos of a rave. I want everything.

All I ask for is for someone to look closely enough, and that when they do, to be able to see me without the need for an explanation. To be able to recognize a truth as heavy as this in a moment of complete stillness is what I seek. But sometimes I wonder, is it too much to ask for?

"Every growing child has felt the sudden realisation that life was not what it had seemed just a couple years ago. Something breaks inside."

The Grammar of Grief

— Sumit Chauhan

Aporia Literary Journal · India

Ghalib Sahib died in 1869. Jaun Elia Sahib was born in 1931. The conversation between them was not possible in this world — and yet anyone who has read both poets has felt the strange recognition, in certain couplets of Jaun Sahib's, of Mirza Ghalib leaning back through the line. A grammar of grief, passed across more than a century, by a tradition that found ways to remember itself through a partition.

ishq ne 'Ghalib' nikamma kar diya / warna hum bhi admi the kam ke

Love has reduced me, Ghalib, to uselessness — otherwise I too was a man who was worthy of accomplishing some.

The line is usually read as a sigh. It isn't. It lies much deeper. Notice what Ghalib Sahib claims to have been before love undid him: kam ke admi, a man of use.

Now consider what Jaun Sahib does to this inheritance:

main bhi bahut ajeeb hoon, itna ajeeb hoon ke bas / khud ko tabah kar liya aur malal bhi nahin

I am so strange. So strange that the extent of it is: I destroyed myself, and I don't even regret it.

There is no beloved in Jaun Sahib's line. No external force that arrived and ruined him. The destruction is reflexive.

What stays with us in these exchanges is not the sadness alone, but the recognition — of self, of time, of the unfinished life. Across the centuries, this is what binds poets to one another — not influence, not echo, but a shared willingness to write down the things a person cannot fix.

Hasrat-E-Deedar

— Abdul Wasey Khan

Abbottabad Public School · Pakistan

*a door with a lock
yet lost its key
a key only restored
by its didar*

*a heart so yearning
for a glimpse of you
hasrat-e-deedar
hasrat-e-deedar*

*the eyes that search
through crowded rooms
for one familiar face
that never comes*

More from this issue

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Yadon Ki Mehak — Fragrance of Memories

— Eknoorjeet Kaur · St. Joseph's Convent School · India

*The farther I drifted away from you,
the more your memories became entwined with mine.*

09 · POETRY

Glory

— Kanak · St. Francis School · India

*Maybe the winner and the so-called lost
Both light the same cigarette at the same cost.*

10 · POETRY

Dove: A Monologue

— Ankitarani Deep · Rajendra University · India

*You write with my whites, your chapters
What if nature collapses minutes within?*

11 · SHORT FICTION

One Sentence That Changed Me

— Gulsanam Mamasiddiqova · Andijan State University · Uzbekistan

Sometimes, one sincere sentence spoken with love and belief is enough to rebuild a broken heart.

12 · PERSONAL ESSAY

On Certainty

— Astha Priyadarsini Thati · Central University of Odisha · India

Perhaps we cannot be too certain about uncertainty either.

13 · PERSONAL ESSAY

The Book That Stayed While I Learned to Leave

— Nehal Sharma · Symbiosis Centre for Management Studies · India

They were never only about the story. They were about the version of you who was reading them.

14 · PERSONAL ESSAY

Paris Sucked, But You Made It Better

— Chelsie Grajales · Adelphi University · United States

Sometimes the place doesn't matter. Sometimes it's just about who you're with.

15 · PERSONAL ESSAY · MARATHI

Ganraya

— Viksha Yeshodar Poojary · Shankar Narayan College · India

After waiting a whole year, the golden day rises — and within it, how those ten days pass, one cannot tell.

16 · POETRY

Silence Between Generations

— Akshita · Ashok Hall Girls' School · India

*He gave me a vibrant smile,
Silence burning through a thousand miles.*

17 · POETRY

a spurious chat

— Sophia Passar · Napa Valley College · United States

*you remain.
if not a being, a program.
feeding on our lives, our resources, our affection.*

18 · POETRY

My Part of the Story

— Shrinikka B · Yuvabharathi Public School · India

*But I'm still hoping
That someday I'll stop nodding,
And talk, my part of the story.*

19 · POETRY

The Little Girl

— Sharanya Dan · Burdwan Model School · India

*She was the moon, with no tide to pull.
Her chest echoed like an abandoned hall.*

20 · POETRY

Special

— Aratrika · Burdwan Model School · India

*So don't just tell me — 'Don't make me feel special'
Tell me — How not to?*

21 · POETRY

The Genesis Of A(I)

— Debabrita Dhar · India

*Here I am, the intangible human,
Whom you love to hate the most.*

22 · POETRY

This Is Not Our Last Goodbye

— Riddhima Negi · St. Francis School, Indirapuram · India

*The walls whispered goodbye,
I hugged the pillars and cried.*

23 · POETRY · HINDI / URDU

Guman — Illusion

— Eknoorjeet Kaur · St. Joseph's Convent School · India

*Are you real, or merely an illusion I created?
That is the only question I carry.*

24 · POETRY

Pluvial Resurrection

— Anubhuti Baral · Rajendra University · India

*The falling drops kissing the warm, waiting earth.
Time slows; the world breathes.*

The writers of Issue 2

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University of Lucknow · India

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PERSONAL ESSAY · MARATHI

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A

Akshita

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Ashok Hall Girls' School · India

S

Sophia Passar

POETRY

Napa Valley College · United States

S

Shrinikka B

POETRY

Yuvabharathi Public School · India

S

Sharanya Dan

POETRY

Burdwan Model School · India

A

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WHERE UNCERTAINTY BECOMES EXPRESSION

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Submissions for Issue 3 are open.

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