

# CLIMATE PARABLES

Imaginative Stories by  
Women at AUW



*Edited by  
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# FORWARD

ROZINA KANCHWALA

As a co-facilitator of this wonderful program and one of the editors of this anthology, it is with great excitement that we present captivating stories presented here. This collection of stories, written by women from across Asia, showcases unique voices, experiences, and insights into the complex issue of climate change.

At Eco.Logic, we believe the arts are essential in helping us navigate the uncertainties that the climate crisis presents. The role of storytelling in the climate movement cannot be overstated and it can serve two purposes:

It helps us envision and craft the world we want to live in

It gives voice to underrepresented perspectives that are often the ones experiencing climate change.

The countries where these authors come from have rich cultural heritages and diverse landscapes that are no stranger to the far-reaching impacts of climate change, so it is fitting that we now hear from women whose intersectional identities and perspectives can provide us new ways to reckon with both the wonders and the devastations brought about by shifting weather patterns, rising temperatures, and changing ecosystems.

In this anthology, we embark on journeys, guided by the imaginations and perspectives of the women whose storytelling helps illuminate the nuances, challenges and possibilities that lie at the

intersection of climate change and human experience.

Within these pages, you will find tales that envision both the best and worst case scenarios and be reminded that imagination is a catalyst for change. These narratives not only shed light on the urgent need for action, but also kindle hope, inspiring us to strive for a sustainable and equitable future.

I am grateful to the remarkable women who have contributed their stories to this anthology. Their voices resonate with passion, wisdom and empathy, offering us glimpses into the interwoven fabric of experiences and the natural world.

May this anthology serve as a testament to the strength, resilience, and creative spirit of the women at the Asian University of Women, and may it ignite conversations, inspire actions and foster a collective commitment to tackle the climate challenge upon us.

Together, let us embrace these stories, learn from them, and forge a path towards a more sustainable and harmonious future for all.

*With anticipation and gratitude,*  
*Rozina Kanbhwala*  
*Executive Director, Eco.Logic*

# INTRODUCTION

EVAN TIMS

Cli-fi remained a relatively minor genre until Indian author Amitav Ghosh wrote *The Great Derangement* in 2016, a work that pointed out the failings of literature in contending with the crisis. In its wake, dozens of major authors have written novels that address climate change, many of them bestsellers. *The Ministry for the Future*, *The Immortal King Rao*, *The Deluge*, *Blackfish City*, and countless other examples from the past few years have captured public imagination and media attention. These works also have a significant, and often unrecognized, connection to South Asia. Despite cli-fi's roots in works by South Asian writers, most popular authors in the genre do not share this heritage. While novels that foreground the region have topped bestseller lists of late, books by authors who write from a South Asian perspective have not had nearly the same level of success.

South Asia is particularly relevant to the question of climate change and inequality that drives much of the contemporary climate discourse. A once-colonized region that faces an unequal share of environmental consequences, many of its countries are among the most climate vulnerable on Earth. It is little surprise, then, that so much of climate fiction explores the worst impacts of the crisis here. However, even these representations favor some communities over others. India and Bangladesh are often referenced in cli-fi, and numerous authors draw their heritage from these countries. Afghanistan, however, is almost

never mentioned in works of climate fiction or even science fiction, for that matter.

For anyone familiar with the multifaceted realities of climate change, it should be no surprise that the fictional genre dedicated to exploring it is closely engaged with inequality. After all, climate change is synonymous with a worsening of conditions for the most vulnerable people on Earth. Despite its borderless and universal nature, it only seems to be drawing stark divisions between those who can afford to survive and those who cannot. These inequalities exist within communities, countries, and between nations—and they may well get worse.

This workshop grew out of a smaller program I hosted in the summer of 2018. I traveled to the Asian University for Women in Chattogram, Bangladesh, and invited students to join for a discussion of climate fiction and our shared future. The excitement and interest of the young writers who later joined this workshop was immediately clear. I asked them to make depictions of what the world would look like in fifty to a hundred years. Walls of protective force fields between warring states, automatic educational downloads for women who can't attend school, and robots to help with agriculture were just a few of the examples that they shared. Through these ideas, I caught a glimpse of the unique and exciting landscape of climate and science-fictional ideas from the unique perspectives of these young authors.

Later, after returning to the U.S., I reached back out to AUW in the hopes of hosting a longer-term engagement. Despite the challenges of remote learning, forty two students signed up for the workshop, most of whom joined at least one session. The final stories in this anthology represent only a small fraction of the remarkable and creative ideas that the authors came up with over a two-month, once-weekly workshop. We explored the future of climate change using writing prompts, discussions and informational lectures. Some of our prompts: imagine you're a time traveler going to the future and reporting back. What do you see? What is the worst-case outcome of climate change? What would a climate utopia look like? What is your story of climate or social justice?



The collected stories of this anthology represent the dedicated, creative, and immensely challenging work of imagining the future. Many of the authors were forced to flee Afghanistan in the wake of the Taliban takeover, and now reside at AUW in the hopes of attaining an education and charting their own personal future. Others are far from home for different reasons, or even grew up in Chittagong, but they all have faced significant challenges in pursuing their goals in an entirely new language and educational system.

Imagination is a universal attribute, a human trait that cares little for borders or social divisions. However, it is also as much a space beset by inequality as any other. Getting to imagine is one thing—being able to contribute to the global dialogue is another. Access to universities, publishers and language training is limited for many communities, and those same groups are often at the most at risk from environmental degradation. As you read this anthology and ponder visions of the future from voices across South and Southeast Asia, I ask that you consider the limitless possibilities that would be offered by an open and inclusive dialogue on climate futures. As we seek to build a world resilient to climate change and even better off once its worst impacts have passed, writers like these have a major role to play in sharing their imaginations and insights.

*For Tomorrow's Writers and Readers,*

*Evan Tims*

*Founder and Director, In 100 Years Project*

# The Most Beautiful Future

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RAHIMA NADERY

*Afghanistan, Studying: Economics*

The best scenario that I can imagine in my mind is a future without war.

Where no one is obligated to leave their country because of insecurity, poverty, air pollution and injustice.

A future where there is no border between countries, just one world without any prejudice of nationality and gender.

A future where no one cuts down trees for personal gain.

A future where the world is devoid of nuclear weapons as a display of dominance.

A future where the knowledge and skill of using a gun for lethal purposes has faded into obscurity.

A future where everyone can be themselves.

A future where gender-based discrimination in education is eradicated, and everyone can pursue their dreams and aspirations.

A future where everyone can breathe fresh air without inhaling the smoke of pollution.

A future where all children have access to the same facilities to grow.

A future where parents care about their children and do not give birth to a child without thinking about what the world would be like for the next generation.

A future where all people want to live in a safe and clean environment.

A future where they do not waste water, and they do not consume and create waste without thinking.

A future where people are not addicted to technology but, instead, can connect with one another.

Where social media isn't used to idolise others or to compare to others.

A future where you spread your kindness generously without worry of anyone misusing you.



# RETAW

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MADHUMITHA PARAMESHWARAM

*Sri Lanka, Studying: Politics, Philosophy, & Economics*

“Aaah,” I woke up screaming. Despite the practice of wearing a mask during the COVID pandemic, wearing an oxygen mask continuously is painful. The result is now I have two love bites from my regular oxygen mask on both backsides of my ears. When I opened my eyes, I saw the usual view of a dusty and half-baked city road through my window. Then I answered the phone call from my friend.

“Madhu, last night you said that you are going somewhere for a long-awaited work trip. What is that work and where are you going?” She fired questions rapidly.

“Oh, Suja, relax. Don’t you remember during our school days back in the early 2000s, we learnt we should say ‘Hi’ or ‘Hello’ when we speak with each other? You didn’t even greet me with a ‘Good morning!’”

“Madhu, this is not 2015, we are in 2040. We are 40 years old, half of grandma’s age now. Fine, Good morning. Now tell me: where are you going?” she asked curiously.

“I’m going to Kandy city where I can at least see some green trees,” I told her with all my excitement, imagining myself enjoying

some pure retaw.

“Wow, Madhu, yesterday I also heard about Kandy on the news as one of the cities where we can buy pure retaw. But how did you manage to get the money for this trip?” she asked curiously.

“As you know, I work in the Coastal Sanitation Team. Unfortunately, two weeks ago, we had a busy week collecting many dead bodies of dolphins and turtles in coastal areas due to polluted seawater and the worsened temperatures. I earned enough money to go to Kandy from this.”

After my reply, for a few seconds, I couldn't hear a single sound from Suja.

“Suja, are you ok? What happened? Why are you so silent?” I asked.

“Madhu, I was thinking about our teenage days. In those days, due to the corrupt leadership, despite our country facing a huge financial crisis, we were able to keep the name of ‘Sri Lanka as a naturally rich country’. But don't you think that the situation in our country has deteriorated to such an extent that we are now making money by disposing of the carcasses of marine animals, and we all have to take responsibility for this situation?”

As she put into words what was in my heart, I said, “I know, Suja, but it's too late to worry about that now. Because not only are animals suffering, but we are also not in a safe environment today. If humans continue to destroy nature, we will surely suffer and die like the animals. Ultimately, this is a whole new job field and maybe it is a reckless betrayal to our future generations. Of course, I still remember how many workshops and campaigns we attended together during our school days to learn how to conserve nature. We learned a lot, but I guess we didn't put it into practice. And of course, our government didn't implement the necessary policies that would have preserved our environment and the animal species. But enough on what could have been. I have to get ready to go, otherwise, I will be late to buy retaw.” I hurried to end the call.

She replied saying, “Oh, ok, safe journey Madhu, try to stock up on some retaw that you are going to buy from Kandy so that you can sell it here for a good price. I will be your first customer.” As idealistic

as Suja was, even she realized that retaw was precious and knew people would pay for it so she was thinking practically now.

After hanging up the call, I was searching for the train ticket to Kandy that I had left on the desk, and I saw an old newspaper underneath. When I saw the word WATER, the pureform of RETAW, written on it, I felt a flurry of emotions.

I said to myself, “How fast time moves! Those days I wasted more than I needed without knowing the value of water, But now I’m in a situation where I have to do an unhappy job and save thousands of dollars so that I can go and buy clean drinking water. I can still hear my mom’s voice in my head; she used to scold me for wasting water unnecessarily. I wonder if we had all been more conscious back then, would we still have water and not need retaw? I feel guilty and sad about the world that doesn’t understand why we have retaw now for purchase when we used to have water available.” As I notice the time, I rush out of my house so that I can catch the train, wiping my guilty tears away.



# The Dew

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KHOJASTA NAZARI

*Afghanistan, Pre-Undergraduate Student*

The Dew lived on Earth in the past, but he was not accepted among his people. He was treated harshly and with cruelty. He was too big to fit in with humans. He could not enter a room without making everybody stare at him with fear. People were afraid of him because he was not beautiful, according to human standards of beauty, and because he was not the way human beings expected him to be. So, people left him. They boycotted him from their lives. Nobody talked to him. No one asked him how he was or gave him jobs. Nobody came to his bed when he was sick. They did not even allow their kids to come to him and talk. The Dew was all alone on the Earth, and as days passed, he became lonelier. He had animal friends, but they too were lonely and in hiding. All alone with himself, the Dew had nothing else to do, but to observe. He spent days watching people and their behaviors towards each other and other creatures. He was curious if they treated others the same way they treated him.

As he watched, he found out that human beings mistreated other living things too. They destroyed trees and killed animals for their personal purposes without thinking about the consequences of their

actions. He grew sick of all the noises in the city so he moved deep into the woods. Overtime, he had to move deeper and deeper into the woods because someone would always come and cut the trees around him. One day, when he was sitting by himself and reading a book, he heard noises outside. He looked out of his window to see that people had set fire to the trees on the edge of the jungle. The fire became bigger with each passing minute and had caught the tiny squirrels by surprise. They screamed and ran in every direction, but no matter how fast they ran they could not get away from the fire; the fire was too fast. The Dew, who was friends with the tiny squirrels, took some of them with his hands. He put them in his bag and started running. All this madness had filled him with anger, so he ran faster and on his way took more of the frightened animals with him. He ran without looking back. He ran and ran until he was out of breath and could not run any longer. When he looked around him, he found out that he was at the top of a mountain; below him, there was nothing but big white clouds. He knew that his anger had brought him to the highest mountain and going back into the woods would take him days, maybe more. He did not intend to return.

He had made his decision. He was not going to go back into the Earth that was corrupted by human beings. He was going to build a new land, a land over the clouds. He was going to bring all the other creatures here with him and let those humans kill each other. He asked the animals that he had saved from the fire to help him. They volunteered happily. One of the tiny squirrels gave the Dew an acorn that she had brought from the jungle. Together they planted new trees and started a whole new jungle. At the same time, the Dew was learning to communicate with the forces of nature so that he could ask them to help him carry out the plan. He wanted to persuade the wind to carry a message for him. A message to all the living things in the land to unite with him and leave human beings alone to survive on the brains that they were so proud of.

At the same time, down on the land of humans, Pari was sitting on her windowsill and thinking about the good old days. The rain always reminded her of when she was younger and the world used to be natural.



These days everything had changed. Since the numerous simultaneous natural catastrophes that occurred in 2030, everything started to change. Cities became emptier as the temperatures got hotter. Instead of once spacious streets, now apartments were built to accommodate more people. Streets became narrower and were covered with solar panels to create electricity. Everything was made by technology these days. Even the air they breathed seemed to be fabricated by the big white CO2 suckers dangling outside her window. There were not many natural things left out there to hold on to. Humans were even fabricating plants and grass. It seemed like everybody was more focused on surviving and adjusting to this new pitiful situation than on saving the world from getting worse. The government had made rules like the one that would no longer allow people to go into forests in order to save the wildlife from humanity's reach. Even that was not of much use anymore, with heatwaves burning down the forests anyway. Seemingly the government did not make much effort to put out the fires. The help was mostly done by environmentalists who did their best to save as much wildlife as possible with their insufficient supplies. Pari was one of those people. She was struggling hard to tell people that this was not the end, and that the world could still be saved and revived. But people were so interested in the new technologies and the new virtual world that they even forgot that there was a real world outside their windows that can and should be saved. Pari was not sure if she hated technology for saving the lives of millions of human beings or hated it for fooling people into this wrong belief.

However, what worried Pari the most was something else. Every time Pari and her team went into the woods to put the fires out, she found fewer animals than the time before. It seemed like they were all vaporizing. At first she thought that it was because of the fires. She thought that the fire was getting to them before she and her team could save them and it upset her very much. However, recently she realized that it could not be that. Pari and her team, even though not thoroughly equipped, were always ready for an emergency situation. The longest time it took for them to put a fire out was 30 minutes and that was two years ago. Nevertheless, the last time she checked, the

number of animals her team had saved was ten times less than two years ago. This was quite mysterious. She also saw several animals run into the deeper part of the jungle in the team's last rescue mission, but she could not chase them because she had to set the fire out. She made up her mind to figure out this mystery.

One day in the middle of summer when the heat was at its peak, the opportunity came. A huge fire was forecasted in the forest to the north, the biggest forest of the country. Pari and her team were already ready with their equipment and had gone to the forest earlier. Once the fire started, the water splashing jet robots were ready to put it out, and the team was ready with their special anti-heat costume, which looked a lot like an astronaut's costume, to get the creatures into the anti-fire and anti-smoke cages where professional nurses were ready with their equipment to tend to them. Pari was in the department that looked for any left behind injured animals in the area. This time Pari had come with a little more preparation. She had taken with her a considerable amount of drinking water and food. She had made her decision: she was going to find the reason for the animals' disappearance. The forest-fighters had a thick tube attached to the back of their costumes through which they sent the smaller animals to the central cage and received tools for emergency situations where the creature could not wait to be sent to the cage for treatment. It also helped them with finding their way back to the center. These tubes were naturally 13 kilometers long and gave the forest-fighter free space for movement. Once Pari found a rabbit to follow, she started running further to the north. She had decided not to take the tube off to measure how far she had come and have a way to communicate with the team if necessary. She decided not to let the team know about her plan. She had practiced not trusting anybody lately. The forest-fighters were known for their disagreement with the government's policies, but it was hard to figure out who was truly disagreeing and who was pretending. She had talked about her theory only to one person in the team, her closest friend, Fred, but she had not told him about this.

It was a difficult chase especially because she had to hide with her big figure in order not to frighten the animals. She was chasing them

from a distance. As they went further into the forest, the air became tenser and movement harder, but on the brighter side, the animals were starting to slow down to walk now that they had left the danger behind. Pari had realized that the group became larger as more animals joined the rest of them and they all seemed to be headed towards the same destination. Pari felt extremely thirsty due to all that running. She was afraid to take her eyes off the herd and lose track of them, but when they got to a circular clearing in the woods, she heard something from above her, looked up and saw about two hundred birds of all types flying overhead. They were apparently headed to the same destination with the rest of the animals on the ground. Most interestingly even still was that the birds seemed to lead the herd on the ground. The sight was frightening and sad at the same time. Pari was hating that she was one of the reasons that these living creatures could not live in peace.

Pari walked alongside the herd until a point where her digital watch showed her that she had walked 13 kilometers and if she walked any further the tube would get stuck and send an alarm to the people in the central camp. So she unplugged the tube, took her belongings and started walking again. The animals were mostly silent, but sometimes some of them made noises that Pari assumed were small talks between themselves. Pari wished she could understand what they were saying.

They walked on until night fell. Pari was tired. Although they were walking slowly, strangely it seemed like her steps had become lighter or somehow bigger because nothing else could explain how far they had come in such a short time. When it got darker, the herd stopped and Pari could finally eat some proper food. She was extremely tired and sleepy but she could not take the risk of falling asleep. What if the herd went on when she was sleeping? Instead, to keep herself busy while fighting her sleep, she started studying the woods surrounding her. She put on her illuminating-glasses, which helped her see at night without creating any detectable light. The trees around her gave evidence of hundreds of years of life. There was no doubt she had come to the farthest parts of the forest. The cold breeze, dumped voices and the trees all proved it. While inspecting, she found several plants that were believed to be extinct long ago. She was wondering

what would the government do if they knew that deep into this forest there were things that they had tried for decades to remodel. She did not know how much further the herd was planning to travel or where they were all going.

These thoughts were dangling in her head when she slowly went into a half sleep. A sleep full of nightmares in each of which she was running from something or maybe towards something. She had not slept long before she jolted awake and looked around her at the forest. It was covered by mist. As a natural reaction, Pari hurried to put her mask on. Living in a big city over past years had taught her to breathe as little of the mist as possible. But when she could not find her mask and had to let out her breath, she came to realize that if the mist was supposed to suffocate her, it would have done it by now when she was sleeping.

Pari got to her feet. She was furious at herself. How on earth could she fall asleep in this situation? She started looking for the herd through the mist, but it was of no use. She had to get closer to the place she last saw them resting despite the risk. She went forward, but there was no trace of the herd. She was sure she had last seen them here, near the three great oak trees that strangely resembled a couple and their child, but now there was nothing. The horror washed over her that the herd must have left when she was asleep. She was so furious that she wanted to cry. What now? She had come all the way, taking the risk of being fired and getting lost in the woods and now she had lost the herd. What was she going to do now? She was fighting back her tears of anger, when an idea struck her. The only thing she could do was to go deeper into the woods. It seemed like a silly idea, but she had come this far for an answer and she would rather die and get lost than to get back to her suffocating, irritating life. She might even find the herd if she hurried. It was not very light and she assumed that the herd could not have started too long ago since it was still a little dark. She picked up all her things and set off deeper into the forest. She walked faster now out of fury.

She had walked for about an hour when she felt that the air was getting lighter. She was walking up a hill or maybe a mountain. She

looked at her wristwatch and it showed that she was now 100 meters above sea level. No wonder she was feeling exhausted, but the transition was so smooth that she had not even realized it for a long time. Pari stopped after sometime and bent down holding her knees. She was tired, hungry and starting to feel hopeless and worse than all of this was that she had not yet found the herd. She decided it was better to keep moving no matter what happened. She took out a ready-made sandwich and a flask from her bag and started eating while walking up the hill. The sun had come out; the lit up forest told her that. How far could the herd have gone, she wondered. They could not have had much of a head start, but why could she not find them? There was no trace of them. The forest was quiet with not even a breeze to shake the leaves of the trees. Pari hated to admit to herself that it scared her. Maybe it was because of the elevation. She had come so high above the sea level. The lowered pressure of the air could have blocked her air. But the silence was real. Not a single branch moved on the trees and Pari was wondering: if she was going higher and higher up the hill, why was it not getting lighter, but instead getting darker?

Pari stopped after a while when it got too hard for her to move on without lighting her way. It had all happened so suddenly that she was even more scared. What was happening, she wondered. Pari felt someone or something was staring at her, waiting for her to signal her position. She did not know what to do. What if she turned on her phone's flashlight and someone or something attacked her, but she could not stand there forever either. She had to do something. She had to get her shaky legs moving, but they seemed to be frozen. It all happened in a second, she took one step forward, a sound came from somewhere like a branch breaking and something closed in on Pari from behind. Someone started speaking from behind Pari, a low muffled voice.

“What is a human species doing up here?” it asked. Pari turned around to see a giant hairy thing behind her that was and was not like a human being. It was huge like a bear, but it had the face of a human and on it there was a mixture of anger and hatred. The expression was so strong that it made Pari take three quick steps back without

realizing it. This definitely was the Dew that Pari had heard about in her childhood stories from her grandmother. With the only power left in her body Pari managed to mumble “Who are you?” in a voice so weak that even she barely heard it.

“Answer me.” The Dew shouted. “What business does one of your kind have in this land?” he implored.

“I came to ...” Pari cut herself off midway. He definitely would not understand what she was doing if she explained. So instead she said, “I am Pari. I am a forest-fighter. I put the fire out in the forest and protect animals from it. Who are you?”

The Dew let out an angry laughter. “You what?”

“Your kind kills animals for their parties and destroys jungles to make a table of it to write your selfish stories on. You do not even spare each other’s lives. You kill for your stupid beliefs. You think your stupid little heads are worth destroying the earth. You definitely don’t protect animals. You only know how to kill. No, you don’t protect animals. I’ll tell you what you do: You save them for later for when you are hungry enough to find an excuse to get around your funny ethics and eat them then. That’s what you do.” The Dew said all of this while pacing back and forth with anger.

The truth of what the Dew said hit Pari hard in the face. She only managed to reply with a small “that is not fair.”

But that seemed to make the Dew even angrier.

“What is not fair is how you continue burning fossil fuels when you know it is toxic for other species. What is not fair is you polluting the air that suffocates miserable birds to death. Unfair is that even the animals down in the rivers cannot live because of your addiction to plastic. Unfair is that your good-for-nothing heads have every kind of creativity to make life easier for your kind, but go blank when it comes to other species. Unfair is how you save your own asses and hide your little heads in your stupid virtual world when the other living things out here are paying for your selfish actions. And yet you dare to say with that proud stupid face of yours that you are protecting animals. What are you protecting them from when you are the danger huh? Tell me!”

“Now take your leave and forget about all of this. We are going to

live in harmony with each other and leave you humans to your brains. You seem to be smart enough to hang in there for a couple of years more. You have spent more than what was yours. You had the time and the brains, but you wasted them all. You are now alone.”

This much talking came as a surprise to the Dew too. He never knew he had so much to tell someone.

Pari wanted to shrink into nothingness because of embarrassment. All that the Dew was saying was true.

Humans had done all the things that they knew were bad for the environment and had not only destroyed their own lives, but also the lives of millions of other living things. And now all they had done was create technologies to only serve themselves. What was more painful was that what the Dew had said about what Pari and her teammates did was also partly true. All they were doing, all that Pari had done her whole life and was very proud of, was just delaying those animals’ death and although not intentionally, but actually for the sake of humankind. How long did she think that humans were going to keep away from this forest? As soon as they got tired of fabricated meat, they would surely start chasing the animals that Pari and the rest of what the forest-fighters had saved.

Pari realized that she knew the truth all along but she had forgotten how little what she did was in an effort to comfort her zeal. She was so busy comforting herself by comparing the little that she did and others did not that she forgot what she did was so little. Now, there were only two ways left. She could either leave everything to the Dew or head back home and find a way to bring everybody to their senses. Pari was torn between the two decisions. If she left the Dew to his way of doing things. It would be more beneficial for the animals but doing so meant letting humans drive themselves into destruction because nature would no longer serve human beings alone. Nature depends on everything that lives in it. Anything that comes from nature gives back to it and that is what makes life on earth possible. Human beings are the first ones who have forgotten to give back as much as they get from nature.

But human beings are part of nature too. They are not machines.

What if she gave everything up to the Dew and many years later her children's children wanted to get back to nature. What if they wanted to revive everything and it was too late? Pari had the choice to do something and bring humanity back. She could not just leave it here, not like this, not now that she had realized her mistake. Maybe she could do something. She had to do something. Neither nature nor human beings were going to survive without each other. They both depended too much on each other that they knew. She had made up her mind. She was going to ask for another chance, one last chance.





# Guests of the Earth

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MASOONA NOORI

*Afghanistan, Studying: Education Policy Analysis*

Billions of years before today, a girl named Sun was born on one of the dark nights of the galaxy. Every year that passed, she became younger and more beautiful. It was destined for her to spin and dance like the Sama dance of Rumi so that she could have children. Birth in the universe is such that they give birth when they spin and dance.

The Sun was alone and turned and turned and turned until they ordered 8 children to her. The children continued to revolve around the mother like Muslims around the Kaaba and like the disciples of Rumi.

It was a custom among the galaxy tribe that every solar system had a guest house. They were expected to welcome their guests with open arms. The Sun decided to choose Venus from among her children, to be the guest house of her solar system. The galaxy viewed Venus as the beautiful art-inspiring child of the Sun. However, one day the springs of Venus dried up, the temperature became too hot, and she could not receive guests.

The Sun decided to give this duty to her third and beloved child, Earth. The Earth, where, with every turn around the mother, flowers

grew from his footsteps, and the sound of his melodious laughter could be heard through the birds and hyenas. He gifted the song of love and happiness to the inhabitants of the solar system. The Earth was the kindest child of the Sun, but he was still too young and naïve to be a guest house.

The third child of Sun started a new adventure. The guests entered through the gates of the oceans and gradually made their way to the land. The guests liked the land so much that they did not want to return to their homeland. Merciful Earth, when he saw the guests oppressing each other, he would not complain to his mother lest she burns them.

His heart was so soft and kind, that he cried so that springs would flow from his tears. The clear water would be pure wine for the guests.

From the heart of the oceans to the heights of the mountains; from the roaring waves of the seas to the rainwater that sat on the branches of the vines, everything was for the guests.

But instead of displaying gratitude and sharing the bounty, what did the guests do?

Like hungry monsters, they clung to the body of the Earth. They plucked and ate from him and wounded him. They were unaware of the fact that the Earth was soft and thin. The Earth gave and hoped for gifts in return, but instead, the guests took and took and gave nothing back. They oppressed the Earth without realising the oppression was shortening his life and also their own.



# Utopia Story

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SAMIHA SHANJANA

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The cold morning breeze comes from the north side of the balcony and touches Sahar's feet. It feels like someone is tickling them with a feather covered in ice. She opens her eyes and tries to see through the window. The morning sun is shining brightly. "It's going to be a good day," Sahar whispers to herself. She wakes up and makes her bed, but the clock disappoints her. It's already 7:15am! Her classes will start at 8:00am. "Jeez. I don't want to ruin my good day." She quickly gets ready and starts for her school.

She walks beside the road. The vibrant colours of different flowers catch her attention and reflect in her eyes. The morning air is light and fresh. She can see sparkles everywhere. These sparkles are not merely bright lights. They are the inner joy of the people living happily after winning a deadly battle with Climate Change. "Climate Change?" Yes, it's a heavy word.

Sahar heard about floods and heatwaves when she was 8 years old. Having dinner with family and hearing stories from her parents about how they overcame those natural calamities are one of the best memories of her childhood. Those stories were more like fairy tales

for her. She never expected to experience anything like that.

In 2016 when the entirety of South Asia was fighting against the drastic changes in climate, Sahar got the opportunity to experience all of these fairy tales for herself. Sahar loves to read storybooks that have a nice ending. She doesn't like the tragedy genre because they always end in heartbreak for the reader. Due to climate change, Sahar discovered herself in a state which could be only described as the main character of a tragic story. She thought she would never be able to go back to her normal life again. It was like a nightmare for her. Even if all the changes settled to a constant position, she assumed that she wouldn't see any happiness in the next chapters of her life. However, the nightmare didn't last long.

Sahar can hear birds chirping instead of what used to be the annoying horn sounds of vehicles accompanied by screeching tires and disgruntled people manoeuvring through traffic. She looks to her left and sees the stream that flows from the neighbouring city running along with her. The surface is reflecting the sunlight and it looks like small white shiny pearls are floating on the water. She wants to take some of them with her, but she knows very well she can't. She can see a grey-coloured gate from a far distance and it doesn't take her long to recognize that she has almost reached her school. She starts running as fast as she can. "I can, I can, I can. Run, run, run," exclaims Sahar. The school bell rings. Sahar steps inside and rushes to her classroom. She comes to the 3rd floor through the staircase, turns left, and enters her classroom.

Sahar sits beside the window. The atmosphere of the entire classroom is calm. Nothing has changed that much after overcoming the terrific challenges of climate except some additional courses, which have been added to the curriculum. Sahar loves to learn by experiencing things herself. In these courses, students have to come up with their own ideas to tackle future climate threats and that's why she loves them. Mere bookish knowledge can't satisfy her thirst for experiencing things more and more. Suddenly, a group of students outside grabs her attention. They are planting trees in the schoolyard. There are varieties of flower plants such as daisies, cosmos, periwinkle,

lantana, plumeria, and more. Sahar smiles. It's noon – time for lunch.

Sahar along with her friends goes to their dining hall. They stand in a queue. She grabs a plate and takes a cup of rice, a cup of green veggies, one egg and a glass of water. She takes out a chair and sits beside the window. She tastes her meal. She can taste the white rice grain with the freshness of the green vegetables. The veggies come from the school garden and are freshly harvested. The vegetable's clear soup is salty and she can taste that some different spices have been used today, but she likes the taste. She completes her lunch and starts walking.

She looks around her. Everyone has a smiling face. They are laughing wholeheartedly. Nature also has decorated itself with a new look. She can't express her cheerfulness in words. It seems like it's the world she wanted to live in. "I hope it's not a dream. If it is a dream, then I wish this dream never ends," she said to herself.



# Heavy Flood

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BAS REZAYEE

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Her eyes are following the book's words, but is she really reading and understanding them? It has been a while since Sara has been able to concentrate on assignments or tasks as she used to. There was a huge and damaging flood in a neighbouring village. These days, the one and only thing that fills Sara's mind is the concern over whether that dangerous flood will come to her village, forcing them to relocate and go somewhere else. Sara feels deep sadness that the flooding is damaging her peaceful village, and will not allow her to play, to rest under the green trees and read her favourite books. She worries about losing her home. It is not only a small village to her; it means everything to her. Sara cares about everyone there. She helps those who are in need; she plays with kids and this makes them happy. Sara loves the fresh air, blue sky and the green land of her village.

Sara used to spend most of her time reading books, watering the flowers, gardening and helping her mother with the housework. But now all she does is worry about losing her home, peace and her village. After a few days what Sara was obsessively thinking about, actually happened.

It was about 4 o'clock in the morning and Sara was sleeping and dreaming. Her mother came to Sara and woke her up and told her in a hurry, "We must move, the flood had been coming and it flowed over the whole village." She was shocked and heard huge noises from outside – one was crying, the other was screaming. The kids were all terrified. No one knew where to go. As these thoughts had been consuming Sara's mind for so long, she wondered if she was dreaming and if this was just a nightmare. But alas, it was not. In the early morning, the sky was almost dark, and no one could see each other. Sara was not moving; she was stuck in her thoughts. Her mother again came to her, this time angry and shouted at her to get up and move, "We should go." Sara asked "Where?" Her mother responded, "I do not know where, I just know we must leave here as soon as possible, otherwise we all will die."

People scattered and everyone moved to the nearest village to save their lives. It was almost 11 o'clock when Sara and her family reached the other village exhausted, helpless and homeless. The only things she had with her that she managed to grab as she was leaving were her two favourite books and her small doll that she received from her grandmother on her birthday.

The people from the neighbouring village helped the vulnerable people, provided them food and some living essentials. It was a dark night and Sara was outside, staring at the dark sky and bright stars, and still thinking about her village. This time she thought of the bigger picture. She was thinking how the flood came, from where and what people could do to stop such dangerous events in the future.

It was the second time in a year that Sara's family was displaced. The first time, because their home was near the coast, and the rising sea levels drove them away. This time because of the heavy flooding. That night Sara was wondering how many more times she would be forced to change her home again and again, to start from zero, and to make a place her home. And why these things were happening at all.

The next morning Sara woke up with resolve as she decided not to give up. Sara decided to study and do research into why this phenomenon happens, how these catastrophic events can affect a

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vulnerable community and what are the strategies to overcome those events and build resilience. Sara decided to gain knowledge and share awareness among her community. She decided to be a climate leader rather than a victim.





# The Beauty of Nature

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ISABEL BORGES PEREIRA

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During the past few years, environmental organizations, activists, and youth groups in Timor-Leste have worked hard to make the world a better place to live. Numerous youth groups, including the organization that I founded, United Develop Serves-Foundation (UDS-F), sometimes bring students to the beach to help clean the area. Before going, we teach them the importance of throwing rubbish in its place and carrying water bottles everywhere. In addition, my sister's newly founded NGO, named Clean and Green Timor-Leste (CGTL), often organizes beach cleaning every weekend. Lots of other organizations, like Flora and Fauna, Movimento Tasi Mos, and others have contributed to make Timor Leste more beautiful. Furthermore, these NGOs post videos and pictures of places like rivers, beaches and parks in Dili Timor-Leste through social media.

One night, I dreamed of playing at the beach with my parents and my boyfriend. Early that beautiful morning, my mom woke me up at 5 AM. She knocked on my door and shouted, "Isabel.... Isabel... Isabel... would you like to go for a morning walk at the beach with me and daddy?" I immediately opened my eyes and answered "Mom, am

I still in a dream?” “No, you are not!” she replied. “A few minutes ago, we were playing together at the beach. I must have been dreaming,” I explained. “Wake up and go with us to the beach, if you want,” my mom said. I guess I was dreaming; “okay mom...I am getting ready now.”

I immediately got up from the bed and got ready to go to the beach called Cristo - Rei Dili, located in the capital city of Timor-Leste. I called my boyfriend, Avio, to come to our house, so that the four of us could go together. At 5:45 AM we left the house and arrived at the beach by 6 AM.

That early morning was so quiet, calm and peaceful. There, we began by climbing the mountain and watching the sun rise. We looked at the sea from above, which was so pretty. The birds were singing in the sky, which made us feel very relaxed. After watching the sun rise, we came down to the beach, which was so clean and fresh. I swam with my parents and my boyfriend. The road that was usually crowded was so quiet, with no sound pollution. There was only a salesman who sold coconut water. After swimming we came out from the sea and bought coconut water to drink. The coconut was so tasty, sweet and fresh.

After drinking, we moved to another place and got our breakfast from the restaurant near the beach named “Rai Henek Mutin” (in English, White Sand). That day I could see the happiness on both my mama and papa’s faces. They had a very romantic and happy conversation, this is what I always want to see from both of them.

It was one of the most wonderful moments in my life. These three people are so special to me, I love them all, and always want to see their smiling faces each and everyday and everywhere they are. That moment was so amazing because I could feel and enjoy the beauty of nature with my loved ones.

The more we put ourselves into something good, the more we ourselves will enjoy the beauty of it. When we throw rubbish everywhere, we will also suffer from the actions and attitude that we show. If we want to enjoy the beauty of nature, we have to also take care of it. We can do things like organize clean-up programs instead of destroying the environment. The more we contribute to cleanliness,

the more we will enjoy the beauty of these places.



# Fresh Air and a Glass of Water

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SAKINA NAIMI

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I was awakened by the heavy, warm light of the sun. I had never experienced such hot weather before. I looked at the vase in my room and I saw how much the flower had faded in a single day. When I checked my mobile, the temperature was above 40°C, which is completely abnormal in a country like Afghanistan. We always had temperate weather in the summer and very cold weather in the winter. I opened the window to let the fresh weather come in, but when I opened it, I was faced with pollution and a dark sky that hid the nice buildings. Quickly, I closed the window and turned on the air conditioner to keep the house cool. While the air conditioner produces cold air inside the home, it produces hot air outside, only making the problem worse. After I gave some water to the flower in my room, I ate breakfast before going to work. I worked for a construction company, and I was so happy that our work was easier than it was in the past. Just give guidance to the robots and they did the work. As the population increased day by day, the space for living became limited. That is why our company bought a patch of jungle to make buildings and sell them to the customers. Robots cut all the trees so fast and people

bought the wood to use in the winter. Before cutting those trees, there were some beautiful birds and other animals living inside the jungle. After the robots did what we told them there were no more animals in that place. On my way to work that morning, there was very heavy traffic and I arrived late. Fortunately, I did not need to put my car in the parking lot because it was controlled by computers and did not need a driver. After my work time finished, I decided to go for a walk. When I reached the street, I used a mask because of the polluted air. I could not walk more than 10 minutes because of the air quality. The traffic noise was also annoying, so I came back home. As the weather was warm and I was thirsty, I went to take some water from the filter machine, but there was no water because I forgot to put it in in the morning and there was no water in the taps, either. These days, most of the buildings face a lack of water. TV NEWS was talking about the lack of drinkable water in the whole world. I was just so worried about all the new things that were happening in our life. We had an easier life and much more comfortable work, but the weather was getting worse day by day. We have nice buildings to live in, but the green places were less visible in our cities. I wondered if the jungle we destroyed to make buildings would have given us clean, fresh water. But what could we do, when everyone in the world was doing the same thing?



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