

MONOGRAPH

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BEHIND CLOSED DOORS:
THE HISTORY AND
ARCHITECTURAL BEAUTY
OF COLONIAL CALCUTTA

*An Exclusive Interview
With Susmit Bose*

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Editor's Note

Ayush Chakraborty

So here we are with our February issue. We are two months into the year 2021 and I can say that a lot has changed amongst us. Except maybe me asking Anuraag for work only to find out that he's finished everything already. That bumbling idiot will never change. But apart from all that jazz, I believe that we are finally starting to see the early signs of actually getting somewhere. It absolutely amazes me to see the amount of submissions we are receiving currently. Not to mention, the interviews. Our first live interview with Susmit Bose himself comes with this month's issue. None of it, and I repeat, none of it would've been possible if not for the wonderful people I work with. It is has been an honour to work amongst such talent that comprises the humble romantic that is Monograph.

Hope, ladies and gentlemen, has unearthed itself (if I do say so myself). But let's put hope and aspirations aside for a moment and take a look at the works of dedicated writers and artists, for each work is a treasure in its own right. I present to you, the fifth issue of The Monograph Magazine





BEHIND CLOSED DOORS PT. 1

Anuraag Das Sarma

THE HISTORY AND ARCHITECTURAL BEAUTY OF COLONIAL CALCUTTA

History is a tainted subject – prone to back-calculations and personal inclinations. It is kind to some, cruel to others, written by the victors, quoted by academics and twisted by present day realpolitik. The past hardly shapes the present – it is in fact, the other way round. Let's take the Marathas as an example. Often treated as nationalists who tried to “save India from Aurangzeb” – this reputation of theirs is a flawed one. They were nationalists, yes – but they identified not with India but with the Marathi-speaking populace. They could have cared less about the religious leanings of the Mughal Empire, for in their overzealous quest for political supremacy, they killed both Hindus and Muslims. In the name of their master, they reduced villages to dust, and murdered innocent civilians in cold blood. Sadhus, monks, farmers, Brahmins, fishermen, warriors- everyone fled when they heard that the Bargis were coming. Like savages they descended on these innocent men and women - raped, tortured and killed civilians, looted everything and left just as unceremoniously as they'd arrived. Their savagery was captured perfectly in the age-old popular rhyme:

খোকা ঘুমালো , পাড়া জুড়ালো
বর্গী এলো দেশে ,
বুলবুলিতে ধান খেয়েছে ,
খাজনা দেবো কিসে ?

*When the children fall
asleep, silence sets in, the Bargis come to our country
Birds have eaten the grain, how shall I
pay the tax?
All our food and drink is over, how shall
I pay the tax?*

After the Battle of Burdwan in 1747, things seemed to be getting better for Bengal. However, by 1751 no clear victor had emerged and a peace treaty was signed, according to which Aliverdi Khan, the then Nawab of Bengal, had to pay 12 lakhs to the Marathas as chauth. This should have bankrupted Bengal, but instead Bengal entered into its golden period – art flourished and the treasury of Bengal overflowed.

Coming back to my first statement – one would be inclined to ask: “But is this a fabricated lie? Were the Marathas, the ones portrayed often as the underdogs, capable of such horrific acts?” Surely, this could be a carefully constructed exaggeration, crafted by Aliverdi Khan’s minstrels and historians. However, if we do consider the Dutch East India Company’s historical recordings as an impartial source – one would label the casualties of these Maratha invasions at no less than 4,00,000. A similar form of nationalistic militant jingoism suits the status quo in our era of nuclear weaponry and communal riots and hence the barbarity of the Marathas is often overlooked.

However, once the Bargis were out of the scenario, Bengal truly flourished, both in trade and in the arts. The Nawab, Aliverdi Khan (Grandfather of the now immortalized Siraz-ud-Daulah) had come to power via a coup arranged by the Jagat Seth Bankers (comparable to the famous Rothschilds). Aliverdi Khan had proved himself to be a fitting ruler – brave, persistent, a patron of the arts and at times cunning. It was towards the end of his reign that Bengal entered its short-termed golden epoch.

Though ruthless in Battle, the Nawab was committed to the idea of peace and security of his subjects and due to the stability provided by his administration, art flourished. Murshidabadi artists developed a very distinct style under the tutelage of Dip Chand and Nidha Ma of Shahjahanabad fame. Delhi was no longer the most prosperous city in India. It was Bengal – the crown of the vastly diminished Mughal Kingdom. Bengal's revenues had risen by 40%: one single market in Murshidabad handled 6,50,000 tonnes of rice annually: and millions of weavers produced and exported textiles that contributed significantly to the treasury – and it is here that things went wrong.





Aliverdi Khan's successor – Siraj-ud-Daulah, was rash and blunt. He antagonized the veteran commanders who'd served his grandfather loyally and he also alienated the Jagat Seth bankers. He was not a tactful ruler but an oppressive tyrant and a bisexual rapist – the exact opposite to his grandfather who'd usually argue that the Europeans were “like a hive of bees of whose honey you might reap benefit, but if you disturbed their hive they would sting you to death.” Even on his deathbed, he warned his successor to not fight the Europeans, but in 1756, Siraj-ud-Daulah did just that. He razed Calcutta (which was the EIC's biggest trading post in India) to the ground when he found the British fortifying Fort William in response to the then on-going 7-year war. The Siege of Calcutta was a big success for Siraj-ud-Daulah, who caught the British unprepared and destroyed Calcutta in general and the Old Fort in particular. However, in 1757 there appeared on the horizon an enterprising young General Robert Clive, who'd just led a decisive victory in the Carnatic.

Robert Clive had come to India with one thing on his mind – personal enrichment and by the time he went back to England, he'd become one of the richest men in the country. It's ironic- the appropriation of the word 'loot', for perhaps there were no bigger looters than the officers and the stockholders of the East India Company, whose modest office on Leadenhall Street in England saw increasing profits every year – all by looting the treasury of Indian kings and rulers.



Lord Clive, often hailed as a military genius, started out as a lowly writer in the East India Company settlement at Fort St. George, but rose through the ranks when his military prowess was discovered during the First Carnatic War. He was deployed to Bengal to reclaim Calcutta (The Siege of Calcutta had cost the Company 2 million pounds - 600 million pounds when adjusted for inflation) along with Vice Admiral Charles Watson. They took Calcutta with ease on 2nd January 1757.

And here begins the true story of Calcutta. What happened in 1757 changed the course of Indian history forever – The Battle of Plassey. The Battle of Plassey is a tricky battle to analyse – Siraj had already proved himself to be an unfit ruler and it were his actions that led to the battle. Mir Jafar and the Jagat Seth's did double-cross him but considering the tension in the durbar, anyone would've done it. Siraj was not a popular leader to say the least.

Also, in Indian history, most subahs/nawabs rose to power by staging coups – especially in Mughal history. Siraj's grandfather, Aliverdi Khan too came to power through a coup staged by the Jagat Seths. The Jagat Seths however, had now decided to sponsor Mir Jafar, and for this they enlisted the British East India Company. This, ladies and gentlemen, was the war that changed India forever.



The British won and for the first time in history, a company, one that had made the bulk of its money by trading, had managed to place a puppet Emperor and that too in the then-richest province of India.

It is sort of fitting that the oldest building in Calcutta is Clive's country home in Dum Dum. And much like the city it lies in, the history behind this Indo-European juggernaut of a house is shrouded in mystery. It is believed that Clive purchased this house shortly before the Battle of Plassey in 1757. It was known then as Burra Kothi and its origin has always been subject to debate. A passage from the house even extends to a canal connected to Dum Dum's Motijheel – similar to the kind at Kathgola Rajbari (though not as impressive), this suggests that the house belonged to a wealthy family. It is believed that Robert Clive spotted this house while on his march towards Murshidabad and sent his foot-soldiers to order the inhabitants to vacate the house by the time of his return to Calcutta.

"...the British had the gall to call him Clive of India as if he belonged to the country, when all he really did was to ensure that much of the country belonged to him."

-

Shashi

Tharoor, Oxford Union, 2015.



If you allow me to diverge a bit from the Imperial era of Indian History, I'd like to mention that the mound on which Clive House is built has recently given way to certain archaeological findings- namely pieces of pottery that suggest that there existed a civilisation in Bengal around 2,200 years ago.

Coming back to the house itself, it is believed that the house was built in the late 17th century but what is more interesting is the mound it was built on. It is widely believed that the mound was built in one day and while this is visibly more fiction than fact, one cannot help but imagine the reason behind this belief. These popular beliefs, one could argue defined the British Raj in India and they still exist – Hastings Sahib's ghost who rides from his house to his office in Dalhousie (right beside the Income tax Department), Siraj-ud-Daulah's supposed height of 6'10''(fantastically untrue), the belief that electric poles were used to hang independence-activists, the list goes on. Coming back to Clive House however, people also claim that both the garden and the house are haunted (something that oddly plagues all Colonial palaces of the day – Writers', Belvedere Estate, The Royal Calcutta Turf Club, etc.).

Let us now move a little ahead, for this article has already grown longer than I expected it to (a polarising figure like Clive needs careful analysis and I'm afraid I haven't done him justice. There's so much I had to skip through to adhere to a certain word limit). Clive's successor (not a direct successor, that would be Harry Verelst, who was immediately followed by John Cartier who was in turn followed by:-) was the enigmatic warren Hastings.

Hastings was very different from his predecessor- both in approach and in beliefs. While Clive came from an upper-middle class family (his forefathers being constant members of parliament and holding important positions under the King of England) Hastings was born to a poor gentleman, and even though he attended Westminster, there existed a social divide between him and the landed gentry. Another difference lay in their feelings towards India – while Clive looked at it with contempt and used it only to further personal gains Hastings was curious about the local culture and was even quoted as saying “I love India a little more than my own country.”





The first property of William Hastings' that comes to mind would be the Belvedere Estate, which currently houses the National Library and rightfully so – it is a brilliant example of the Anglo-Indian style which had really taken form. C.E. Buckland said of the house, “In the middle of a park studded with groups of trees stands Belvedere House. Its architecture is of a free Italian renaissance style developed of an ordinary Anglo-Indian building. Its terrace overlooks a rich expanse of verdure, its flight of steps are environed by flowing creepers, its ground covered with lotus and water lilies. Its garden encircled with various trees, the banyan, the almond the bamboo, the cotton tree and even by some specimens of the peerless Amherstia.” It is believed that Mir Jafar, after vacating the throne of Murshidabad, settled in Calcutta, where he built many buildings – one of them being the Belvedere House, which he gifted to Hastings.

Belvedere Estate was originally the house of the Governor-General, until the Government House (Raj Bhavan) was built in 1803. It was also witness to one of the most important historic events of the time – the duel between Warren Hastings and his then legal officer – Sir Philip Francis. While the reasons for the rivalry are unclear, it is possible that Francis believed that Hastings' policies were hedonistic and self-serving while Hastings was of the opinion that he was putting an end to corrupt practices present in the E.I.C. administration. Hastings wounded Francis in the duel and the deafening noise of that single gunshot was heard all across England. After the duel, Francis started harbouring feelings of personal resentment towards Hastings' and hence, when Hastings returned to London, Francis, who exercised serious political clout was integral to the impeachment trial of Warren Hastings.

“Mr. Francis.... drew his trigger, but his powder being damp, the pistol did not fire. Mr. Hastings came down from his present to give Mr. Francis time to rectify his priming, and this was done out of a cartridge with which I supplied him upon finding they had no spare powder. Again, the gentlemen took their stands, both presented together, and Mr. Francis fired. Mr. Hastings did the same at the distance of time equal to the counting of one, two, three distinctly, but not greater. His shot took place. Mr. Francis staggered, and, in attempting to sit down, he fell and said he was a dead man. Mr. Hastings hearing this, cried out. ‘Good God! I hope not’.”

-

Dr. Busted

The impeachment of Warren Hastings was a landmark case in E.I.C. history. Held guilty for the judicial murder of Maharaja Nandakumar (the first Indian to be executed by hanging) he was accused by Edmund Burke and many other M.P's of the time. Nandakumar was appointed as the tax collector for the Nadia, Birbhum and Hooghly districts in 1764, right after Hastings resigned from that very post. However in 1773, when Hastings was reinstated as the Governor General, Nandakumar brought charges of extortion and bribery against him – claiming that he had been offered one-third of a million rupees by the Statesman. This was a great blow to Hastings' image of an anti-corruption administrative powerhouse, and when the case went to court, Hastings' school friend, Sir Elijah Impey (the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Judicature at Fort William) accused Nandakumar of forgery and as per the Forgery act of 1728, sentenced him to death. Nandakumar was hanged in Calcutta, near present day Vidyasagar Setu.



This verdict is seen by many historians as Judicial Murder and Sir Philip Francis, Edmund Burke, Charles James Fox and many others saw it similarly. It took the house 7 years to come to a conclusion but finally they acquitted Hastings of all charges on 24th April 1795. However, the impeachment procedure bankrupted Hastings, and even though he was made a Privy Councillor in 1814, his reputation was forever tarnished.

Coming back to Calcutta, Hastings also owned a smaller country residence, close to the Belvedere Estate which is called Hastings' House and now houses the Institution of Education for Women, affiliated to the Calcutta University. This house was his weekend house – sporting stark white walls and lofty pillars. This very house was in fact converted into a State House for visiting dignitaries in 1901 by Lord Curzon.

Hastings owned a few more properties – Rishera House, a once grand and opulent building which has completely disappeared from Calcutta's skyline, was his temporary residence. He owned a townhouse in Dalhousie Square – a small little two-storied building which currently lies sandwiched between the Income Tax Department and the New Secretariat Building. 2 stories have been added in recent history, to my personal chagrin – for the mishmash of two completely different styles; that of ornate Anglo-Indian architecture and a modern day boring box-shaped utilitarian architecture, lends the current building a Frankenstein's monster-ish feel.



Another house in Barasat is credited to Hastings' but I'm of the opinion that it belonged to a certain Lord Francis Rawdon-Hastings, instead of trusty Old Warren. He also did own a sizeable estate in Sukhsagar, on the banks of the river Hooghly but by the latter half of the 19th century, the house had been washed away by the Hooghly.

One might be inclined to ask why I chose to focus on these buildings instead of the personas and personal history of these men. Why did I choose to focus on inanimate buildings of bricks and stone and the answer is simple. These men are no more, all they left behind (other than poverty and a stinking communal mess) are these buildings; these treasure troves of history that exude the very old world charm that one would expect in a city like Calcutta. 2,676 words in, I hope I've managed to keep you interested. It's been a pleasure, folks. Now, if I have your permission, I'd like to get working on the second part.



THE WHITE TIGER

Kinjal Chandra

20 pages into *The White Tiger* and my blood started to boil. Adiga with his caustic and scathing sense of humour and scrutiny leaves no stone unturned in lambasting each and every aspect of India. Politics, sanitation, education, livelihood, you name it! But as I went ahead with this book, I realized I was making the mistake quite a few others have while reading it.

I was not addressing the aspect of my privilege and luxury. We the privileged live in a “different” India. Had we struggled for a morsel of food, heard our stomachs groan out of inanition, and had a hard time shooing mosquitoes away while spending a night on grimy footpaths, the India in front of us would appear mightily “different”.

Much of the hardships mentioned above are an indivisible part of the life of the protagonist Balram Halwai, aka Munna. Born to a caste of sweet makers, son of a rickshaw puller, Balram has steely determination and an adamant resolve to become a “white tiger”. He christens himself as a white tiger, a beast that is born only once every generation in the jungle.

No matter what impediments lie in his path, he is uncompromising about his ambition of becoming a “master”. He is deliciously audacious, blatantly unscrupulous and devastatingly humorous. Each and every aspect of him is not essentially likeable but you still want to take his side because of the circumstances he is under.

From a village in the Darkness, Balram rises up to become a driver. Mr. Ashok and Pinky Madam become his “masters” as he ends up becoming a “servant” to them. He drives their plush cars, prepares okra sabzi and dal for them, massages their feet and runs all their errands with mute subservience until one day he realizes he’s had enough. What a phenomenal premise! I was simply flabbergasted with the way the story progressed and reached its crescendo. Adiga has incredible elan in his writing. His incessant condemnation and bellyaching about the Indian milieu are by design.

The atmosphere is no less than a character in this book and his “kicking up a fuss” attitude is a crucial contributor to the impact that this book flings. The White Tiger is blunt, brutal and dastardly but it is indubitably true. No wonder Adiga’s no holds barred fashion that shines through in The White Tiger helped it to secure the Man Booker Prize in 2008! Make sure you give this a try!



*And in case don't want to, you can
catch the world
premiere of the official film
adaptation of this book starring
Adarsh Gourav,
Priyanka Chopra Jonas and
Rajkummar Rao 22nd January
onwards on
Netflix.*

THE CATCHER IN THE RYE

Ayush Chakraborty

“If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you’ll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don’t feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth.”

With these opening words, we are introduced to Holden Caulfield, the narrator of *The Catcher in the Rye*, a piece of coming-of-age literary fiction written by J.D. Salinger. The novel revolves around the story of a sixteen-year-old Holden as he fails his fourth school in a row and travels around Manhattan, without informing his family. The story revolves around several themes of alienation, loneliness and the loss of innocence. *The Catcher in the Rye* is about a generation that does not want to grow up but is forced to experience the harsh realities of life.

The Catcher in the Rye





As Holden goes around New York, encountering new people and revisiting old friends, having exceedingly weird conversations with each one of them, especially a prostitute and the pimp who beat him up, we come to know what the story is actually about. You might think of it as another stupid book about a whiny teenager. But I suggest, take another glance.

Throughout the novel, we see Holden being victimised by the society he is so desperately trying to fit in. He feels trapped on the “other side of life” and tries to get a place in a world he does not belong in. As we go along, we begin to understand that Holden alienates to protect himself. His red hunting cap for example, is a symbol of just that. The hat is completely out-of-place in New York but Holden wears it to hold on to his idea of uniqueness, innocence and individuality. The colour of the hat is red, the same as his brother Allie and his young sister Phoebe’s hair. He believes these people to represent innocence and purity and wears the hat to connect to them. But he is also wary of how the hat might make him appear to the public eye. So, he never wears it in front of people he’s acquainted with. Although he desires to be different, he cannot help but try to be a part of the very people he accuses of being “phony”. This right here presents the central conflict of the novel. Holden’s want for isolation and his need for human connection.

Holden wears his hunting hat to express his uniqueness and isolates himself to say that he is superior to other people. His cynical sense of superiority is a way to protect himself. It is the source of whatever stability he has in his life. Nevertheless, it is also the cause of the pain in his life. Holden does not address his emotions directly; he refuses to find the source of his problems. He desperately needs human affection and love but the wall he has raised up against the entire world prevents any person from getting close to him. He shuts down his feelings and turns everyone away. For instance, he wants to meet Jane Gallagher again, for he longs for the connection he had with her but at the same time he is frightened to contact her, for meeting her after all this while might have an affect on the “golden” image he has of her.

This leads us to another important theme in the novel: Innocence and the pain of growing up. *The Catcher in the Rye* is about a young man’s growth into maturity, but Holden is an unusual protagonist in this sense, for his goal is to reject maturity. Holden fears change, he gets overwhelmed by complexity. He is scared, for he is guilty of the very sins he accuses everyone else of. Instead of confronting his shortcomings, Holden starts to believe that adulthood is a life of lies, superficiality and hypocrisy and that childhood was a time of innocence and honesty. His fantasy of being a catcher in the rye reveals this. He imagines childhood as a field of rye, where children play about and that adulthood was the deadly fall off the edge of a cliff near the end of the field. Holden would imagine himself as being the “catcher”, one who would save the children from falling off the cliff and losing their innocent ways. He would imagine himself as the protector of innocence.

The Catcher in the Rye gave a voice to many in different generations. People who were forced to grow up. The story of a sixteen-year-old boy, having to face the world and the stark realities of it, on the backdrop of the aftermath of WW2 shows us how the world grew up around many people. How they were exposed to the realities of life early on. The novel is significant, to this day for it covers problems we are still dealing with. The problems of alienation and loneliness are rampant among people, especially young adults and facing life amidst all odds has never ceased to be a challenge.

“I mean if they’re running and they don’t look where they’re going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them. That’s all I’d do all day. I’d just be the catcher in the rye and all”



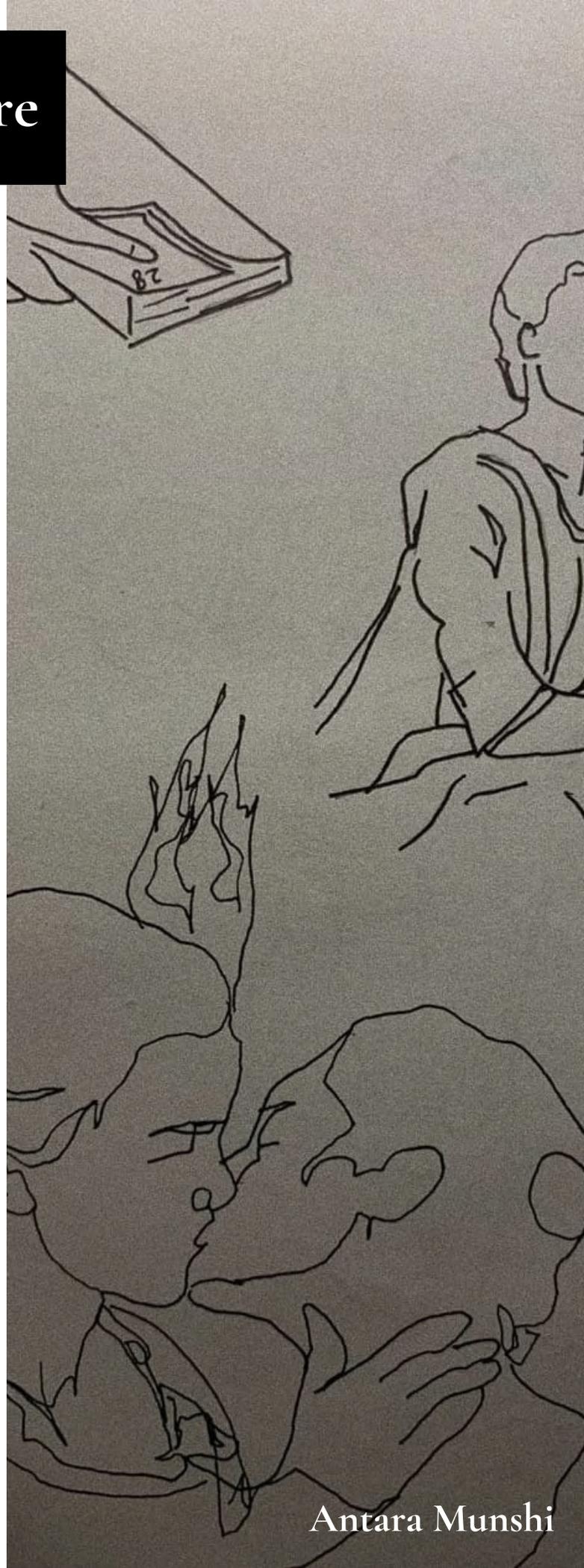
SALINGER

Portrait of A Lady on Fire

Dishari Guhathakurta

“Portrait of A Lady on Fire” is a film that seems to scream through its silences. Set in the backdrop of late 18th century France, it is a story of a young female painter, Marianne, who is commissioned to draw the portrait of a woman of the gentry, Heloise. She arrives in a deserted island of Brittany where she is to spend the week and create the appropriate likeness of the daughter of the Countess of Brittany. On her arrival to the countess’s mansion, she is greeted by Heloise’s handmaid, Sophie who shows Marianne to her room and gives her supper. From Sophie she learns that her mistress had been extremely critical of the painters before her and had not found any of their portraits satisfactory.

The next morning Marianne meets the countess who explains the necessity of having a suitable portrait of her daughter, as it is to be sent to her suitor, a Milanese nobleman. However, Heloise has refused to pose for any more portraits as she is reluctant to get married.



Antara Munshi



Antara Munshi

Thus, the countess reveals that Marianne must pretend to be Heloise's companion for walks but in secret.

The first thing that struck me while watching this film was the characters' resigned acceptance of the painful reality of the world around them. This is a story of the love between two women, shackled by the chains of an oppressive society. Heloise has no wish of getting married to the man she barely knows, a man who was supposed to marry her deceased elder sister. Marianne is a young woman trying to make a place in the male-dominated world of art and trying to get out of the shadow of her Father, who had once been a famous painter. Throughout the movie we see waves of emotions portrayed with skillful subtlety. The confusion both women feel on realising their love for each other and the acceptance of those feelings is played beautifully by both Noeme Merlant (Marianne) and Adele Haenel (Heloise). Director Celine Sciamma successfully shows us an extremely sensuous yet innocent love story. Both women are aware of the reality that they can never be together. Thus, they spend their limited time ardently loving each other. Luana Bajrami also delivers a splendid performance as Sophie, Heloise's handmaid. Although soft-spoken and of timid appearance, we later see her as a quite head strong and determined young girl.

I began my review saying that this film screams through its silences. The reason is the complete lack of background music throughout the film. There are only two scenes that have the use of music to interrupt the film's relative silence. Both scenes carry immense emotional power. However, the final scene is a work of absolute brilliance. We see Heloise in a theatre while the orchestra plays Vivaldi's concerto "The Storm". The music screams for freedom. It portrays the arrival of the thunderous storm. It flows through Heloise's veins and we can feel her emotions sore like the winds in the storm.

There's no doubt that "Portrait of a Lady on Fire" is an example of cinematic brilliance. It can ignite a feeling of immense distress and hope at the same time. The actors become the characters. We can feel the despair of Heloise and Marianne. We are shocked by Sophie's will and determination. The film plays with waves of emotions as the concertmaster plays with his orchestra. This film is a must watch as it proves once again that cinema, in its true sense is a visual art. The director shows us the beauty of love, heartbreak and even reality and the fact that ordinary people often possess extraordinary strength of character, something which is usually overlooked.

Rahul Bose: A Cinematic Anthology

It's always difficult to write about Rahul Bose, because you just cannot decide which aspect of him to highlight. Do we talk about the international rugby player Rahul Bose, who has represented the country for twelve long years or do we talk about the activist Rahul Bose who has associated himself with innumerable causes in recent times?

After quite a few hours of debating (not kidding), I have decided to focus on the thing he is known for the most, his contribution to Indian cinema, and the array of characters he has so effortlessly portrayed, a list only few actors in the industry can match up to. Yes, this is a celebration of the journey of one of the finest in this field, a journey which took off in Dev Benegal's *English, August* (1994).



Aindrila Ray

As hard as it was to come to a decision, I have somehow managed to narrow it down to three of my favorite Rahul Bose performances over the years. Keep reading for some solid movie recommendations, trust me (just, please) you will in no way regret this.

The Japanese Wife (2010)

The Japanese Wife, which is an adaptation of Krunal Basu's book that goes by the same name, is rightfully called one of Aparna Sen's best, dealing with an epic romance between a schoolteacher, Snehmoy Chatterjee (Rahul Bose) from the Bali Islands of Sunderban, West Bengal and his Japanese pen-pal, Miyage (Chigusa Takaku). If you think Rahul Bose is all about portraying stereotypical, well-read, culturally-evolved, elegant, middle-class Bengali characters, this is the movie to watch in order to have your mind changed.



While all the actors shine throughout the movie, it is Rahul Bose as Snehmoy Chatterjee that steals the show. Snehmoy Chatterjee is a simple man, and the beauty of the character lies in his genuineness. Miyage and Snehmoy can hardly pronounce each other's names and have never met in the seventeen years they have been writing to each other. However, they have developed an emotional bond that is very hard to explain and have even exchanged wedding vows having just seen each other through photographs. He flinches every time his aunt (Moushumi Chatterjee) mentions his marriage, and he hesitates when the other residents of the village mock his relationship, and his loyalty is tested when the recently widowed Sandhya (Raima Sen) and her eight-year old son start living with them. Rahul Bose shines in the moments of vulnerability, and in his impeccable portrayal of Snehmoy's unpolished, broken English which is neither too over-the-top nor underplayed at any instant. The movie is all about very real emotions bound together by a very unrealistic storyline, and no other actor could have been a better fit for the role.



It is the way he expresses himself in the simple moments that you understand the man's brilliance –Snehmoy's pride when he wins the local kite-flying tournament with the kites Miyage sent to him from Japan, his little moments of fatherhood with Poltu, Sandhya's son, his satisfaction of having developed a relationship of mutual understanding with Sandhya and his frustration and struggle to do everything he can and often going beyond his means for Miyage when she is diagnosed with cancer, even from miles away. Rahul Bose moves from one range of emotion to another so easily that you, as the audience, get wrapped into the flow of the story and become a part of it by the end.

The movie is available in Bengali, English and Japanese and streams on YouTube.

Antaheen (2009)

Antaheen, also known as *The Endless Wait* by Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury opened the doors for a new genre of cinema in the Bengali film industry, the 'middle-of-the-road' genre that bridged the gap between commercial and arthouse films (well, sort of). This movie was not only a breakthrough for an industry on the downfall, but also managed to gain both commercial success and a nod of approval from the critics.

The four main characters are Abhik Roy Chowdhury (Rahul Bose), Brinda Menon (Radhika Apte), Paro (short for Paromita) (Aparna Sen) and Ranjan (Kalyan Ray) whose lives get interlinked due to a controversial mega-project of real-estate entrepreneur Vijay Ketan Mehra (Shauvik Kundagrami).

Abhik is an honest, upright yet understanding IPS officer who is considerate of the people around him. Abhik is a textbook Rahul Bose character, a police officer who casually talks about Jim Morrison while making an arrest, and the man delivers his absolute best in this movie. Abhik has been unlucky in love and hence resorts to virtual relationships and soon develops a bond with a young woman (Brinda) and the two mutually decide to not reveal any real-life details or their identity to each other and just talk.

Brinda is a dynamic and ambitious journalist who takes it upon herself to investigate the powerful entrepreneur who is rumored to have used quite a few illegal procedures to make the project successful. After successfully conducting a raid on a consignment of illegal arms related to the same case, Abhik gains fame on national television and Brinda asks for an interview but gets refused immediately. Hence, their first real-life encounter is quite bitter in contrast to their online relationship which blossoms without their knowledge of each other's identity.



The bridging gap between the two are Paro and Ranjan, an estranged couple who separated ways due to difference in aspirations and have still not fallen out of love. Abhik is Ranjan's nephew, and Brinda works under Paro in a popular TV news channel.

Again, it is in the seemingly insignificant moments where Rahul Bose shines as the actor. Rahul Bose brings out Abhik's soft, empathetic side so effortlessly in scenes where Paro confesses to him that she still wants to reconcile with Ranjan, in the silent gazes when his aunt talks about her definition of love and his understanding of Ranjan's loneliness even without him telling. While I would not give the ending out, this movie is all about losing in love but still believing in it, and the endless wait for things to be perfect, which it never is. The particularly heartwarming scene where he finally figures out who the woman he loved was, but knew that there was no way they could be together was so beautiful and intimate that it felt almost intrusive to watch, and that is where the power of his talents lie.



I also have to acknowledge the beauty of the music album of the movie, composed by Shantanu Moitra which is absolutely brilliant and just blends into the 2000s aesthetic that the movie has to offer so well, and in the end, brings all of it together.

Antaheen is available in Bengali and streams on YouTube.

Mr. and Mrs. Iyer (2002)

I remember a few years back, I asked my mother (a self-proclaimed cinephile) if she had to choose one Aparna Sen movie to watch, what will it be and within seconds she replied, *Mr. and Mrs. Iyer*. If you're looking for a movie that will stay with you for a long time, this is the one to go for.

The screenplay written by Aparna Sen and Dulal Roy is largely based on the aftermath of the Gujarat pogrom. A bus carrying a variety of passengers, ranging from a group of teenagers, to an elderly couple set out for Calcutta, with little to no idea of what's in store for them.



This same group consists of our protagonists, a Tamil woman, Meenakshi Iyer (Konkona Sensharma) who is travelling with her infant son, and a Bengali wildlife photographer, Jehangir Chowdhury (Rahul Bose). During the course of journey, the bus has to change its usual route for an unprecedented road blockage, and hence finds itself in the middle of a curfew imposed due to communal riots breaking out in the neighboring tribal villages.

Although Meenakshi and Jehangir, who is called 'Raja', which is his nickname, get quite acquainted to each other, Meenakshi, coming from an orthodox Hindu Brahmin family, hesitates to interact with him any further on finding out that he is Muslim. However, when a group of Hindu extremists board the bus on a hunt for Muslims, she quickly protects him by introducing him as her husband, Mr. Subramaniam Iyer. Hence, two total strangers quickly develop a relationship of trust and dependency and with the help of each other, eventually find their way to Calcutta safely.



The movie, though largely meant to be thought-provoking, is still an Aparna Sen movie and hence all the aesthetic factors that come with it are a hundred percent present. Jehangir Chowdhury is also a very signature Rahul Bose character, a progressive Bengali man who largely disapproves of casteism and religious discrimination. You sort of fall for Jehangir Chowdhury in the film, when he dreamily talks of his experiences in different forests of Assam and Kerala, when you feel how passionate he is about his profession and in the way he cares for Meenakshi and Santhanam (Meenakshi's son), who he has only met two days back. Aparna Sen brings the best out of both her actors, who equally give their best.

It is through the brilliance of the two actors that two very real characters are brought to life, you unconsciously root for the two in the moments of crisis, and their contrasting personalities work together in perfect sync to make this movie a phenomenal experience.

The movie is available in English, Bengali and Tamil.

So, these are in my opinion, Rahul Bose's top three performances till date. However, my first exposure to Rahul Bose was in a movie called *Chain Kulli ki Main Kulli* (2007) that aired on Pogo TV (00s kids, assemble) but I am sure if I added that my editor would not be too happy about it.



The Haunting Of Hill House

Amrisha Banerjee

Everything human-made bears significance. One could argue that the constructions we erect are treated as proof of our convictions and beliefs because the testimonies provided by these constructions are reflective of us as humans. In other words, the environment we build is like a societal autobiography. Hill House was such a construction and also a testament to decades of trauma and harrowing experiences. The enormity, grandeur and gaudy furniture of the house did what it did best – hide it. You have to have lived there to truly tell the tale. A house contains but Hill House - it consumed.

Ghosts, for most of us, are spiritual entities who float around in white bed sheets and seem to have an undying (pun intended) pursuit to chase the screaming adults around the house. To some, ghosts manifest itself as a dark, looming silhouette standing behind your door, watching you scroll away on your phone. Some manifestations of ghosts are audaciously hyperbolic and come in the form of a corpse-like figure with worms and maggots crawling out of its mouth and eye sockets.

Some of us have a muddled sense of reality and fantasy and fail to draw the line of distinction and that's alright – as long as it doesn't end up causing the protagonist of the story to die, who usually has the intellect of a wet, tattered dish rag.

Thus, *Haunting of Hill House* is a story of an all-consuming house with a hint of the supernatural. However, the show is different, if I may put it that way. It looks straight into the eye of the conventional horror storytelling techniques, all the R .L. Stines, the Stephen Kings and other horror aficionados and tells them to step aside (politely) and sets the stage for a new form of horror. In the wake of experimental horror storytelling such as *Get Out*, which deals with the tale of a horror turned age-old internalized societal construct – racism and gives it an eerie twist.

Following suit are similar masterpieces such as Ari Aster's *Hereditary* and *Midsommar*, Yorgos Lanthimos's *Killing of a Sacred Deer* among many others. These films have ever so slightly introduced the supernatural into the story and have provided a looming aftertaste of anxiousness without actually indulging you in the true essence of horror.



Mike Flanagan, the director of this 2018 Netflix mini-series and other major hits such as Oculus and Hush, has successfully given his brainchild what most horror films lack – sense and meaning. It is based on Shirley Jackson’s 1959 novel going by the same name. Mike Flanagan took the story and modeled it according to his liking and needless to say, outdid himself and the previously made cinematic adaptations of the book.

INT: We see a family of seven, in the past. The Crain family. A dysfunctional one but you don’t know it, yet. Eleanor (Nell) Crain and Luke Crain are twins and the youngest in the family. There’s Theodora (Theo) Crain, the middle child and dare I say, a little... aloof. There is Shirley Crain, quite the responsible child and finally the eldest, Steven Crain. Their parents are a handsome couple – Hugh and Olivia Crain, both architects by profession and have moved into a new house in the suburbs. A house that is quite the talk of the town mostly because it is infamous for being “haunted”. Hugh wants to fix the house, fix its broken walls, leaky pipes and crumbling pillars and hopefully generate some profit by selling it - all while living there with his family.



The show seamlessly transitions (almost too perfectly) between the past and the present, occasionally stealing glances into the lives of the children who are now adults, living independently, some with families and figuratively, some with denial, some with regret, some with past trauma and some – just don't. At the root of all the mess present in the psyche of the Crain family, somewhere there is Hill House, mockingly grinning, flashing bare its fangs filled with vice and malice, slowly eating away their sanity.

During their stay in the house, they face certain ordeals, call it supernatural if you will, which finally results in a major tragedy, thus forcing the family to move out of the house. The children fail to make sense of the tragedy considering their age and this, along with the horrors present inside the house double up and stay in their minds in different forms and shapes. And it's horrific trauma that finally, in their adulthood, becomes their "ghosts". But these ghosts are not orbs of light or floating bed sheets. These ghosts are regret, guilt, internalized trauma and the likes.





According to one of the popular theories, the children end up representing the five stages of grief -

Steven, played by Michiel Huisman, becomes a bestselling author out of his re-telling of the incidents at the house which the siblings were never keen on to begin with because the narrative in the book was of his siblings' and not his. He remained a skeptic bystander. His grief and skepticism manifests as a ghost which is denial - the first stage of grief; his failing attempts at making sense of the events which he never seemed to have experienced and has dismissed as hallucinatory experiences. Steven says – “A ghost can be a lot of things. A memory, a daydream, a secret, grief, anger, guilt. But in my experience, most times they're just what we want to see”.

Shirley, played by Elizabeth Reaser, becomes a mortician by profession and owns a funeral home. In the spectrum of the levels of grief, she represents anger - the second stage of grief. Shirley was always the ideal child. A daughter the parents could rely on, a sister who would have your back and finally a dutiful mother and wife, all while running a lucrative business. Instinctively, she always took responsibility for everything and the slightest of inconveniences made her blood boil. Steven's overly dramatized book which Theo seemed to make a profit off of, Luke's constant relapses into his heroin addiction, her own singular yet designative moment in life where she cheated on her husband and had been guilt-tripping on it ever since, her anger at Theo who she thought was going out with her husband - for perfect Shirley, it all boiled down to repressed anger that she had hoarded almost all her life, hence becoming a symbol of subdued rage which never found an outlet.

Theo, played by Kate Siegel, was a gifted child. She had the predisposed psychic ability to see the past and future of things by touching the object, an ability she supposedly inherited from her mother. Olivia described her as "sensitive". A single, middle-aged woman, and a successful child psychologist, she still chooses to live with her elder sister Shirley. Theo tries filling her void with shallow, temporary things such as routine visits to night clubs, booze and occasional sex. However, she copes with her loss at the house quite differently. An effort to reclaim control is the natural response to the helplessness and weakness that comes with loss, something which gets reflected in her relationships as well. There are many methods that one may use to try and restore structure in life and for Theo, it was bargaining - the third stage of grief. She is able to concede by negotiating, but attempts to do so by extracting a few more "normal" moments out of the chaos that keeps gnawing at her sanity and holds on to the fabric of hope, however thin it may be by indulging herself into these pleasures. If one fails at bargaining, they downward spiral to the next stage: depression.

Luke, played by Oliver Jackson Cohen, is the representation of depression - the fourth stage of grief. We see Luke as a heroin addict, a coping mechanism for his underlying untreated depression. The tragedy at the house and the sheer suddenness of it coupled with his tender age, snowballed into addiction in the later part of his life. Luke, clearly, bore the brunt of the tragedy the hardest. He kept seeing the “ghost” of a tall man with a bowler hat, something that he used to see as a child when he lived in the house. He made constant efforts to keep his head above the water but he kept drowning in his addiction and old trauma. He kept relapsing over and over again.

Finally, we see Eleanor, played by Victoria Pedretti - a beautiful, benevolent symbolism of the final stage of grief – acceptance. Nell, just like Theo, was gifted. She could see her own death being played in front of her eyes but never truly understood it fully. Her “ghost” was herself, the manifestation of her own death. She was the only sibling who fully stomached the reality of the tragedy at the house which compelled them to leave and accepted it with open arms. Her acceptance did not imply oblivion and neither did she fall back in denial like Steven. Nell accepted her past and her present, her trauma and also her healing and allowed those moments to fall in front of her like gentle rain...or confetti.



She cherished the true ways in which her siblings gave her love that softened her present and gave the strength to cope with the future. Here, she says – “I loved you completely and you loved me the same. That’s all. The rest is confetti”. And then she passes on, allowing the house to consume her.

Hill House plays a pivotal role for everyone who lives in it. It models their trauma and gives it life, almost as if the house has a life of its own. One could consider the house a loose metaphor for one’s psyche. Hill House becomes a part of you. It is your salvation but it is also your source of resentment. It is your peace but also your war. But at the end, it urges everyone to come back, to come home, like a motherly figure waiting for your return - so that it can take you in its warm but mysterious embrace and not let you go. It will keep you alive but as a memory in the damp and broken pillars of the house. You shall experience togetherness but you shall feel it alone because as the concluding line of the show goes – “ Within, its walls continued upright, bricks met neatly, floors were firm, and doors were sensibly shut; silence lay steadily against the wood and stone of Hill House, and whatever walked there, walked alone”.



A Heretic, A Heathen

Michelangelo's vagrant skies disseminated wispily over the neon glory of the city, and under open azures exuding all the freedom I could ever wish to hold in the palm of my hand, I'm enclosed within cathedral walls built of norms, and lies, and conformity hammering my will into bending a little more each day, of people making me kneel before what I hold no faith for, a little more every day. To wonder how a heretic, a heathen, could capture God's realm in the most flawless radiance that the devout have ever knelt under is sacrilegious. The omnipresent dare not be brought to question by the unenlightened mortal mind.

The heretic who stained chapel stones in sin, in beliefs and truth woven in magnificent colours and ethereal forms in God's own land that pious men have looked up to for guidance since religion made its ragged mark on human conscience, became an embodiment of light, of brilliance, as truth unearthed itself from the deep tresses it was buried in, where they thought it died. The heretic, the luminary, wove his truth into the fabric of piety and secrecy. And looking at the sunset skies, it reinforces itself into a truth that cannot be buried.



Gaagarika Gupta



The human mind, the mortal will
always commands above divine
commandment, the rest is all vagrant
wisps that blow away with time.

As the cerulean skies reveal the truth
so hidden in oblivion, I reach out to it,
to become of it, shedding fears and
norms that have only held back too
many people.

The angel in marble was finally
carved, he was finally set free as
chapels and walls turned to rubble in
the sand.





Shubhankar Sengupta

Love, Lockdown and Longing pt.1

"Let's go," Biplob said with a tone of authority, one moment and immediately flinched the next.

"I already made myself clear over the phone. If the flights get cancelled, I will manage something on my own," Taposee said.

The official lockdown was yet to be announced by the government, but everyone was preparing for it. Everyone behaved like WhatsApp forwards – circulating unverified messages, inventing preventions, and prescribing them to others. Neither Taposee nor Biplob fell into the trap. Yet, neither of them realized that the sudden situation will put them into a specific state of an affair they had been dreading for some time now.

"Like what?" Biplob replied with a higher pitch. A few years back, a tone like this from Biplob would have instantly resulted in revolt, but through the years Taposee had learned to ignore it.

"Don't bother. I am shifting with Indrani in a couple of hours."

Taposee ran her fingers through her handbag, grabbed her mobile, and dialled Indrani's number standing at one place as Biplob waited outside the hotel room. Indrani was Taposee's friend. Over the years, apart from being a close friend of Taposee, she had grown an unlikely fondness for Biplob. "I see," Taposee said as Biplob noticed a change of colour on her face as she continued to talk on the phone, "I will manage.... No no, it's okay... I'll manage it."

Taposee pressed the mobile hard on her palm and then disconnected without looking at the screen.

"You'll not kill yourself if you stay with me and we have two separate rooms anyway."

"Don't bother. I can stay with Jhumpa Pishi or Bubai till everything gets settled down," Taposee said in a normal tone this time. Apart from Jhumpa Pishi, her father's ailing sister, who was bedridden after her kidney had stopped functioning, and she had to undergo dialysis twice a week and Tubai, her uncle's youngest son who worked in a Software start-up; no other relative stayed in Kolkata.





"Jhumpa Pishi is not doing very well nowadays, and going to her place would mean an extra burden. And you know the financial condition of Tubai's family."

"I just don't want to be a burden," she said, still standing at the same place. He tapped his fingers on the wall but didn't reply. As he waited for Taposee to pack her bags, the day's events ran inside his head. It was difficult getting to the hotel and there were cops around the area. In the hotel too, the receptionist looked suspicious when he asked the room number for Taposee Kundu. Before giving the details, he was checked for fever and was then provided with the information. "I don't think the hotel will shut down."

"Are you done with your reasons?"

She turned inside and packed all her belongings as fast as she could. Still waiting at the hallway, Biplob had an urge to ask her to check the bathroom for a thing or two she might have left, but remained quiet. In the past, whenever they were on vacation, she would eventually forget to check the bathroom and remember once they were on the flight back home. After two or three times, Biplob made it a habit to do it himself. The last time such a thing happened was two years back. When Biplob saw that she was almost done, he said "Im waiting outside in the car".

...

On the way back to a place, both of them called home once upon a time, almost empty roads complemented their state of mind. An epidemic which people first took lightly turned pandemic in no time. The people who felt remorse were now terrified of their lives and were taking all the precautions. The carburettor in Biplob's old Wagon-R was noisy and so was the awkward silence between them. Biplob turned the radio on when the silence became uncomfortable to him. A local Bengali channel was running a Rabindra Songeet: *Majhe majhe tobo dekha pai Chirodin keno pai na.*

At times, I get a glimpse of you, why can't it last forever?

Keno megh ashe hridoyo akashe

Keno megh ashe hridoyo akashe Tomare dekhite dey na.

Why do the crowded clouds in my soul, stop me from seeing you?

Moho-meghe tomare dekhite deyena

Moho-meghe tomare

Andho kore rakhe

Tomare dekhite dey na...

Majhe majhe tobo dekha pai

Delusions stops me from seeing you,

Makes me blind,

At times, I get a glimpse of you...

He switched the radio off and looked ahead in the road, gripping the steering wheel with all his might to squeeze out whatever he was feeling inside.

Taposee let out an audible sigh.

There were no more songs for the rest of the journey. Even the silences failed to make a noise.

...

Twenty minutes later, Biplob drove inside the parking lot of Geetanjali Complex. A total of twenty-three families lived in the six-storey housing complex. One of the apartments was vacant after the previous owner sold it and the new one was still vacant.

Biplob grew in a neighbourhood not far from the place he now lived. He knew the people around and the lanes by heart. If one asked him to tie a cloth around his eyes and go to the nearby grocery shop, he eventually would find his way back and forth. It was not magic; it was by design; he always had a mind that paid attention to details. Some of his friends said that it's because he taught history and history as a subject had always been kind to details that suited a ruler.

By the time they stepped inside the apartment, Prime Minister's announcement had begun. Biplob turned the Television of the drawing-room on as Taposee looked around, finding herself in a place she knew nothing about. Then she drew the nearest chair and sat with her right arm resting on the dining table.

The prime minister announced, "There will be a total ban of coming out of your homes. Every state, every district, every lane, every village will be under lockdown."



With her ears towards the speech and eyes all over the place, Taposee inspected every inch, every corner of the apartment.

Biplob had changed the apartment like he always wanted to. Things had changed its places – the television was no more in the bedroom; the fridge had been shifted from the south-west corner of the house to the east wall. The sofa set along with the centre table was moved to a space near the Television.

"If you can't handle these twenty-one days, this country and your family will go back twenty-one years," the prime minister continued. "The only option is social distancing, to remain away from each other. There is no way out to escape from Corona Virus besides this."

The wall adjacent to the fridge had all the photographs from the various trips they had made over the years. She was in the photographs but nowhere in the apartment. Her existence was rubbed off, forgotten like an old piece of cloth that once used to be a hot favourite. She felt her hand touch all the frames, making slight adjustments to make them aligned with each other. She hadn't had that urge in ages. She was ageing.

"All the steps to ensure essential commodities will be maintained."



I presume the flights will be cancelled from tomorrow," Biplob said switching the TV off and keeping the car keys on the table-top. "There are masks and a few bottles of sanitizers near the TV set. Use them in case someone visits and I am not around," he said like he would address a guest about a new rule of the house

"I think so too."

"Somehow, I knew something similar to this would happen considering the situation in other countries, so I made a grocery shopping that would last Umm...about twenty days for both of us." It had been a couple of months that she had heard the word 'us' in the context of their marriage.

Without changing the clothes, Biplob wore his house slippers and was already on his feet, moving vegetables from the fridge to the kitchen to prepare dinner. When Taposee couldn't think of anything else to do, she said, "Let me know if I can be of any help," and waited for a reply as she noticed Biplob from the corner of her eyes. When no response came, she said, "I am in the guest room."





She waited on the dining table with nothing else to say – wondering how she would manage to survive the rest of her stay in his company. Then Taposee slid her bag that was crowding the pathway to the guest room. The fear of estrangement didn't suddenly crop up in her head. It started building from the car, grew on the lift and was at its peak now. A feeling that was once a doubt during the journey became evident as she sniffed the unpleasant air inside the apartment.

"Some of your clothes are cleaned and ironed in the almirah," he said before she was about to enter the room.

She remembered leaving some of her stuff here. Only the things she thought would have the utmost need were packed in a hurry.

There was a time they shared a small house with just one bedroom. Now and then when they fought, the only bed of the house they shared melted away all the ego and anger. But now that the apartment is a bigger one, there was enough space for the anger and the ego to breath and live in.

• • •

Hiraeth

(n.) homesickness of a home that never was

Beatrice was Danté's home, his illumination;
His path to Hell, Paradise and Purgatory;
Danté, depicted ninth circle of hell as
treachery; believed
fraud to be the worst.

What kind of fraud is worst though?

(I can't seem to find rhyme here)

Danté didn't marry Beatrice, did he?

He hoped though,

Hoped to unite with Beatrice, and that hope
lead

him to travel through Hell;

Hope breeds eternal misery.

This piece seems like an embodiment of
chaos, a

word dump at this point.

Some can't find their home,

And some who find homes ;they aren't lucky
enough

to be in them.

Some pieces are vulnerable aren't they?

There are lights you know? And there is
dark;

Then there are people who are the light, light
of all lights.



Shreya Khera

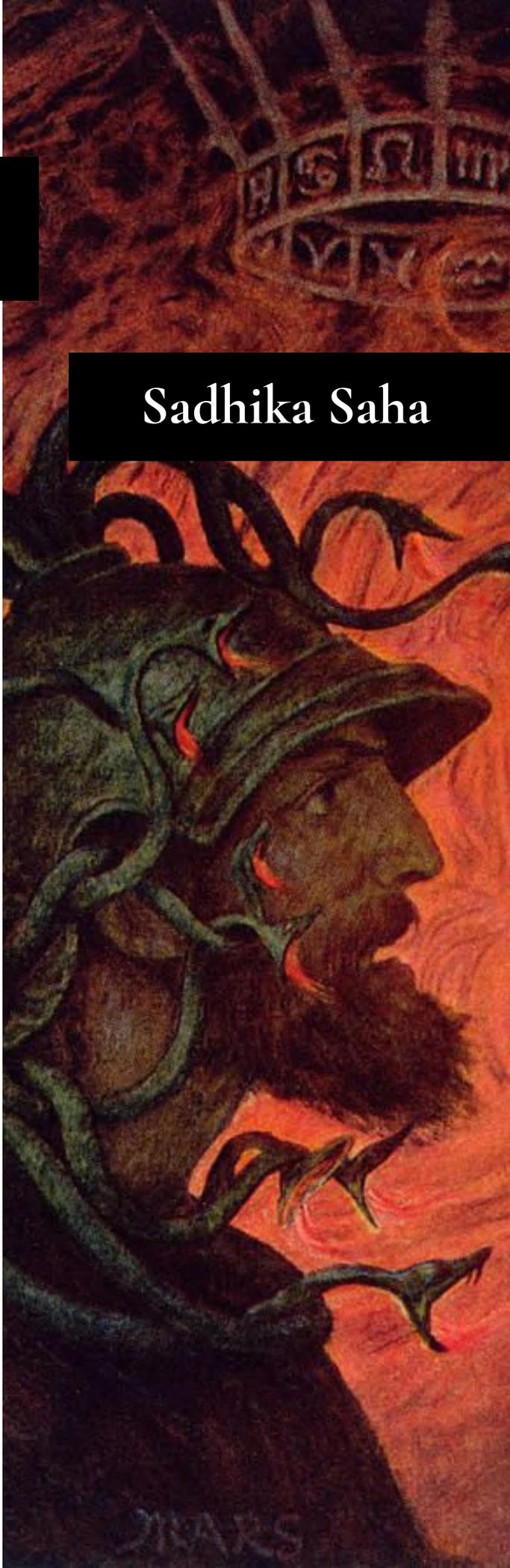
Have you found lights? People that
feel like
lights? Places? Trees? Hearts?
Buildings?
The falling of snow?
A hot cocoa; Does the brown remind
of eyes?
Things that remind you of home?
The home you never
belonged with?
The sweaters? Hoodies?
I am not talking of love, don't get
me wrong,
I am talking of the feeling; the
person you
become,
The memories you make; does that
feeling feel like
a home you can't go back to?
Hiraeth.



The Ares in Aphrodite

I emerged from the darkness,
When the water broke,
From being the unexpected one,
To finding myself a place at home,
I had to be everything from
Wisdom in a child
Who had just been born,
To the woman
Who had to be
Beauty's epitome.

But I soon got tired
When eyes started glaring into my attire.
It was not something to be appreciated,
Hence my marriage to him was finalized.
I did not have any say,
I was simply persuaded to-
to get married to the
Ugliest of the lot,
Who was always surrounded
By smoke, soot and liquor.



Sadhika Saha



He gave me gifts to
Make up for his cruel artifice,
But I could only dream
On the nights his absence screamed.
One day I saw you covered in blood,
And decided to tend to your heart,
Maybe that day I fell in love,
So I revealed more than what my attire gloved.

It was not long before
The secret was out,
And instead of finding out
About the reason behind it,
He set up a trap,
That allowed everyone to attack.
But our affair went on,
Because my oppression is not an option.

I had to be my own love and war,
Even if the entire world decided against it.

The Fear of Silence

The pitter patter of the rain
The gravel on the roads
The purposeful sound made by a costly bike
And the artificial bird noise made by a
ghastly car
On a ghostly night
At 11pm

The fear of silence strikes
The movement of the fan
The dance of the towel
The swaying of my neatly cut hair
And the screeching of the tire
And the horn of the fire
On a ghostly night
At 11pm

What is fear for you?
They asked. Silence, I replied without
Remaining silent
Why can't you just stay calm?
This is another fear, I told
Why are you always in a hurry?
I never questioned myself, I replied hurriedly
On a ghostly night
At 11pm

Sai Sagar

@classics_covered



The replies unanswered
The calls unattended
The names forgotten
The words which cannot be forgotten
These are the wild horses chasing me
On a ghostly night
At 11pm

Poets, thinkers and philosophers
Need silence and calmness
And their thoughts flies like butterflies
Without the silence
But here is a man
Who is against this
On a ghostly night
At 11pm

Questions of questions
Lie here with no answers
Not to be answered
Neither to be touched
Only to be rode
On a silent road
On a ghostly night
At 11pm



The typing sound of a type writer
Or a key board
Or the scratching sound of an ink pen
On a piece of paper
Sounds like the hooves of a horse
Riding through a dusty desert of words
Riding on the horse of imagination
Inhaling the dust of words
Exhaling the dust of poetry
Is your dear storyteller
On a ghostly night
At 11pm

Like a knight
In a rusted iron coffin
Afraid of remaining silent forever
And wanting people not to remain silent
When his dear name is taken in front of
them
Then loses the silence in front of him
Forever



Thorns

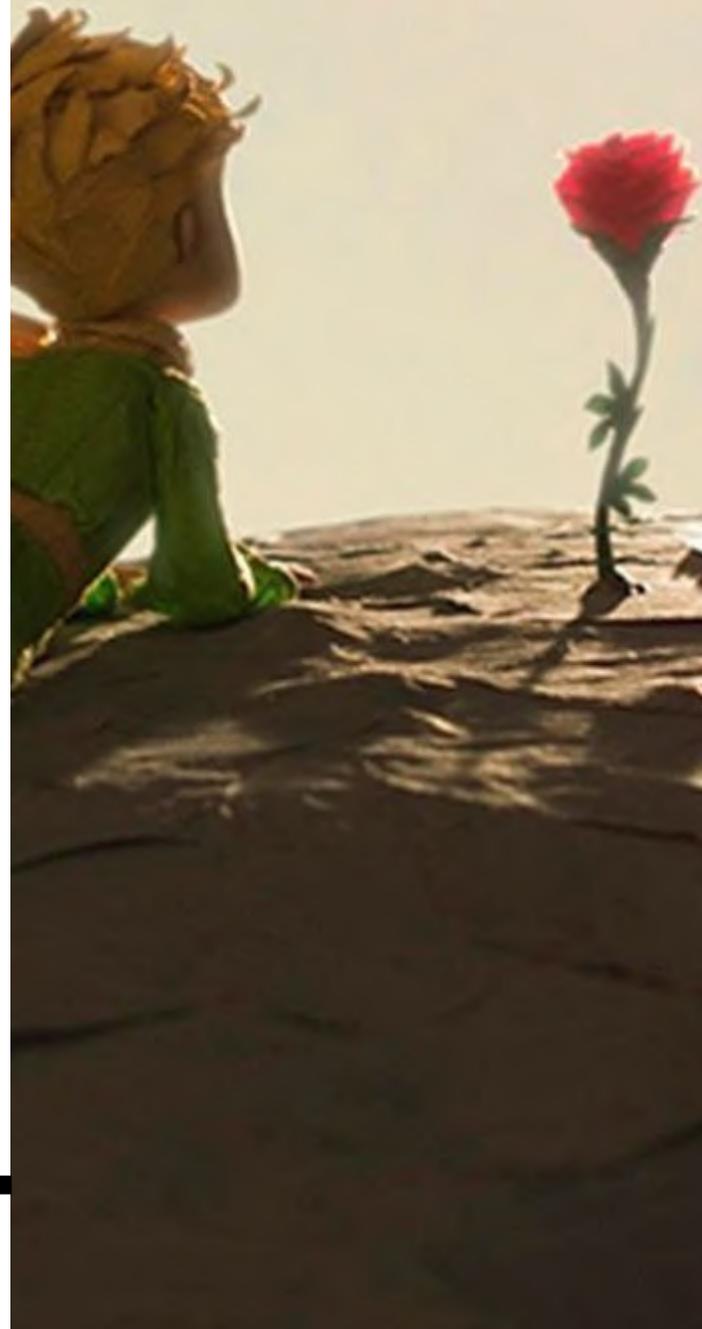
A beautiful rose,
Red,Black or Pink.
Reading these "so-called" meaningful words
Not written in ink.

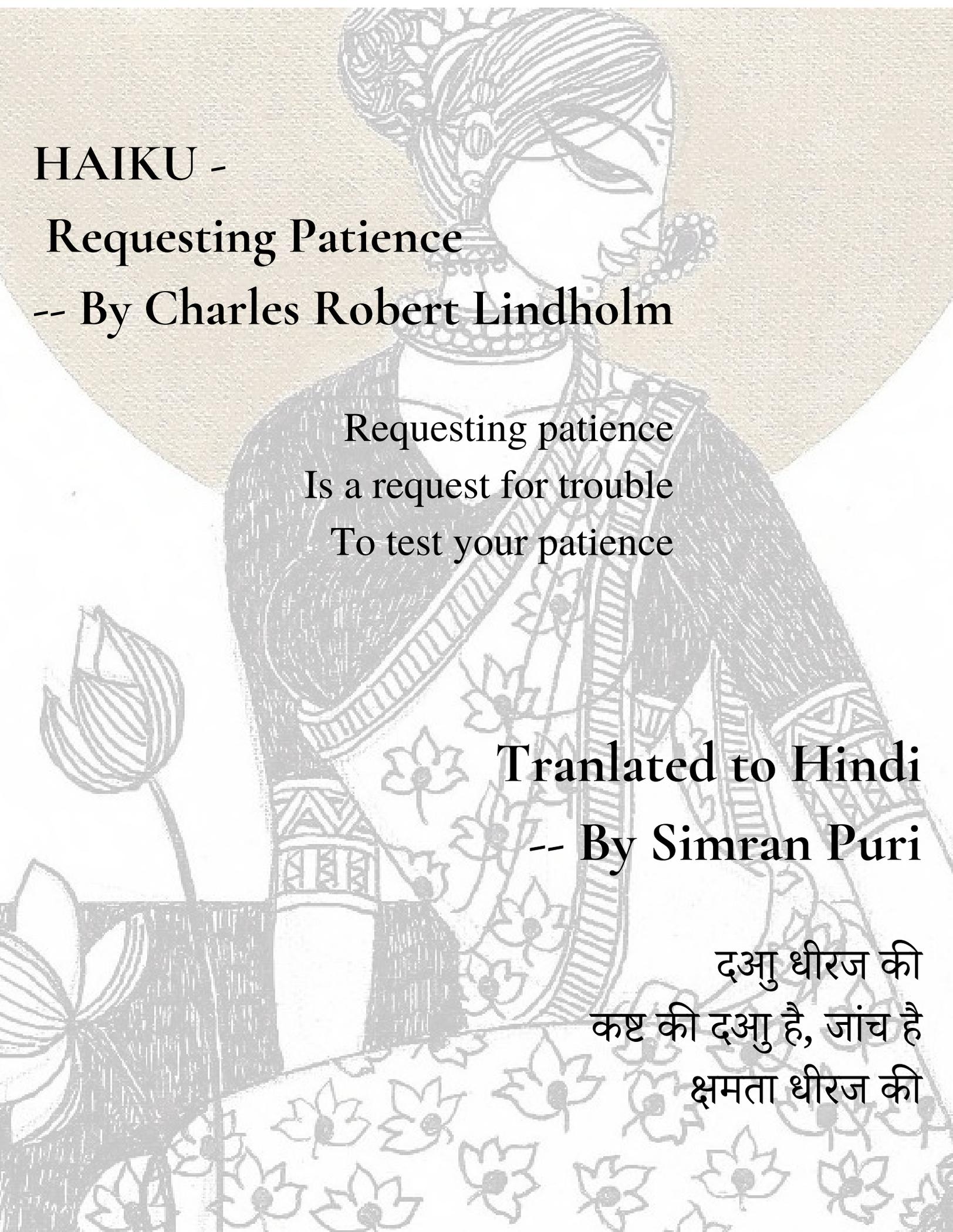
What lies beneath the colours?
Of the people you call friends.
It seems all so subtle,
Until you let it sink in.

Here is the rose you consider to be so
beautiful,
With shades of red unseen.
I will call it a mirror,
For the people you choose to believe.

You believe your rose to be beautiful
With nothing that it could do wrong.
You treasure it like gold,
Until you get pricked by its thorns.

Priyanka Chandra





HAIKU -

Requesting Patience

-- By Charles Robert Lindholm

Requesting patience
Is a request for trouble
To test your patience

Tranlated to Hindi

-- By Simran Puri

दआु धीरज की
कष्ट की दआु है, जांच है
क्षमता धीरज की

অপ্ৰেমের কবিতা

একটা

ভয়াল, ভয়ংকর প্ৰেমের স্বপ্ন দেখছি।

স্বপ্ন দেখছি

এমন এক উপত্যকার, যা
জরুরি অবস্থার অকারণ
চোখরাঙানিকে
মানতে শেখেনি।

সেই

উপত্যকায় পৌঁছে আমি তোমাকে 'প্ৰিয়ত' নামে
ডাকব!
আগের
মুহূর্তে, আমরা প্ৰেমকে দেবো নতুন সঙ্গ।

এই

ঘর, এই শহর, এই
দেশে ফেরার সমস্ত সম্ভাবনাকে ধুলিসাৎ
করে

যা পড়ে থাকে, সেই উদ্যম, মাতোয়ারা জীবনের
স্বপ্ন
দেখছি।

অদ্রিজা মজুমদার



স্বপ্ন
দেখছি এমন এক অদ্রস্নাত ভোরের,
যা সীমান্ত পেরিয়ে এসে
তোমার
কানে কানে বলে যাবে আমার গল্প।

সেই
ভোরে পৌঁছে আমি তোমাকে শোনাবো প্রতিটা রাতের
জসিয়ে
রাখা ঘুমপাড়ানি গান।

আর
সেই ভোরের শেষে বৃষ্টি নামার ঠিক আগের মুহুর্তে,
তোমার
রক্ত্রে
রক্ত্রে ছড়িয়ে দেবো অনেক গুলো অসমাপ্ত কবিতা।

সেই
উপত্যকা বা সেই ভোরের
যদি খোঁজ পাও, তবে জানিও।
ইশান
কোণে অপ্রেমের মেঘ করবার আগে, তোমাকে শেষ
বার
ছুঁয়ে
আসতে চাই।

তারপর
ঝড় আসলে ক্ষতি নেই...

আছড়ে
পড়ব - তোমায় নিয়ে নতুন কোনো গান লেখার
উদ্দেশ্যে ॥



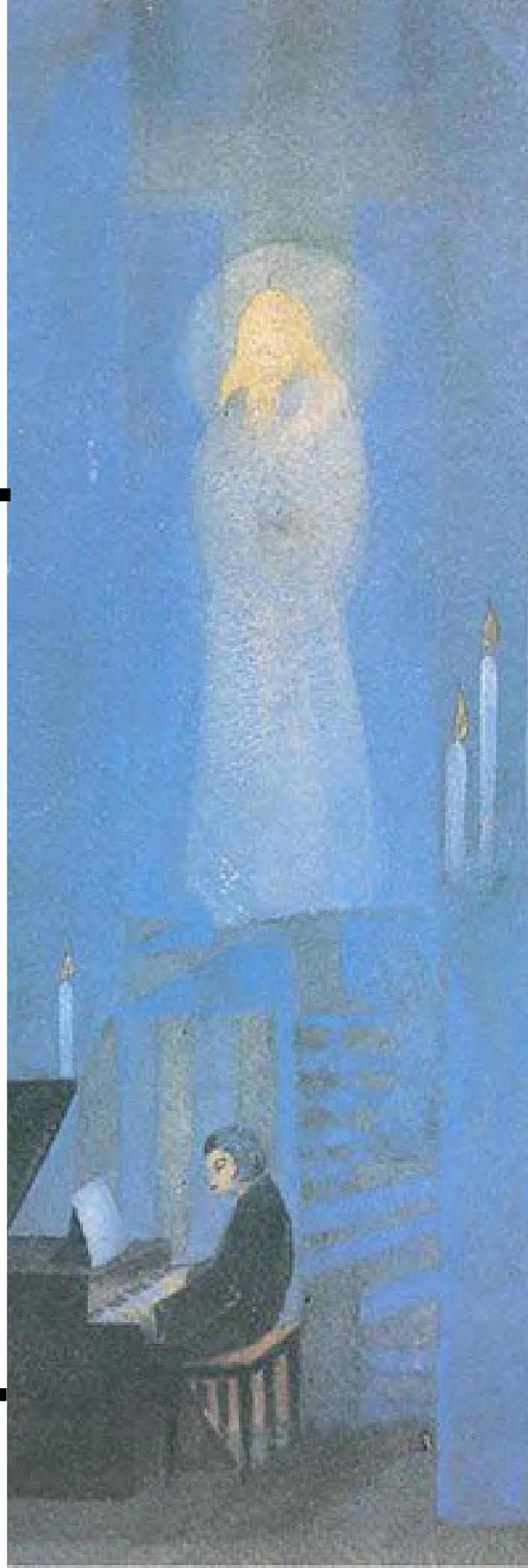
দুই শিল্পী

অৰ্ণব দত্ত

এক প্রভাতে দুই শিল্পী, প্রফুল্ল মনে-
সমুদ্র সৈকতে বন্ধন আঁকছিল নির্জনে।

দিবা শেষে রজনীতে,
দুজনেই ক্লান্ত চোখে,
দেখে সে অঙ্কন গিয়েছে,
ঢেউএর অতলে।।

প্রতি অনুতে তুমি বিরাজ প্রভু,
প্রিয়র কাজলেও তোমায় দেখিলাম;
নিজ হাতে তুমি গড়েছ তৃণ,
করেছো তাহাতে তৃণা দান।।



ইতি-

অনুরাগ দাস শর্মা

(A Translation of Leonard Cohen's Famous
Blue Raincoat)

ভোর চারটে
শীত চলে যাচ্ছে
এই চিঠি ডাক বক্সে
তোমার ঠিকানা খুঁজছে ||

কুয়াশা-এ ঢাকা
এ শহরে আমি থাকি
সারা বিকেল ধরে
আমি গানের সুর গড়ি ||

আর তুমি বলেছিলে
মরুভূমি আঁকড়ে থাকবে |
শূন্যতার জীবনের গল্প
তুমি কি লিখবে?

আর জেন্
তোমার গল্প শুনতে এলো,
ঠোঁটে তোমার দেওয়া গোলাপ
আর কোটে রাখা তোমার হাত ||





দু বছরে যে মানুষ কতই পাল্টে যায়
তোমার ছেঁড়া রেইনকোট বৃষ্টি তে ভিজে যায় |
আর তুমি শিয়ালদাহ-এ যে সারাদিন কাটালে
আর তাও খালি হাতে বাড়ি ফিরে এলে ||

তোমাকে আর কি বলব, সব কথাই তো জানো
এই অদ্ভুত ভোরের কথা বুঝি মানো |
ক্ষমা করার যে আমি কেউ নয়ই
না করা টাই বোধ হয় ভালো |

আর যদি তুমি ফেরো
অভিশপ্ত এ শহরে
আজীবন মনে রেখো
সে রয়েছে শুধু তোমার জন্যে ||

আর জেন
তোমার গল্প শুনতে এলো,
ঠোঁটে তোমার দেওয়া গোলাপ
আর কোটে রাখা তোমার হাত ||

ইতি -
তোমার বন্ধু

হে বন্ধু, বিদায়

অর্ণব দত্ত

চুরুট ছাই, চিরকুট,
টোটা বন্দুক, রক্তাক্ত কারাগার -
দ্রুত গতি, কিছু দৃশ্য,
অনুমতি অগ্রাহ্য, হঠাৎ রাস্তা পারাপার।

মুখোমুখি উর্দিধারী, উর্দিগুলো কই?
হারিয়ে যাওয়ার হিসেবনিকেশ,
হুইফির টিপসই।

"কর্তব্য, খুচরো পাপ, ক্রোধের অপচয়-
তাই মর্গে যারা ঘুমিয়ে থাকে,
তাদের সাথে আভিক পরিচয়।
মরচে পরা উর্দির তারা,
এখনো আমি গুনি-
এই, তোমার কি কেচ্ছা কাহিনী,
বলো দেখি, শুনি।"

"আমি ধোঁয়ার রাজ্য হাতেরে দেখেছি,
সে এখন অন্য কারো সাথে -
বলতে পারো ডিভোর্স হয়েছে,
ওই...গান্ধর্ব মতে।"



পান্ডুলিপি প্রমাদ গোনে
সমান্তরাল ট্রাকে,
রবীন্দ্রনাথ কি সাড়া দিয়েছে,
ব্যর্থ কবির ডাকে?

বইগুলো ভালো করে দেখ,
পাতায় পাতায় প্রমাণ ছড়িয়ে আছে।
স্নায়ু এখনো উত্তেজিত?
খয়েরি রং জমাট বেঁধেছে,
কপালের খুব কাছে।

বৃষ্টি নামে মুদ্রাদোষে,
আর ভিজতে থাকে অন্তিম যাত্রার খই -

মৃত্যুদন্ডের রাজসাক্ষী,
সিঁক্ত, ক্লান্ত, অসহায় -
বারুদের গঞ্জে মেশে দীর্ঘশ্বাস,
" হে বন্ধু , বিদায় " ॥





Monograph Interviews: Susmit Bose

On the 26th of January, our Editor In Chief sat down with the legendary musician Susmit Bose. The interview was video recorded and is currently up on our YouTube page. The link is available on our website

The following transcript is an excerpt from the aforementioned interview.



Susmit Bose

Susmit Bose is an Indian musician whose songs often deal with social issues, such as human rights, global peace and non violence. He has been making music since the 1970s and has performed widely in India and abroad.

1. Did you always want to be a musician or was it something that crept up on you one fateful day?

I decided I want to be a musician at the age of 4 or 5 but then I come from an Indian Classical family. My father, besides being the director of All India Radio, was a very well-known thumri singer. So we used to have musicians like Alauddin Khan Sahab and Ustad Ali Akbar Khan Sahab flitting in and out of the house. So, I wanted to grow up to be Pandit Susmit Bose, but that didn't happen. Because, you see at that time, music wasn't something that people from supposedly good families should be taking up. That's why father never allowed that thing to happen and that created a lot of rift between my father and me. He would kick me out of the house; sometimes I'd leave and sleep in the station till the cops would come throw me out...

[Contd.] ...One day, in one of these ballets [at his school, Springdales] there was this rehearsal going and there was this poem of Tagore being recited - Where the Mind is Without Fear. There was this girl, I can still see her you know, in a flowing satin dress and I could hear on the P.A.:

"I can see a new day
A new day soon to be
When the storm clouds are all passed
And the sun shines on a world that is free."

My hair stood on end. So I went to the booth and said, "What was that?" Now, my music teacher was much more of a mentor to me than my father. My father disregarded me. So he just threw an album at me because he was busy. And there was this album with a tall lanky man with his head thrown back, with an instrument in hand and one single microphone. And the album was called "I Can See a New Day" by Pete Seeger. I took to it. Now there was another trauma there. How do I get into it, because this is what I wanted to do...

In the university, in the 60s, you know they were very dichotomous times- There was the Vietnam War, Man on the Moon. There was Leila Khalid, the first woman, hijacking an airplane from Palestine, there was Marianne Faithful with her sexuality, there was nirvana, there were the hippies, there was a whole lot of things happening. Mid 60s, it seemed like the entire world had changed and the youth had taken over. It was a milestone kind of a year. People were writing songs like "Hard Rains a Gonna Fall, Masters of War, Rainy Day Woman and all that kind of songs... Since everybody was expressing themselves through all kinds of art forms I wrote a song called "Walking Talking Contradiction".



2. There's this story of you in Kathmandu where you ran into a very famous Guitarist.

Jimmy Page! I didn't even know that was Jimmy Page really. And so I had a battered guitar and I went to Kathmandu with a one of the guys who organized Woodstock and with no money. No money. We went to this chai shop where everybody had gathered and I just picked up the guitar just to show them that I could do something and from that day on, my food and stay was taken care of. We used to stay in these little huts near Hanuman dhoka, rented out for 10rs or 12rs and every night I'd come back to a note in front of the door saying "Sing this, sing that, Come here, there's food." So I went.

While all this was happening, I was sitting near the pond singing Stairway to Heaven and this man comes, lanky guy, with his face down all the time. He sat down and said "Hey, there's a better way of doing that." I said, "I don't give a damn, I'll do it my way."

So he took the guitar and he said "Shit guitar man!" And then he played. It was just beautiful. Anyway, after that he nodded his head and left. And when I went to where everyone was sitting someone asked, "Hey what was Jimmy saying to you?" I said, "Who Jimmy?" They said, "Don't you know, that was Jimmy Page." Gosh!

3. What is your opinion on the current state of music?

I think it's more orchestrated because it caters more to a dancing kind of group. Not to say it's dead, people still listen to music. But even in Indian Classical music now, when a classical musician goes on the stage now, he barely plays the aalap for 3 minutes or 4 minutes. Then he leaves out all the jhor and madjhor and goes straight on to jhala and in that Jhala he spends a lot of time with Sawal Jawab that Zakir Hussain started.

Many many years ago there was I.I.T. Bombay and I was there and I wouldn't name the Indian Classical musician, so he was there. He was nervous as hell because he was billed after me. So he came up to me and said, "Susmit ji, this isn't right. Who will listen to me play after you're done?" I said, "Everyone has come to hear you play. Everyone in the audience is stoned and wants to have a good time. They want to imagine a psychedelia. So you just go there and play a long aalap."



He went and he sat on the thing and [mimics discordant noises] started off, and I said, "What is he doing?" And people started booing because it was complete ruckus and after my song which had purpose in it, and after that you've got an image of the next act and you come and bum trip the entire image.

...But every age gets the art it deserves and I am not anti it.

4. Coming back to your time at Springdales, would you consider yourself a Delhi boy through and through?

Absolutely, if there was no Delhi I wouldn't be there. Delhi, being the capital, there was so much politics there, it was a breeding ground for me. I could participate freely and not just in one kind of politics, it was across the border and so it helped me a lot.

5. When did you decide to shift to Calcutta and why?

I decided to move to Calcutta because in Delhi you know, the creative space was entirely taken up by the mainstream. There was no space for me and I didn't want to be a part of that and Delhi was becoming a mall where everything was consumer oriented and very commercial.

...Calcutta has always been a passion city for me. I had nothing to do with this city. When I was young, father used to bring me down to Calcutta to stay with my grandmother, and we used to live in Central Avenue. So, I used to walk from that Indian Airlines office, to Chandni, to Chowringhee to Park Street and go back home and that was my kick.



6. You took a hiatus in 1980 and that was the time when the Bangla Rock scene was coming up in Calcutta. Did you have any opinion on it? Any bands or songs you liked?

[When] This entire movement of Jibonmukhi gaan was happened in Kolkata, I got very interested in it and I have great regard for Suman and Anjan Dutta. Mohiner Ghoraguli, the guy came to see me in Delhi and man he was awesome. He came and said "Susmit Da, I only want to talk to you for 5 minutes" and we sat for hours over cups and cups of tea and everything and we talked about his vision and we talked about my vision and he asked me why I was singing in English and why not in any other language and I explained it to him. And he asked me about urban folk music. And he asked about all these deep and profound sort of questions and answers that we got involved in.

6. Do you have anything to say to our viewers who might be pursuing music professionally?

The only thing, as Miles Davis said, "Play what you really are." Don't go around trying to write the top hit, you know. There are two kinds of people - one is an artist and one is a musician. An artist is one goes around and expresses himself. Without the whole thing of trying to hit the gallery. And the musician is one who will work for days, weeks or months working on something that would be acceptable to everyone. So, I hope people are more true to music.

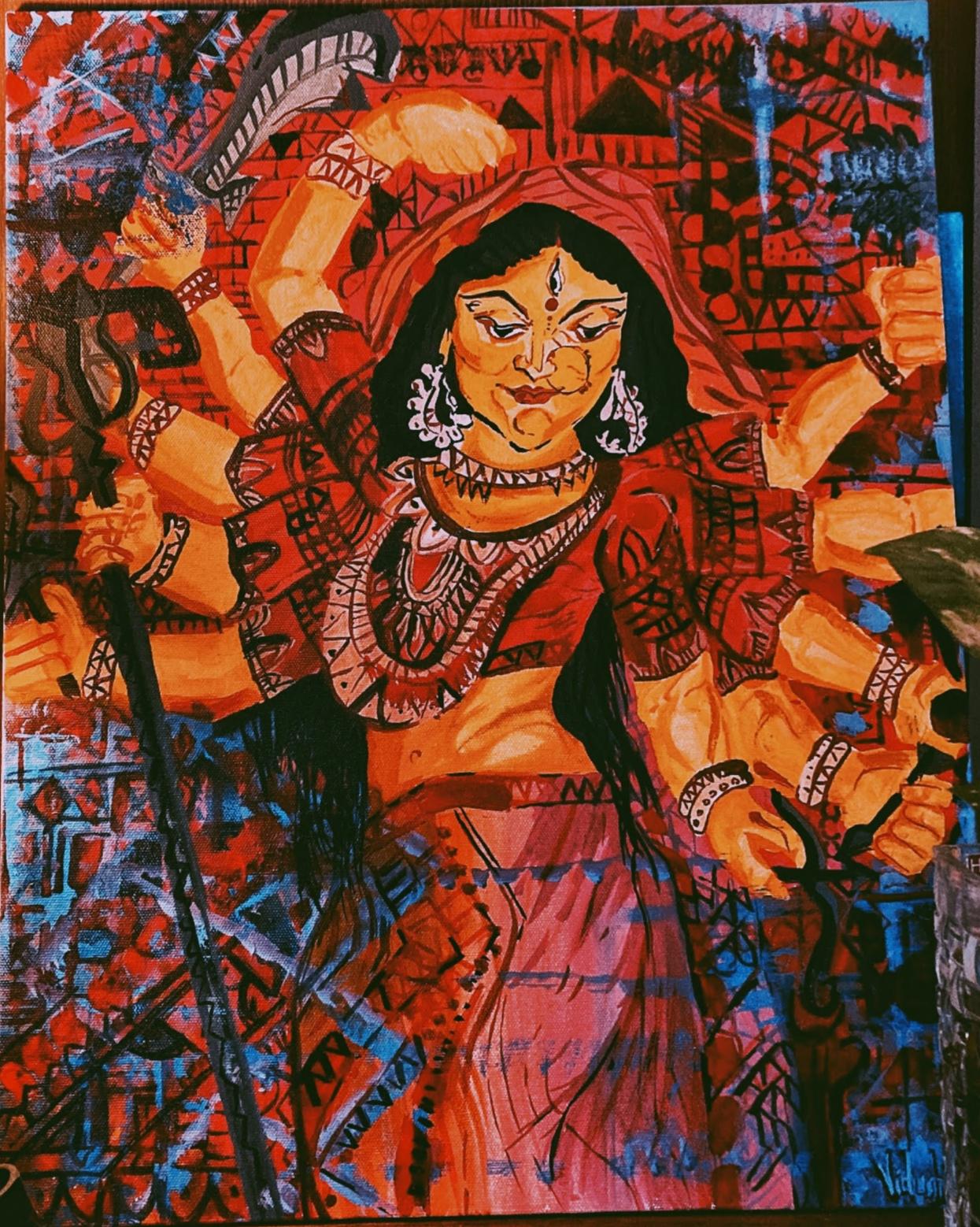


Artists

in

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Special Thanks To:

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MONOGRAPH