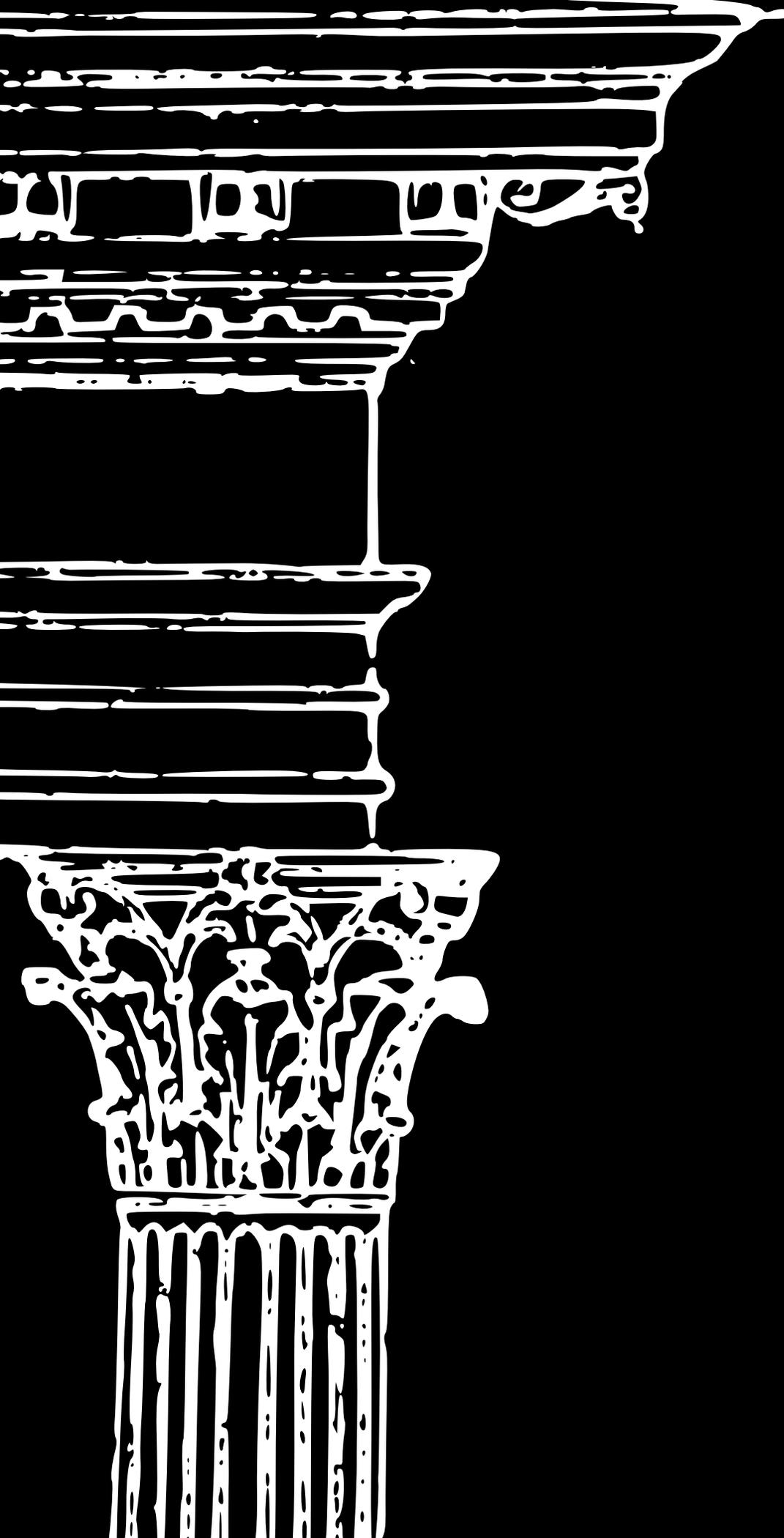


# MONOGRAPH

YEAR 3. VOL. 3



A STUDENT LED MAGAZINE FOR THE ARTS



# MONOGRAPH

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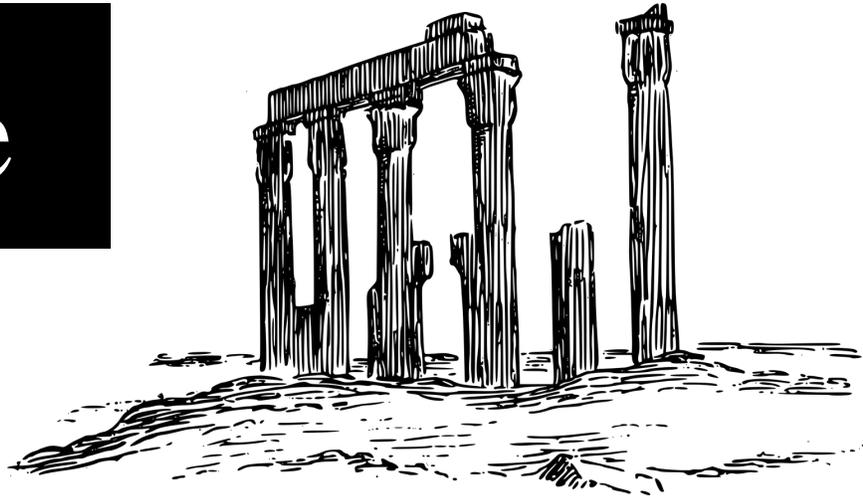
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# Editor's Note



We march towards the end of the year with rapid footsteps; with a dead sound on the final stroke of that repeating hour, which confirms the circular nature of life. 2023, within our reach brings with itself new beginnings, and while we all, grappling with shrinking economies and unstable socio-political realities, remain hesitant about happy endings, all I wish is for the next year to be kind.

*Anuraag Das Sarma*

*Editor-in-Chief*

*Monograph*



# Editorial: Caste Barriers maintained through sexual violence and assault



Caiityya Pillai

The feminism theory that we subscribe to is its western version and does not consider Indian nuances. Caste and gender are interrelated and separate. They are interrelated because they are inter-sectional and the crimes of sexual violence against women of lower castes are often, interrelated.

The caste system is an age-old practice that promotes systematic oppression of communities. It is rooted in hegemonic and unjust hierarchal principles. India comprises more than 6,000 castes and 3,743 subcastes. They are continually exploited by the upper castes. This system of caste evolves from concepts of descent, ecology, status and ranking.

The patriarchy is a system that perpetuates limiting and oppressive gender roles, political and economic subordination of women and



sexual assault. India takes a contradictory stance on its treatment and worship of women; it glorifies its deities but oppresses its women.

Caste and gender are different because a woman from an upper class is made to adhere to norms that uphold ‘tradition’ but are meant to enforce subordination. By adhering to these norms, she can avail the benefits of the upper caste through her male counterpart and wield some power. A woman from the lower caste is made to adhere to oppressive, patriarchal norms that uphold ‘tradition’ and ‘dignity’ and suffers from the caste discrimination and violence. Both these structures work to oppress the woman in the second scenario.

Ruth Manorama is a Dalit social activist from Bangalore, who was awarded the Right Livelihood Award. She shares her insight saying, “Caste relations are sexualised and gendered to maintain a hierarchy that exists to facilitate the upper-caste men and is perpetuated through degradation and sexual violence that is inflicted on women.”

The oppression of women stands at crossroads with caste discrimination and gender on either side and this oppression goes both ways. Women of today face discrimination in an





‘invisibilized fashion and this discrimination is shrouded with the cloth of ‘tradition’. Women hold a central role in the discourse about gender and caste, they are the upholders of the dignity of the family and community. Violence is often enacted on the women of lower classes by upper-class men to establish dominance and subordinate the community.

Examples of this can be seen all over the country.

In Uttar Pradesh, the Katra village of the Budaun district, two teenage girls from the Dalit community were abducted, gang-raped, killed and hung from a tree. This incident took place on May 27, 2014, after the girls asked for a mere raise of Rs. 3 to their wages. The assault and murder were carried out by upper-caste men. Two of the suspects, in this case, were police officers and this goes to prove that authority of judgement or protection should not be in the hands of upper-caste policemen.



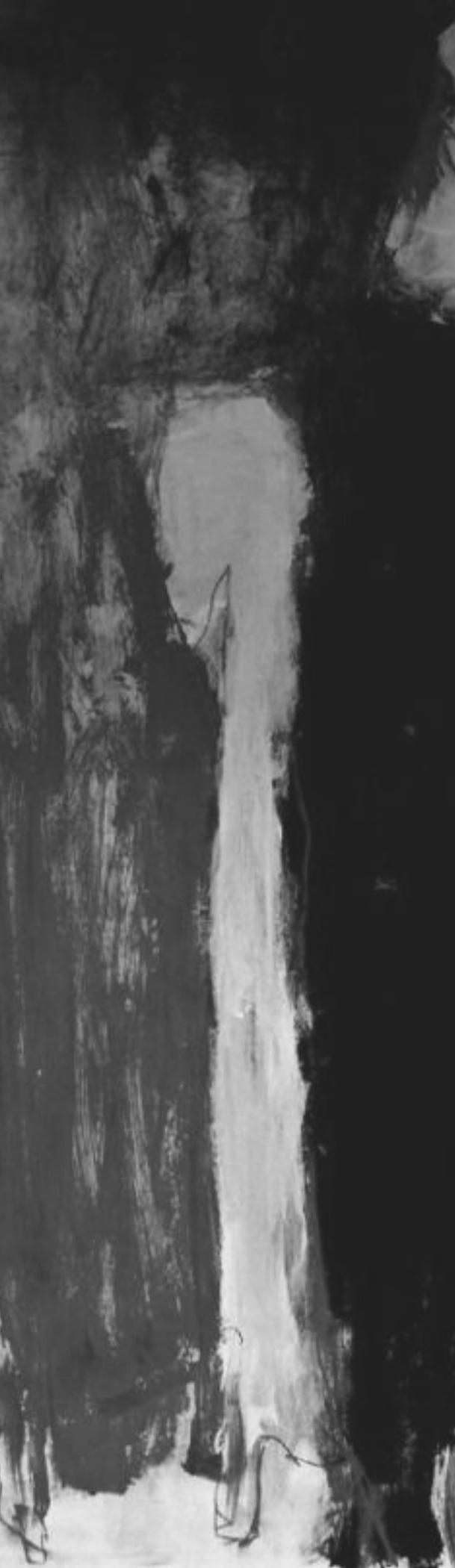
In Madhya Pradesh, a Dalit woman approached a police station carrying her foetus in a plastic bag, claiming that she had been assaulted by three upper-caste men for several months.

In Hyderabad, the crime records bureau, in April 2018, revealed that over the past three years 37 Dalit and tribal women had been raped at the hands of upper-caste men. This reiterates that caste discrimination is not limited to rural areas but is prevalent in relatively urban spaces as well.

All these cases created country-wide debates on whether these crimes are crime of sexual violence or sexual violence rooted out of power dynamics of caste. Even though these cases display a clear intersectional connection between gender and caste, some of the accused in the cases above were not charged under the Prevention of Atrocities (Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes) Act 1989.

Although the country has 195 exclusive courts to handle crime against SC and STs, only 27% of the people accused of these crimes were convicted during 2014-16. The ministry says the tremendously low number of convictions is owed to delay in lodging FIR's, absence of proper scrutiny of the case by the prosecution before filing the charges etc.





The Hathras case is a landmark case for the discourse on gender and caste.

An uproar reverbed through the country for this case, people protested for days and nights and many conversations on the motives behind the crime provided for a countrywide debate room. One side thought the crime to be solely associated with sexual assault and another believed it to be sexual violence perpetuated to maintain cast barriers and assert dominance. The victim was a 19-year-old Dalit woman, she was raped in the Hathras district of Uttar Pradesh. The complaint was not registered till two days after the incident and no arrests were made for 10 days. The victim's body was promptly cremated after her death, by the police, The violence and gruesome nature of the crime and the caste-power dynamics indicate that this was not a crime of only sexual assault but holds a complexity to it that makes it more contextual and specific. The intersectionality of caste and gender play a role here, which makes it harder to prove the intent of caste discrimination.

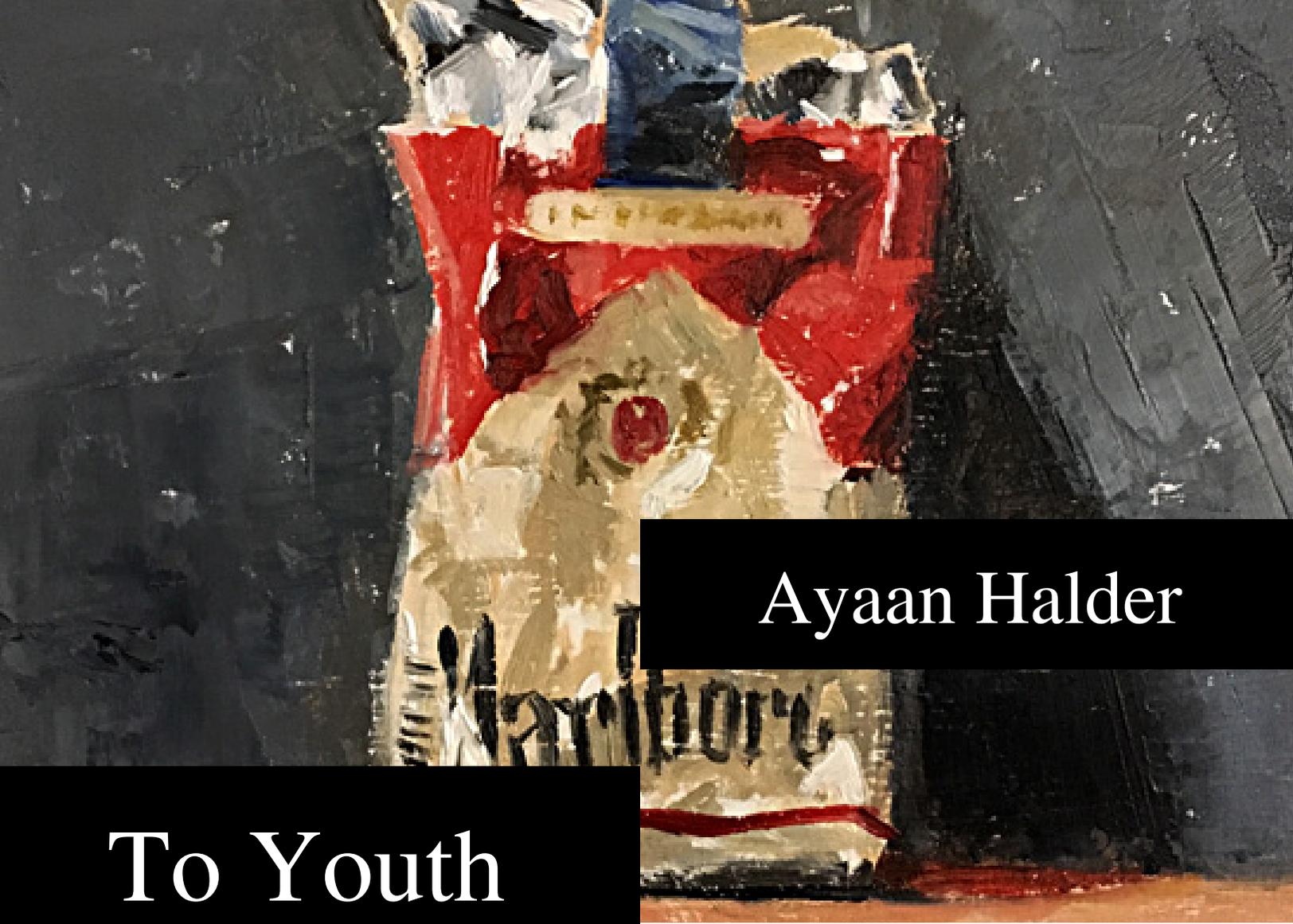


without the consent of the family. The violence with which the crime was committed led to her being paralysed with a spinal cord injury. They also tried to strangle her, and, in the process, she bit her tongue off.

The illegality of caste discrimination is highlighted through these strong laws but its legitimacy in society and implementation of the law are not addressed strongly.

Legality and legitimacy, often confused with each other are distinct concepts. Legality or illegality is the state-sanctioned status on the criminalisation of an act or good. Whereas legitimacy proved to be more dynamic and complex than the former. Legitimacy changes with the public attitude or opinion towards a practice or good and plays an important role in formulating the image of this act in the minds of the public and subsequently affects its continuance. The legitimacy of caste discrimination and the implementation of policies will need to be addressed to view any decrease in its perpetuation.





Ayaan Halder

# To Youth

Waking up today, I took a moment to peek through our rather quickly emptying hourglass. I don't know why I did it, I don't even know if I should have. But I guess the silver lining was that I caught a glimpse of you again. You were in the balcony with a cigarette dangling between your fingers; the same brand you had watched your father smoke for all those years. I smiled when I noticed the anxious hesitation on your face before you flicked the butt to the ground. Ashtrays were too risky, I know. Perhaps not as risky as they are now, but I understand. Do tell me though! What was it that bothered you? Did you worry that if your cigarettes touched the ground beneath you, they'd set fire to this world you wished so much to be a part of? You are happier, you know?

I know it may be hard for you to believe. Crushing, even, for you are close, if not at, the crest of the wave that you think will somehow take the shape of a storm. But you are happier than I ever will be. For your sighs are lighter than mine, and you still pick out your clothes to celebrate your odd tastes of fashion, and not to cover the stretch marks on your thighs. The way you love is still uncouth, and you're in peace with the lack of reciprocation towards it. And despite the fact that when your days melt into each other, you stand on their edges, begging to turn into me, you're still lucky to wake up each morning to a body that doesn't feel alien to you.

Your food, It doesn't taste like ash and regret in your mouth, and your fingers needn't be cautious about the size of the morsels they sculpt. Strange as it may sound, mine are crooked monstrosities layered with fat, and the afternoons at my mother's table are just not the same anymore. The fat, it's everywhere now; in the waist, and the thighs, the cheekbones and in the weight of the stretched out elastic running through the shorts that no longer fit. There's nothing left of your rickety frame to grace me when I lock myself in a strange white room with thick dark curtains, standing naked on the cold marble.



Outside the room stands our father, aging, yet younger, much younger than I am; as young as you perhaps, perhaps younger still; ceaselessly mumbling his disappointment at the brevity of our youth. He has boiled himself down to nothing more than a cold, cruel reminder of all that we could've been; all the ships that sailed even before we knew we had an ocean to cross. The balconies have changed, the verandas have disappeared, tin roofs are now blocks of cemented glory; and yet, you and I both serve the same sentence in the fiery pits of hell, chained by the choices we were too cowardly to make. But looking at you through the hourglass, I relish the hopeful look on your face, and for a moment, just for a moment, I want to believe you when you say that things would come around. Believe you when you say that we are worthy of being loved, worthy of being listened to. That a day would come when the mumblings would stop, and the house would be engulfed in the white dove's silence. But the day never did arrive; not on the the eighteenth birthday, or the nineteenth, not even when the world came to a halt by the twenty fourth. And locked up in a room that I never can call my own, I never could get my grasp around how skipped meals became hunger strikes.

The white light is near now; the scissors stains on the back of my hand and my wheezing breath are testament to that. Hope has waned, and the love that you had professed to me the day you had finished high school now weighs my shoulders down heavily. The hourglass is shaking, it's quiet frugality not worthy of holding the reckless indulgences of time hostage. And peeping in, I rest my eyes only on you, and not what engulfs your world. For beneath you, I see the tiring wave that you surf upon; the one that cannot carry the depth of your aspirations. I have failed you! I have failed you! I have failed you!

I remember the letters that you wrote to me; the wishful thinking on yellowed paper;



“May your art be worthy; not worthy of what’s beyond, but worthy of you. May your poems be read, and the strokes of your brush be understood by keen, seeking eyes. May the notes and silences of the songs you write for your lovers; The worlds you build brick by brick within this world that’s secretly built upon such beautiful, neglected poetry, be listened to with unalloyed attention.”

The light is now nearer, and the unyielding knocks on my door tell me that it’s time for dinner. Or is it just my rumbling stomach? Either way, the the weight of the stretched out elastic running through my boxer shorts ensure that I cannot fit through the door anymore. And so I remain with you in my dark, marbled room, not moving my gaze from the hourglass, staring intently at the cracks that now exist on its surface. The hourglass is brimming; struggling to contain the weight of time, which has now taken the form of matter and is no longer constricted to the vague measurement of my existence or yours. The knocks on the door turn to raps, to thrashes; my old wooden door my last line of defense.

Is it my father who now calls me for my meals? Or is it my tomorrow, looking at me through our hourglass in hopeless appeals to contain the white light? The light has now taken over the marble; has taken over my immaculate bookshelves; has taken over the smell of incense that you used to light for me; has taken over all but spared the crumbling hourglass; for it is perfectly capable of devouring itself. It is near, it is near. And there is nothing I can do but wait for my father's sonorous voice to usher it in. Now I know who had knocked so passionately, so ardently, as I sat there loving you through our hourglass. It is the white light itself, mumbling to me the things you say when you look into the mirror, worshipping me. "May your fathers look up to you, and your mothers dote on the ink you splatter upon your notebooks. May you sweep your lovers off their feet when you whisper in their ear, And may the things you whisper into your own be things that bring you peace. May your days be a fine balance between the quiet and chaotic, and at night, may your ramblings never be mislabeled as insanity. May you step out of your room without ever having to step out of your bubbles, and may your bubbles forever expand. For all of this, and more, is something you deserve." But no, I'm not worthy of worship, for like I said, I have failed you not once, but through times that are manifold. And that is why I have put an end to worshipping my own tomorrows, for they have failed us both, just as I. And so I shut my ears with my shivering, shaking palms, as the my father's voice escapes your lips, and yours escapes his own, and the blinding white light mirrors mine. As the hourglass bursts into shards cutting deeper into my skin than my blunt kitchen scissors ever could, the three merge into one angry, tired accusation.

"You have failed us"

"You have failed us"

"You have failed us"





# An Intent To Serve

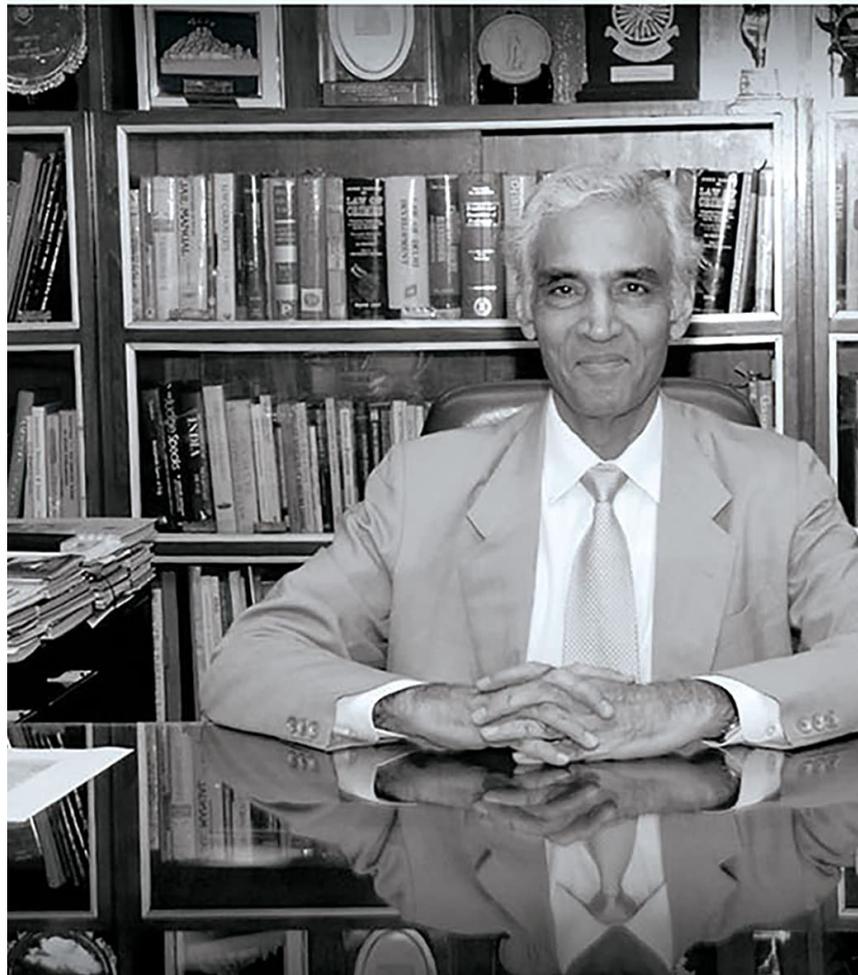
Aishi Saha

Tejendra Khanna's memoir titled 'An Intent to Serve: A Civil Servant Remembers' came out this year from Harper Collins India. The book recounts Khanna's life – more specifically, his tenure and service to the country as an IAS officer and working under various prestigious designations at the different stages of his career. I remember telling a friend about this book even before I began reading it and the remark that followed – '*Oh, a Congressman*'. However, highlighted throughout the length of the book is the emphasis on how non-partisan he has been in his field of work, and the admiration and respect that he has gathered due to that quality.

# AN INTENT TO SERVE

A Civil Servant Remembers

TEJENDRA KHANNA





Born in 1938 in Bihar, Khanna belonged to a family which held quite an impressive career record. He recalls his school days as a little boy plucking fruit from trees on his way back. Here, he establishes a common ground with the general reader who would possibly expect such an elevated figure to also have a similar childhood. Khanna shows that he, too, is an ordinary man, no matter who he became later in life. After having studied Mathematics and Physics at the university level, he sat for the UPSC as per his father's wishes. He was also equally willing in this as he himself remarks – "...I felt at home with people from simple backgrounds and felt that a civil services career would afford me opportunities to interact with them and help them." After a foundational course in Mussoorie, the IAS qualifiers went on a 'Bharat Darshan' tour. Khanna's academic merit shone through and he successfully retained his All-India rank even after his cadre allocation's final exam.

He was posted in Punjab during a very politically unstable time in the state. There was some dissatisfaction among the masses regarding the States Reorganization Act of 1956. A 'betterment levy' in 1959 for the Bhakra Dam Project was met with stiff resistance from the Akali Dal and the Left-wing parties until it was dismissed in 1961. Khanna was appreciated for maintaining what he calls an 'open door' policy in his office, wherein anybody could convey their grievances without third party interference. A young Army Officer, in a 2006 publication titled 'Standard of Courtesy', throws a question in admiration of Tejendra Khanna's professional efficiency – "Will today's DCs please extend half as much courtesy to a Lieutenant?"





Next, he recounts his year spent in the USA and then his contribution in the Punjab Tractors Project. The latter had been a challenge which he overcame and proved his strength of resolution by supporting and investing in an indigenously developed technology that had been rejected by the national government. He showed strength of character and keen foresight which naturally took him farther in his career. In a book release event, Khanna addresses this as he says that earning the goodwill of the commonfolk should be prioritised over making ‘compromises to please hierarchical superiors’’. In every chapter of the book, Khanna narrates the highs and lows of the different stages of his career and how he faced every challenge head-on. After a brief tenure in the Ministry of Commerce, he was again posted in Punjab during Indira Gandhi’s election as PM and the ousting of the Akali Dal from power in the state. During this time, the Akali Dal was engaged in heating up the temperature of the political scene of the state by placing a forty-five point charter of grievances before the central government. President’s Rule was imposed in October of 1983 in Punjab after a terror attack on Hindu passengers of a bus at Dhilwan. Here, Khanna does not fail to mention the achievements of the Congress government led by S. Darbara Singh even amidst all the political pandemonium in the state. He gives a balanced account and narrates from a neutral eye, thus establishing a trust with the reader. Khanna definitely seems to be a very reliable narrator of events.

The language throughout the book is very lucid and the style is crisp and matter-of-fact, formal, sometimes with a pinch of subdued sarcasm. He recounts the known events that culminated in the Operation Blue Star followed by the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984. In 1990, with Chandrashekhar coming to power in Punjab, Khanna was appointed as Chief Secretary and Chief Election Officer of the state. Khanna incorporates letters and statements of various significant individuals who have spoken in favour of his cordiality and dedication to his work. However, he attracted some hostility from senior RSS leaders during his first term as Lieutenant Governor of Delhi (1997-98).

In 2007 began his second term as Lieutenant Governor of Delhi. Following the Batla House incident, Tejendra Khanna was invited by Dr. Mushirul Hassan, Vice Chancellor of the reputed Jamia Millia University to deliver a speech on their Foundation Day. He did so in Urdu, conveying the message of love constant in all religions of the globe. Overwhelmed, many elders present there embraced him for his 'Sufi view' on life. He also comments on how media channels and news reporting often blow things out of proportion, or accentuate and present a highly negative facet of an event to receive more public engagement.

Khanna's account, however, is deeply impersonal and does not allow the reader to look into his psyche. The facts of his professional life are provided in a prosaic manner one after the other. What it offers is a close look at India's developmental history post-independence – the various challenges that she faced and to what degree she was able to overcome them. Khanna mostly gives a positive to neutral account of things as they have been. Sometimes it may feel too ideal vis-à-vis the reality of India's problems that continue to exist. Nowhere does he reveal any personal opinions on the administration or criticise any of the governments in power or its decisions. Wherever he differs, he makes sure to treat the other side not with intolerance. This book is definitely catered to a very specific audience that enjoys factual literature or IAS aspirants to whom the account of such an accomplished figure will serve as a great source of inspiration to follow.

# SINGHARA CHOW

সিঙাড়া চাউ

辛哈拉週

Aishi Saha

## Singhara Chow

If you are born and brought up in Kolkata, there is a very slight chance that you haven't heard of or had Chinese Hakka noodles at some point. Cine Pitara's documentary begins with the introduction of a Hakka settler in Tangra, named Li Kuo Yung, who was born and raised in the City of Joy and who gave life to the Ah Leung restaurant. It made me realise that I had never dwelt on the word 'Hakka' before even though I've had numerous types of delicacies by this name. So, before I get to our main subject of interest, let's do some history.

The Hakka are an ethnic group originating from Northern China, believed to be descendants of the Hans. During the fall of the Song dynasty in the thirteenth century, they migrated to southern provinces such as Guangdong, Fujian, Jiangxi and Guangxi. The word 'Hakka' in Cantonese means 'guest people,' which was used by the natives (*bendi*) to refer to them. They never really got assimilated with the natives and a portion of them arrived in Bengal in the later half of the eighteenth century. A man by the name of Yang Tai Chow is thought to be the first of the Hakka Chinese settlers to come to Bengal (circa 1778). Like Li Kuo Yung's family, most Chinese settlers in Tangra were involved in the tanneries and leather business. Consequently, many of these immigrant families expanded into restaurant businesses, bringing in the unique Hakka flavour to the everyday of Calcutta.

This brings us finally to the face behind Ah Leung – Li Kuo Yung, who ran away from home at the age of sixteen in pursuit of his dream of feeding people. His son, Kit, who runs the family business hand in hand with his father, traces the story of Yung’s humble beginning. Yung worked in many a restaurant, constantly enhancing his skills but his dream had always been of opening a place which he could call his own. He wanted to start a chain with his own special recipes that he had developed over the years. However, it had not always been an easy road. The neighbourhood in which they previously lived showed xenophobic attitudes toward them. This recalls the 1962 Indo-China war which made the existence of the immigrant Chinese in Bengal (and India at large) precarious to say the least. Monica Liu, owner of five of the most known Chinese restaurants in Kolkata (Mandarin, Beijing, Tung Fong to name a few) spent years in an internment camp in Deoli, Rajasthan, where many Chinese immigrants were detained on suspicions of being spies. Many of them left India under such a strenuous political atmosphere and settled in countries of East Asia. Monica Liu and Li Kuo Yung’s family were among the few who stayed back.

Yung visited China for a brief period of one month and honed his already excellent skills of cooking Chinese food. Ah Leung runs on Yung’s desire to deliver to the people of Kolkata the true and authentic flavours of China. The popularity of Chinese cuisine in Kolkata can equal or sometimes even surpass the native Bengali cuisine. So, it is no surprise that over the decades, many Chinese food chains have opened up in the city and some have really made a name for themselves. According to Kit, however, these crowd favourites often buy from outside and their noodles are machine-made. “It’s all about the ingredients and how you prepare noodles, like the bamboo and all,” says Kit about the commitment to quality of his father’s restaurant.

The noodles for the wonton chow are made with paramount precision and care. It takes around ten hours to prepare the noodles alone. It is all made by the Yung family members, no external employees. Patrick Fitzimmons, a visitor from Texas, USA, says – “In America, it’s just the Americanised Chinese...in Calcutta, most of the Chinese is just a fusion type of food...this is the real, the real deal.” And it is true. There is not a lack of Chinese places in Kolkata – but a lot of it is an Indianized version of the original Chinese, an amalgamation borne not only as a natural effect of cultural mishmash but also to meet the market demands everywhere.

Yung gets a little emotional talking about the passing on of the legacy of his ‘Singhara Chow’ to his next generation – not because he doesn’t trust his son, obviously – but because here is a man to whom this restaurant is his entire life’s work, life’s achievement.

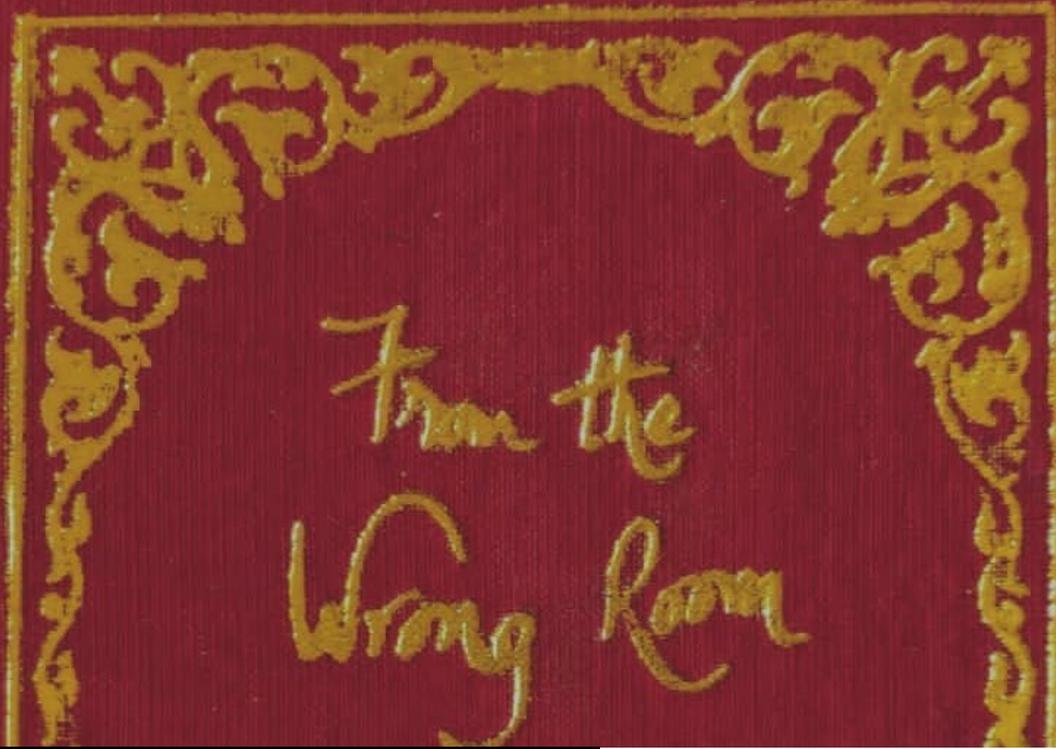




This restaurant is proof that Li Kuo Yung lived and that he lived his dream of delivering the veritable taste of the Hakka to the rest of the world. He is sixty plus, and he says – “...I don’t know how long I can stay over here,” with a bittersweet chuckle. He has two daughters and one son, Kit. The daughters are married and Yung is anticipating his son’s marriage eagerly so that he can lay his eyes on the forthcoming generation that will carry the restaurant forward.

Thank you to the entire team of Cine Pitara for documenting the journey and accomplishments of Li Kuo Yung and his family. Here’s hoping that this urges someone to get lost in the nooks of Tangra and enter the open doors of Ah Leung restaurant.





## From The Wrong Room

Aishi Saha

‘From the Wrong Room’ is an anthology by a budding Bengali poet, Tapas Bandopadhyay, published by Writers’ Workshop, Kolkata. I could not help but have in mind the last Writers’ Workshop book that I had reviewed, a poetry collection by Athira Unni, and look for that similitude of tone that binds the poets of our time. However, if Unni’s poetry was lined by a sense of rebellion and hope, Bandopadhyay deals with an abstract idea of displacement. The preface (which I must admit to having read more than a few times) gives the reader a general idea of what the poet means by the title, ‘From the Wrong Room.’ Bandopadhyay wrestles with the idea of belonging through the creation of a stark imagery of a person at the intersection of two worlds, not knowing which one to call home. The hopelessness in the tone sets the mood for the rest of the poems to follow. Bandopadhyay deliberately creates this poetic persona who seems to be chasing something – belongingness – but that is all there is to it – the chasing, but never reaching. The idealism of this character is broken down when they realise that the ‘right house’ too, is an illusion. It makes the reader wonder if anybody really, truly knows oneself.

Most of Bandopadhyay's poems are very strongly imagist in character, i.e., they contain vivid imagery in very lucid poetic diction. The first poem is called 'Is' which I personally think is wordplay to pluralise the 'I' in order to emphasize the many selves of the speaker. The first two stanzas are relatively simple, dealing with the mundane pleasures of the speaker with their lover. From the third stanza, however, the tone suddenly shifts and the expressions take on a high and elevated character. This part curiously reminds me of Jibanananda Das' 'Banalata Sen' in how both the poetic speakers are weary of the tribulations of the world and would easily trade such harrows for a moment with their beloved. There is the usage of some really interesting phraseology like 'a Mohenjodaro of sighs' which opens up rooms for poststructuralists.

In 'Sin, unoriginal,' we find a more Eliotian voice in the suffocating diction and presentation of brutality against an image of a world that goes on, uncaring. There is also a noticeable recurrence of the motif of light in Bandopadhyay's poems. We find it in 'Sin, unoriginal' where the speaker pleads 'light' for forgiveness. In 'The Fool,' this idea is repeated with the speaker saying, 'For we are seen by light/And that is constantly changing'. 'Now I see you, now I don't' recalls an almost elusive female figure like that of Lord Byron's 'She Walks in Beauty' – someone almost otherworldly, someone who cannot be touched. Lining all these poems is a sense of yearning – yearning for something that will never be.

The next poem that I wish to talk about is called 'ID.' In this poem, the speaker is someone apparently disillusioned by the ways of the world and how that has shaped him as a person. He gets on a train in the hopes of discovering who he was before it all. The main idea is that he has no ticket since this is obviously an impulsive decision. And of course, there is a girl (if this is reminding you of *Jab We Met*, then I assure you, you're not alone). However, like the poems that preceded it, this is not a tale of love where they kiss and the world is saved. On this train where the speaker was looking for his destiny, the 'Inquisitor' comes as a rude awakening and throws him off course for boarding without a ticket. In every way, Bandopadhyay drives home the imagery of the wrong room and the theme of displacement wherein the light in the distance remains an elusive enigma.

‘Fifteen years later’ describes the meeting of two people – the poetic speaker and another subject. This subject is quite obviously an old acquaintance of the speaker – someone he is seeing after fifteen years. These years have left their impression on the individual, and not in a positive way. The speaker remains a detached observer throughout. He makes no attempt to intervene. In fact, he explicitly states – ‘Life’s typhoons have to be faced alone.’ A sense of cold desolation is reiterated again. A step is taken towards something akin to hope in ‘Darjeeling – October 2011’, a short account of the speaker’s memories of the hill station coupled with the recurrence of the female figure. In ‘Dhanbad’ the mood is sultry, laden-eyed. It creates an atmosphere of languor and solitude.

‘Begging for rain,’ for the first three stanzas remains exactly what the title says it is – a plea for rain. The advent of rainfall is clad in the garb of poesy until we reach the fourth stanza where we are introduced to a figure in ‘sodden trousers and striped shirt.’ On the reading the entire poem, the fifth and last stanza specifically seemed reminiscent of Milton’s Satan amid the ever-burning fires of Hell. However, in this context, Bandopadhyay possibly wanted to draw our attention to those who live on the streets, those for whom the rain is both a boon and a curse. ‘Searches’ is a poem written during the pandemic and when the Amphan hit Bengal back in 2020.





When the whole world locked down, technology and gadgets were among some of things that stayed with us and saw our different highs and lows. The speaker seeks to find his nameless ‘you’ in the search list in place of hope. Among some of the lines that really stayed with me and that sum up the mental slump of the pandemic were – ‘Forgetting and healing are lost words,’ and ‘But this year. Defies comprehension.’ It is at this time that Bandopadhyay’s poems cease to only remain an attempt to reach the right room and become one with the times.

One of the last poems of this anthology is called ‘After Poetry’ in which the speaker metaphorizes the act of writing poetry and gives us a number of stark images. This poem is written in five couplets. A tone of uncertainty, of incompleteness remains in this poem, too, as if the end is not really the end – or should not be the end. He underlines the arbitrariness of language – language, which is the main instrument of a poet. This compelling anthology of poems comes to an end with a haiku, on a wistful note – the author does not betray the dominant emotion of the text and neither does he end cynically. It is safe to say that even if one found themselves in the wrong room, they will have the courage to reconstruct their dreams to make it their own right room.

# Hangs Like Golden Chains

Mohua Majumdar

I'm looking for new consonants  
to construct words  
which mirror our mired minds.

I'm looking for a kaleidoscopic lens  
which  
reveals the beauty  
in diversity.

I'm looking for a cloak of empathy  
for those minds shrouded  
by apathy.

I'm looking for the oasis of silence  
in the cauldron of cacophony.

I'm looking for the aural files,  
the captured sounds of  
lost languages, extinct birdcalls  
and disappeared dialects.



I'm looking for the message in the  
bottle swept away,  
from the ravaged boat  
of the refugees.

I'm looking for the oriole  
whose syncopated serenade  
soothed me,  
the morning after the cyclone.

I'm looking for the distant dreams  
left behind  
by the schoolgirls,  
in Kabul.

I'm looking for the day when  
compassion will be  
a contagion.

I'm looking for the sickle  
to harvest hope.

Hope which hangs  
like golden chains  
from the amaltas branches.





From a flicker to a raging wildfire.

Hope is an echo in our inner mountains

.

I'm looking for a gossamer mesh

to ensnare hope.



# The Ache of Adulthood

Devanshi Panda

The comfort of easily collapsing on the grey sofa  
at home,  
The cosiness behind my mom's block-print  
dupatta in a movie theatre,  
The knowledge that when I'm in apartment no.  
1202 food will magically appear on the table,  
The polished black shoes ready for me on a  
school morning, courtesy of my father,  
are all things I never considered wouldn't exist,  
once I set out to be an adult,  
The freedom of adulthood, so tantalising at first,  
Is a deep hollow which can never be filled,  
With hot milk served religiously at 5 p.m in  
hostel kitchens,  
With poorly self-washed clothes in the bucket,  
With PG owners who act like they are 'family',  
It can never be filled, for it is meant to be a  
gaping hole which must only be constantly  
stuffed with reminisces, nothing less, nothing  
more.



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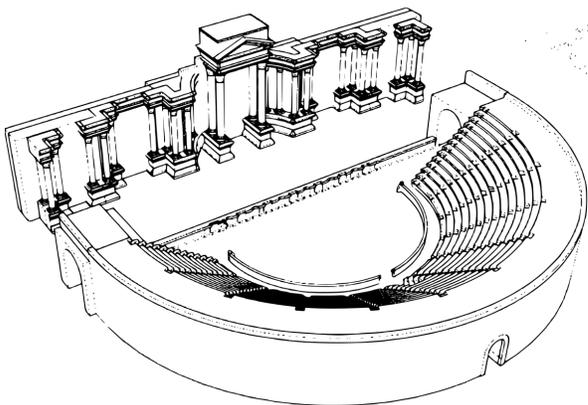
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