

IN ALL FAIRNESS

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PHOTOS: INTERNET



A few weeks ago, a pop music video went viral online, showcasing, surprisingly enough, Saudi teenage girls dancing, singing and expressing themselves, for a change. Titled 'Hwages', loosely translating to 'Concerns', the music video shows girls playing basketball, skateboarding and dancing – all wrapped up in abayas (loose, black attire covering the body). Created by 8ies, the girls take part in many activities (like driving a car etc.) that they are otherwise not allowed to do, and song lyrics like 'If only God would rid us of men.' The video was uploaded last December and has been viewed more than three million times on YouTube already.

As much as one would praise the girls and the makers of this video for finally taking a bold step, it's also worth wondering how in 2017, women still have to live through archaic rules and ancient rituals.

Things are not all so different in this part of the world either. Have you ever seen one of those ad-films where a fairness cream magically changes the luck of an otherwise female 'weakling' – unable to reach goals, never being liked by the opposite sex let alone getting married and of course, being unfit for the dream job? Over the years, stories of the wonders of these creams evolved with time – decades ago a girl was useless unless she changed her skin colour (using the fairness creams of course), thus wooing the man to finally notice her and marry her. Today, the fairness creams are all about oozing confidence in a woman. Gone are the days when you needed to change the colour of your skin to get married; it's all about how confident you will feel and attack the difficult circumstances in front of you – still wearing the fairness cream and changing your skin colour, however.

Clearly, these age-old ideas of the 'forsha (fair-skinned) woman' winning all the trophies in society have rooted themselves so deep, that particular

sections of the social net actually profit out of it.

One wonders, though, if people who watch these ad-films still believe in these ridiculous ideas. Do the educated folks, for who these films are made and showcased in the middle of fictions, reality shows and derais, actually believe that rubbing cream on one's face will change colour? Unfortunately, they do.

The idea of marriage being the definitive life-goal of a woman is so strong in the subcontinent that even today, the education of a young daughter would be incomplete without teaching her how to take care of her home, cook, throw dinner parties and of course, taking care of her 'ultimate family' – her in laws. Coupled with this idea, girls are also required to be fair skinned – otherwise, there is a risk of them staying single their whole lives – something that even today, the society cannot fathom.

It's time to make a similar video in this part of the country, which would voice out 'change', 'acceptance' and 'tolerance'. It's time to create a digital revolution, where the content would be speaking directly to the hearts of the people, breaking all barriers and ending the nonsensical idea of being the stronger person if you are fair-skinned.

In all fairness, it's what's inside that truly matters. ■

| TIME OUT |

SNOW: A MELANCHOLIC JOURNEY

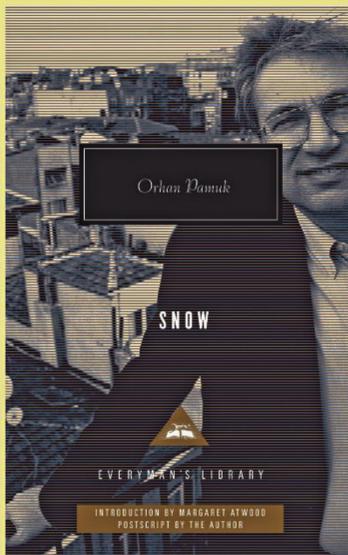
APURBA JAHANGIR

If you are someone who can embrace the emotion that is melancholy, then you can surely relate to Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk. For the book lovers out there, Star Weekend picks the writer's best interpretation on teenage suicide—Snow.

The story is based on the protagonist Ka, a poet, who returns to Turkey after 12 years of being political exile in Germany. He has several motives, first, as a journalist, to investigate a spate of suicides but also in the hope of meeting a woman he used to know. Heavy snow cuts off the town for about three days during which time Ka is in conversation with a former communist,

a secularist, a fascist nationalist, a possible Islamic extremist, Islamic moderates, young Kurds, the military, the Secret Service, the police and in particular, an actor-revolutionary. In the midst of this, love and passion are to be found. Temporarily closed off from the world, a farcical coup is staged and linked melodramatically to a stage play. The main discussion concerns the interface of secularism and belief but there are references to all of Turkey's twentieth century history.

The best part of this book is that it tells a story which we can all relate to. The story summarises many of the political and cultural tensions of modern Turkey and successfully combines humour, social commentary, mysticism, and a deep sympathy with its characters.



"Pamuk knows that as well as anybody and dramatises it in a raucous scene in which a group of leftists, Kurds and Islamists gather in a hotel room to write a letter to the Frankfurter Rundschau."

— *The Guardian*

"The Book is not only an engrossing feat of tale-spinning, but essential reading for our times."

— *The New York Times*

QUIRKY SCIENCE

SPEED OF A VIPER'S STRIKE



Feeding is paramount to the survival of almost every animal, and just about every living organism is eaten by another. Not surprisingly, the animal kingdom shows many examples of extreme specialisation – the chameleon's tongue, fox diving into snow, cheetah sprinting – for capturing prey or escaping predators.

The antagonistic predator-prey relationship is of interest to evolutionary biologists because it often leads to extreme adaptations in both the predator and prey. One such relationship is seen in the rattlesnake-kangaroo rat system – a model system for studying the dynamics of high-power predator-prey interactions that can be observed under completely natural conditions.

Curiously, however, very little is known about the strike performance of rattlesnakes under natural conditions. But that is now about to change because technological advances in portable high-speed cameras have made it possible for biologists like Timothy Higham at the University of California, Riverside to capture three-dimensional video in the field of a rattlesnake preying on a kangaroo rat.



HOW THE DARKNESS AND THE COLD KILLED

Sixty six million years ago, the sudden extinction of the dinosaurs started the ascent of the mammals, ultimately resulting in humankind's reign on Earth. Climate scientists now reconstructed how tiny droplets of sulfuric acid formed high up in the air after the well-known impact of a large asteroid and blocking the sunlight for several years, had a profound influence on life on Earth. Plants died, and death spread through the food web. Previous theories focussed on the shorter-lived dust ejected by the impact. The new computer simulations show that the droplets resulted in long-lasting cooling, a likely contributor to the death of land-living dinosaurs. An additional kill mechanism might have been a vigorous mixing of the oceans, caused by the surface cooling, severely disturbing marine ecosystems.

"The big chill following the impact of the asteroid that formed the Chicxulub crater in Mexico is a turning point in Earth history," says Julia Brugger from the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), lead author of the study to be published in the *Geophysical Research Letters*. "We can now contribute new insights for understanding the much debated ultimate cause for the demise of the dinosaurs at the end of the Cretaceous era." To investigate the phenomenon, the scientists for the first time used a specific kind of computer simulation normally applied in different contexts, a climate model coupling atmosphere, ocean and sea ice. They build on research showing that sulfur-bearing gases that evaporated from the violent asteroid impact on our planet's surface were the main factor for blocking the sunlight and cooling down Earth.

Source: Sciencedaily.com

STRANGE HISTORY

WHEN HEROIN WAS A MEDICINE

Heroin is considered to be one of the most addictive substances in the world. Currently, its usage is highly controlled as it can cause lethal impacts on the human body if inhaled or injected. However, only about 100 years ago, this lethal chemical called Diamorphine was marketed under the trade name Heroin all over the world as a cure for all illnesses. Doctors used to prescribe the medicine as a non-addictive cough medicine, anti-sleeping medication, a weight loss aid and also a sleeping pill. It was prized by its users for the elevated stimulation it created within the human mind after being injected. This is why, in 1895, a German pharmaceutical company called Bayer derived the name Heroine from the Greek word 'Heros' as heroin was believed to create heroic effects on a user. However, scientists soon began to realise their fateful mistake. In 1924, the United States Congress banned its sale, importation or manufacture in the USA and termed it as a narcotic. The League of Nations banned its sale, trade and manufacture all over the world in 1925. However, it took several more years to remove this medicine – heroin – from doctors' prescriptions as a cough medicine and weight loss aid.

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

