

# ARTIVISM: ISSUE 02

## RUNNER UP 3

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### WHO WRITES THE NEXT VERSE –

MARYAM JAWARD

We streamed their stages in island heat,  
Barefoot dreams on a fractured street.  
Neon Seoul on a borrowed screen  
Showed us what discipline could mean.

Beat by beat, they trained desire,  
Sweat turned youth into empire.  
Years compressed in mirrored rooms,  
Talent rising, industry blooms.

We copied steps in tuition halls,  
Between exam charts and peeling walls.  
While power cuts erased our night,  
Their skylines carved electric light.

Was it just glitter, sound, and fame?  
Or statecraft wrapped in a pop refrain?  
Factories hidden behind each beat,  
Policy marching beneath dancing feet.

They funded art like infrastructure,  
Planned each sector, shaped each future.  
Culture wasn't chance or trend,  
It was export strategy, start to end.

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And something shifted in our gaze,  
Beyond the fandom, past the craze.  
We stopped just asking who to be,  
We asked how nations shape destiny.

In cafés where the Wi-Fi lags,  
Between exam stress and salary drags,  
We speak of zones and startup parks,  
Of ports that function, grids that spark.

Not only visas out of here,  
Not only exile born of fear,  
But ministries that actually plan,  
And budgets built by steady hand.

The East Asian effect ran deep,  
Into the questions that keep us awake from sleep.  
Why export labour, skill, and brain,  
Then borrow back in aid and pain?

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Why must reform be slow and thin,  
While discipline builds from within?  
Why fear ambition framed as bold,  
When small states elsewhere break the mould?

We stream perfection every night,  
But now we measure more than light.  
We watch how culture fuels GDP,  
How narrative shapes economy.

The speakers fade. The screens go dark.  
But something steady leaves its mark.  
Not just songs we understand,  
But models we begin to demand.

Not blind applause for distant lands,  
Nor envy cupped in folded hands.  
The music taught us how they grew,  
The harder question: "What will we do?"