

2. Title: Exile in the Capital
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Dilli,

speaks a forgone language

of djinns and Sufi mysticism

in abandoned Kotlas and dargah graveyards.

On moonless nights of fading august, dilli dreams of becoming an actress in an old Persian film.

with cupped hands and almond eyes, she pleads for

one gaze from her lover

To her content,

she's often visited by the ghosts of Mir and Ghalib

by the bus stand near Nizamuddin,

with a veiling face hoping to escape the

peaking gaze of the passengers

she spends the night in their embrace,

She reeks of jasmine trails and sweet ghee

of stretch marks spanning across Ashoka road to Sadar Bazar,

her head full of cigarette ash and conferred trysts of lawyers at Barakhamba

mustered with wailing patches of crimson red partly by shadowed blood and partly by paan stains

They tell me that

all cities are beautiful,

that they all smell of dirt, petrol and lousy nationalism of vandalised walls

what do they know,

of servitude, Hanuman temples

and exhausted protesters,

that she, my Dilli

is a known survivor.