

## **1. Title: Rhea's Life After English Honours**

**Contributor: Rhea Gupta**

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If the external, patriarchal world gave rise to a dystopian reality, our college represented a liberating and empowering haven where we could all co-exist with like-minded, progressive individuals and simultaneously be accepted for our idiosyncrasies and distinct personalities. The fiction we would read in the space of the JDMC campus would provide us with an escape from the hierarchal, gendered, class-divided actuality of the world, awaiting us the moment we would step out of our campus. With the pandemic invading all our lives and colleges being shut for more than eleven months, we have all experienced our safe haven slipping away from our fingers.

Our mobility as young women in a patriarchal nation suddenly went from being sparse, to non-existent. Due to being stuck at home, most of us were supposed to be answerable about who we spoke with, what we purchased, till when we stayed up at night and what we did throughout the day. Being under constant scrutiny, having no room of one's own (literally and metaphorically) stripped us off the minimal privacy we used to have, subsequently trampling upon our efficiency and creativity. Most of us struggled to balance a virtualised college with never-ending domestic chores, being pressurised by our families and relatives to constantly help with household responsibilities and deprioritise ourselves in the process. The dread of losing our college lives, missing out on multiple career opportunities and wasting away our days of youth and productivity at home, persistently haunted the most of us during the days of the pandemic.

As students of Literature who have been sensitized towards socio-political injustices and calamities, I am sure the past year affected us all in irreversible ways, taking massive hits at our mental well-beings. Seeking therapy, occasional journaling and viewing empowering content online, enabled me to make a little sense of the chaos around me. This must be a particularly difficult time for students dealing with mental fatigue or depression as well as the pressure to perform well academically or to get into their desired colleges for higher studies. I would encourage them to cut themselves some slack after graduation, take some time off their monotonous schedules to rejuvenate emotionally and realise it is understandable to not constantly be academically productive. The monotony of online classes, interviews and webinars, as well as the eeriness of staring at a screen for multiple hours altogether, must be taken into consideration while evaluating one's performance in college – don't be too harsh on yourself for being unable to constantly focus on classes. As students of Marxism, we ought to realise that the very notion of being persistently productive stems from the capitalistic framework around us that has moulded us!

Our professors in JDMC were extremely helpful, considerate and supportive after my graduation as well as throughout the pandemic. Communicating with them after graduation helped me gain a lot of clarity regarding my future; my conversations with them were therapeutic and uplifting, as they made me understand it was alright to not know what I wanted to do immediately after graduation and that I could take a few months out for myself, to reflect upon where my interests lied rather than taking unsure, hasty steps towards a new job or higher studies. Do not shy away from reaching out to them and clearing your academical doubts or taking advice for future activities.

After completing my Bachelors in English Literature, I was consumed by a whirlpool of rejections and uncertainty about my future. I wrongly viewed each rejection as the end of the world! If you get rejected by the colleges you had thought you would get into for higher studies, try not to let the dejection consume you. There are multiple other opportunities awaiting you in the future! Use the upcoming year to explore your interests and pursue other hobbies; be gentle with yourself and indulge in activities you otherwise were not able to take up during college – it could be learning a new language or an instrument, trying your hand at poetry or cooking, or starting an online blog. Bridge the gaps between your passion, vocation and your future profession by taking time to contemplate upon what your next step after graduation should be; don't panic on seeing others around you having their next steps figured out...it's acceptable for many to not know what they want from their lives after graduation. We're often made to believe we ought to have a concrete plan for the future by the end of our Bachelors' degrees; most don't tell us we have our entire lives ahead of us to experiment with new jobs, switch career lanes or simply take a break to prioritise our physical and mental health. Being women, we've particularly been conditioned to believe our freedom and youth is short-lived, after which we eventually have to forego personal desires and ambition to bind ourselves to domesticity in order to be deemed as favourable by society. It's imperative for us as students of feminism to tackle these patriarchal notions pertaining to womanhood and realise that we have a lot of our lives ahead of us to achieve goals, fulfil desires and shape our identities.