THE

Lekhak



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Lekhakbyishika

Editor's Note
Behind the Scenes
Mea Vita
In Food We Trust
World Food Day

October Issue 2026

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Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the first issue of *The Lekhak*. It's a warm, almost strange feeling to write that.

Lekhak began as a formal academic space to help students find summaries, analyses, and lines to ponder, the things that helped me get through my college days. Along the way, I added a small corner where people could write their thoughts, or where I could write my own about books, poetry, or life in general, just to keep the place alive. Now I want it to grow into something bigger: a community of readers sharing experiences and stories.

It won't be only about books. You'll find essays, stories, poems, and interviews about travel, cooking, and all the things that make us human and connect us even more to life. For me, a magazine shouldn't feel like a lecture, but like a conversation.

This first issue is a promise. I want *The Lekhak* to be curious, warm, and full of experiences and opinions. I want it to be a place for voices that are sometimes told to stay quiet. If, after reading these pages, you feel like writing back, writing your own piece, or sharing your story, please do. Lekhak will only work if it is shared.

With love,

Ishika Singh

FOUNDER & EDITOR, *The Lekhak*

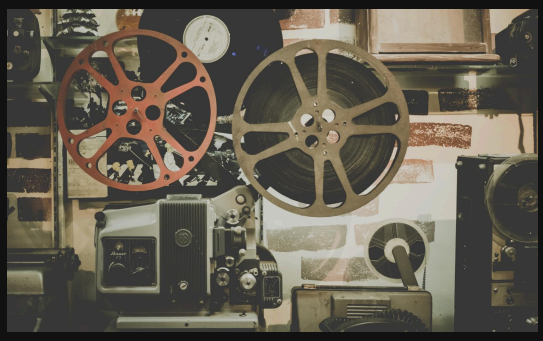
BEHIND THE SCENES

The magic behind the camera

What the audience never sees.

- Pradeep





My heart beats for the magic of cinema, a love born from a deep appreciation for stories and their power to move souls. But I am not content to be a passive observer. I want to understand the tapestry behind the scenes: the camera angles, the lighting, the performances that come together into a masterpiece.

I first watched a film this way through behind-the-scenes footage, and it was a revelation. I now take in a film with quiet contemplation, then return to study its camera movements and the director's intent. Here are six pieces of trivia worth keeping.

01 Everything Everywhere All at Once

The 2022 film's visuals look expensive, but no big post-production house made them. A small team of filmmakers who learned the craft in their bedrooms created over 80% of the shots, barely using CGI. They were led by Zak Stoltz, who had never supervised effects on a feature before.

02 The Godfather

Marlon Brando is revered as one of the greatest actors of all time, yet he often read his lines from cue cards placed just out of frame, even in The Godfather. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

03 Interstellar

Those breathtaking cornfield shots were not CGI. Christopher Nolan insisted on 500 acres of real corn, and the filmmakers even turned a profit by selling the crop they did not destroy while filming.

04 The Dark Knight

Heath Ledger's constant lip licking as the Joker looks like brilliant characterization, but it served a practical purpose: his lip prosthetics loosened whenever he talked, and the habit kept them in place.

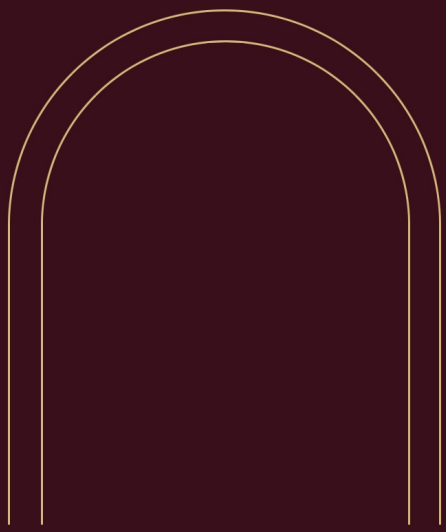
05 Rocky IV

The punches felt real because they were. Sylvester Stallone, who wrote, directed and starred, told Dolph Lundgren to actually hit him. One brutal uppercut put Stallone in the hospital for nine days.

06 Fight Club

There are Starbucks cups in nearly every shot, some hidden, some easy to spot. According to David Fincher, he struggled to find good coffee when he moved to LA in 1984, until Starbucks arrived.

Watch once for the feeling. Watch again for the craft.



Mea Vita

KAVYA S

So I'll kneel in front of god
Beg him
for a moment
to stand in front of heaven's door

I'll hope I have enough virtues
To listen to your melody
As the paradise of hell engulfs me

I'll wait for you
As I stand in front of heaven's door
Patiently
For eternities to come.

Death in All Their Food

A feminist reading of We Have Always Lived in the Castle



By Ishika Singh · *This essay discusses the ending.*

> *"I am going to put death in all their food and watch them die."*

What happens when a woman doesn't have a place to put her anger? What does she do with it then? Merricat's sentence is one answer. It is lethal and powerful, yet politely delivered.

To see why she has nowhere else to put it, look at how the village treats her family. The Blackwoods are wealthy, with a whole house and the land around it, and the village punishes them for it. Why? Because the estate is maintained by two unmarried women, with no man's authority in it. So they are called mad, witches, murderers. These labels work as a kind of social policing, taking the sisters' freedom and turning it into a chokehold.

Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* helps explain the pattern. They argue that literature tends to split women into two personalities, the angel who serves and the monster who refuses. In Jackson's novel, the sisters fit both, or at least represent the two personalities to some extent. Constance is soft spoken and has a quiet way of doing things. She handles every ingredient, and what comes of it, with respect. Merricat is the opposite. She has a dark, mysterious energy and does borderline witch-like things: she talks to her cat, nails books to trees, buries money and other objects, and hopes they will work.

Continued overleaf

Food is the connection between them. A house like this gives food to its women as their territory. Constance embraces what she has been given, and Merricat makes it a weapon. But food also shows trust. Letting someone decide what goes into your stomach is among the most intimate kinds of trust, and that makes it the most powerful thing a woman holds in this world.

This is where the book becomes radical. The sugar bowl is both the crime and the care. Merricat poisoned it knowing her sister never takes sugar, which was the only way to be sure Constance stayed safe. Food is the weapon of death and the act of care at once.

Constance's reply is the radical moment. She knew all along what her sister had done, and it was never mentioned after the incident. Here the server never turns on the refuser. The two personalities share the same space, the same table, and the same love and protection for each other.

The ending does something similar with food. The weapon becomes an offering: after the house is burned, the villagers leave food at the sisters' door.

So what does a woman do with her anger when she has nowhere to put it? In this house she puts it in the one room she has been given. She cooks it, serves it, and watches the world decide whether to eat.

INTERVIEW • IN CONVERSATION • 16 OCTOBER

On World Food Day

*Pastry chef **Abha Singh** of A'Bella Bakes on hot fudge cake, a year of doubt, and the kitchen that always calls her back.*

Abha Singh · Founder & Pastry Chef, A'Bella Bakes



Abha, founder & pastry chef of A'Bella Bakes.

IN HER OWN WORDS

"I'm Abha, the founder and pastry chef behind A'Bella Bakes, my little pâtisserie. I'm passionate about creating handmade desserts that are comforting, beautiful and made with love."

AGE

24

QUALIFICATIONS

B.Sc. Home Science (Honours)
Advanced Diploma in Bakery & Pastry Arts

SIGNATURE

Hot fudge cake — warm, soft chocolate cake with rich hot fudge sauce

STYLE

Classic flavours with her own little twist

FIND HER

On Instagram — *A'Bella Bakes*

01

Many people find that cooking, baking, singing or dancing becomes a kind of therapy for them, a way to slow down, process emotions or simply feel like themselves again.

What does baking feel like to you on the days when you need that kind of comfort, and has the kitchen ever helped you through a difficult time?

For me, cooking and baking have always been a way to switch off everything else. Whenever I'm stressed or having a difficult day, being in the kitchen gives me something to focus on and helps me feel calmer. I really enjoy the whole process, from preparing the ingredients to seeing the result.

There have definitely been times when the kitchen has helped me get through a difficult phase. Even when I'm not in the best mood, cooking or baking somehow makes me feel better and brings me back to myself. I think that's what I love most about it's a space where I feel comfortable and at peace.

02

Almost every chef can trace their love of food back to a person or a place, such as a grandmother's kitchen, a street stall or a family table.

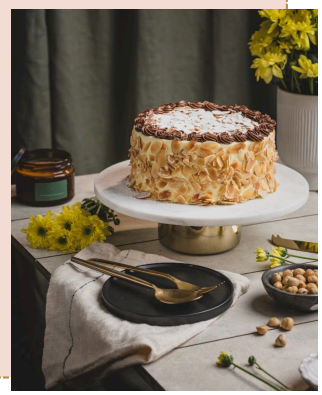
Could you take us back to that first memory of baking or eating that stayed with you, and tell us how it shaped the kind of chef you became?

I think my love for baking really started with the simple memories of being around food at home. I was always curious about what was happening in the kitchen and loved watching how basic ingredients could turn into something completely different.

What stayed with me was that feeling of making something with your own hands and then seeing people enjoy it. I think that's what eventually shaped me like a chef. Even today, I care a lot about the little details and about making food that feels comforting and brings people a little bit of happiness. For me, baking has never been just about the final product, it's always been about the feeling behind it.







Handmade desserts from the A'Bella Bakes kitchen.

03

Every chef has a dish that carries more meaning than its ingredients, something tied to a person, a festival or a feeling of home.

Which dish is that for you, and what do you feel when you make it today?

For me, it would definitely be a hot fudge cake. It's one of those desserts that feels comfortable in a dish. I've always loved the combination of a warm, soft chocolate cake with that rich hot fudge sauce. It's simple, but it has so many feelings attached to it.

Even today, whenever I make it, I get the same sense of comfort and happiness. It reminds me of why I fell in love with baking in the first place. I think some desserts don't need to be complicated to be special, and hot fudge cake is that dessert for me.

04

A professional kitchen can be intense, fast, and demanding, and it is not always easy to stay passionate through the pressure.

Was there a moment in your journey when you almost gave up or doubted yourself, and what helped you keep going?

Yes. There was a point in my journey when I almost gave up. I quit my job one random day and moved back home, and honestly, I ended up wasting almost a whole year just being unsure about what I wanted to do next.

What really helped me during that time was the people around me. My family, especially my brother, kept hyping me up and reminding me of what I was capable of. My friends were always there too, supporting me and believing in me even when I wasn't really believing in myself.

Looking back, I think that phase was important to me. It gave me time to figure things out, and eventually I found my way back to baking with a lot more clarity and determination.

"Some desserts don't need to be complicated to be special."

05

Food is also a way of telling stories about culture, memory, migration, and identity.

When you plate a dish, what story are you hoping the person eating it will feel, and how would you describe your style of baking to someone who has never tasted your food?

For me, food should tell a story without needing too many words. When someone eats something, I've made, I want them to feel something, whether it's comfort, nostalgia, excitement, or simply happiness.

I'd describe my baking style as a mix of classic flavours with my own little twist. I love keeping things familiar and comforting, but I also enjoy playing around with textures, flavors and presentations. I'm someone who pays a lot of attention to the small details, but I don't want the food to feel overly complicated.

At the end of the day, I want my desserts to feel like something you'd remember, not just something that looked beautiful on a plate.



Source - https://aabha.shorthandstories.com/my-story-through-my-work/

"Passion is important, but so are patience, discipline and knowing when to keep going."

— ABHA, A'BELLA BAKES



06

If a young reader dreaming of becoming a chef, or just of finding joy in baking, were reading this article, what is the one thing you would want them to take away from your journey?

I would want them to know that being a chef definitely sounds cool from the outside, but there is so much more to it than what people see. It can be physically and mentally exhausting, the hours can be crazy, and honestly, there are times when you barely have a personal life or any real work-life balance.

But at the same time, if you genuinely love what you do, there's something very special about this profession. My journey has taught me that passion is important, but so are patience, discipline and knowing when to keep going. So, if you really want to become a chef, go for it, but go into knowing what the journey actually demands, and be prepared to work for the dream you want.

TASTE THE STORY

A'Bella Bakes

Handmade desserts that are comforting, beautiful and made with love.

FIND HER ON INSTAGRAM

Source for pictures - https://aabha.shorthandstories.com/my-story-through-my-work/