

A COLLABORATION BETWEEN DEVI ART FOUNDATION, GURGAON,
AND SARAI-CSDS, DELHI

18 AUGUST 2012 – 16 APRIL 2013

CITY AS STUDIO 03: NON-FICTION WRITING



CURATED BY RAQS MEDIA COLLECTIVE

FROM THE PROPOSALS
(AS ON OCTOBER 2012)

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THE DEVI ART FOUNDATION
SIRPUR HOUSE, PLOT NO. 39,
SECTOR BEHIND EPICENTRE (APPAREL HOUSE)
GURGAON 122003
NEAREST METRO STATION: HUDA CITY CENTRE

They had killed three young guys saying they were dreaded terrorists. I was scared. But it turned scarier when I read the reports in newspapers. These dreaded ones seemed quite like me. It was as if they were me ---only the names have been changed.

They were living alone, away from their families, like I was. Rooms were as messed up as mine, with bags half full of clothes and a few eatables which my mother had sent, strewn all around. Bed was as messy as it could be. Lights used to be on till late, or precisely, till morning. My neighbours would say, "Neyaz is very hardworking guy, he studies the whole night." It was only me and my friends who knew the truth how hardworking I was. Anyway, lights would be on till late night, in the 'their' homes too, as I would come to know through newspapers which religiously quoted a neighbour of the 'terrorists'. From their activities, newspapers had concluded that these guys were terrorists. There was no doubt about it. Like any other tenants, the boys had submitted their original IDs and addresses to their landlord (which was eventually submitted to the local police station). They were trying to disguise themselves as 'Normal human beings'. Police had decoded all this and the media conveyed it to you, since it was their job. A nation's conscience was satisfied.

But my conscience was not satisfied. Not at all.

UNMAKING OF A RADICAL
Neyaz Farooque

... At this time, there entered into my life, another woman, who was my companion from then to the end of her life. I arrived for our third meeting after drinks. The next day she wrote in her letter, "Am I not superior to wine?"

Even after poring through many encyclopedias, I have not been able to find the gender of alcohol.

I wrote, in reply, liquor, which is beyond gender, is at least not a second wife. She replied to my letter, "When I am a mother I shall feed you the milk of my breasts. Then you can see whether my breast milk is superior to wine".

I've tried out a lot of breast milk. That milk does evoke wine, but it isn't superior to wine. That germ of thought and feeling, arising from that experience, began our conjugal strife. Gradually I became Khalasitola's prodigal khalasi. Post-marriage, I drank even more than I did pre-marriage ...

The amount of water in the world is still greater than the amount of alcohol, even though all the water in the world is continuously drying up. The one who could transform water into wine, is now crucified and lifeless, the magic of his touch dead. But yet, even now, I get alcohol in Khalasitola, where once upon a time, I was a prodigal. Today I am somewhat still. Now this is my face, or preface.

-Translation from *Khalasitola*

"Thirty years ago, many of us spent the whole day thinking about revolution in the country, and nothing else. Some of us wrote on walls with straw and ink, 'Make the Decade of Seventies into a Decade of Liberation!'. Some of us wrote, 'The Result of Oppression - Bengal Shall be Another Vietnam!'. Neither of the two slogans was translated into reality. Because there were flaws in our thinking, and that's why of all the youth who were involved in leftist political activism in those days, most are inactive now, and not just that, many of them feel there will never be a revolution in this country. One section has lost faith in Marxism and has become immersed in consumerism. We have forgotten about changing the world, and all of us have changed ourselves. In our country, the youth of eighteen years are no longer inspired by the battle to transform the social system. Many of us have also forgotten about that. The young men and women of the next generation do not even know about those stormy days of the Seventies."

-Translation from *Shottorer Dinguli*

MEMOIR TRANSLATIONS FROM *KHALASITOLAR AMI EK PRODIGAL KHALASI* (A
PRODIGAL COOLIE OF *KHALASITOLA AM I*) AND *SHOTTORER DINGULI* (THE DAYS OF
THE SEVENTIES)
V. Ramaswamy

“Everything is the Ridge!” What multitudes it contains! What a range of people I have met there! Farmhouse socialites; shepherds; young lovers; land-shark mullahs; avid trekkers; Shaivite sadhus who grow ganja in their forest temple; villagers on the outskirts of the city fighting against threatened displacement; spandex-clad mountain bikers. Non-human animals are also in abundance, although most try to steer clear of the species that has largely destroyed their habitat (excepting the banana-crazed monkeys kept fat by Hanuman devotees).

LOVELY, DARK AND DEEP
GETTING LOST IN THE DELHI RIDGE
Thomas Crowley

Once, during a particularly harsh summer in Jhansi when the Betwa was drying up and no rain clouds loomed in the sky, Bundelkhandi women from surrounding villages came to the water works office and burst hundreds of their mud matkaas in the courtyard; a form of protest as fundamental as water, as elegiac as a river.

That summer, my father did something unconventional, too. Frustrated at the late monsoon, at the drying river, at the lack of water to filter and distribute, and livid about people wasting precious water in their homes, he took the district commissioner into the alleys of old Jhansi, through tiny doors of ancient houses, to show him taps with no faucets, water springing directly from the pipes in the wall, running into the drains.

When it finally did rain, while my sister and I set paper boats afloat in little puddles, my father guffawed with delight, sipping his evening tea.

“There’d be water in the river now, Meera,” he said to my mother again and again. “We can provide water to the people.” My mother made pakodas that evening.

RIVERS AND RUINS

Aurvi Sharma