

A random list of things (*That do not define me*)

by Stuti Sinha

1. The softness of a **Jaipuri razai** to curl into on winter mornings,
swaddled with fog
(My double blanket is very strictly meant for one)
2. Feathery stems of Baby's Breath
peeking playfully from an unpolished copper kettle
(I repurpose old vessels as vases and stamp Indianness all over my home)
3. Unravelling Rumi's sufism
over a cup of **Kashmiri kahwa**
*(We lived across the street from Kashmiri neighbours;
my Kashmiriness is a product of that osmosis)*
4. Rainbow folds of brocade
and the earthy scent of their heritage
behind the doors Amma's wooden **almari**
*(I cradle a doll in one hand as I first secretly open that cupboard
to inhale the fragrance of her sarees
and the stories tucked in their creases)*
5. **Roohafza** served in opulent homes
is no match for a glass of cold lemon **sherbet** on Kolkata's footpath
(rose flavoured drinks and grandiosity both make me nauseous)
6. Barefoot tramples on a glistening carpet of dewdrops
or '**os ki chaadar**' as **nani** called it
*(I preserve my grandmother carefully in the stories passed down to me.
Our lives didn't intersect)*
7. To always switch the evening lamps on before dusk sets in
*(The dark rolling into light is known in my family as 'do shaam'.
We have monikers for everything, which become obscure.
With time, imperialistic lingo adulterates our native tongue even more)*
8. The lingering lilt of *ghazals* on a second hand Sonodyne stereo
*(Our evening musical mehfils are open to all;
richly steeped in connection, despite that we can't afford the dust on our floors)*
9. Tall paperbacks of *Amar Chitra Katha* in Hindi
over pocket-sized Archie's comics in English
(a tradition I will pass on to my children)

PS: I always make my lists odd