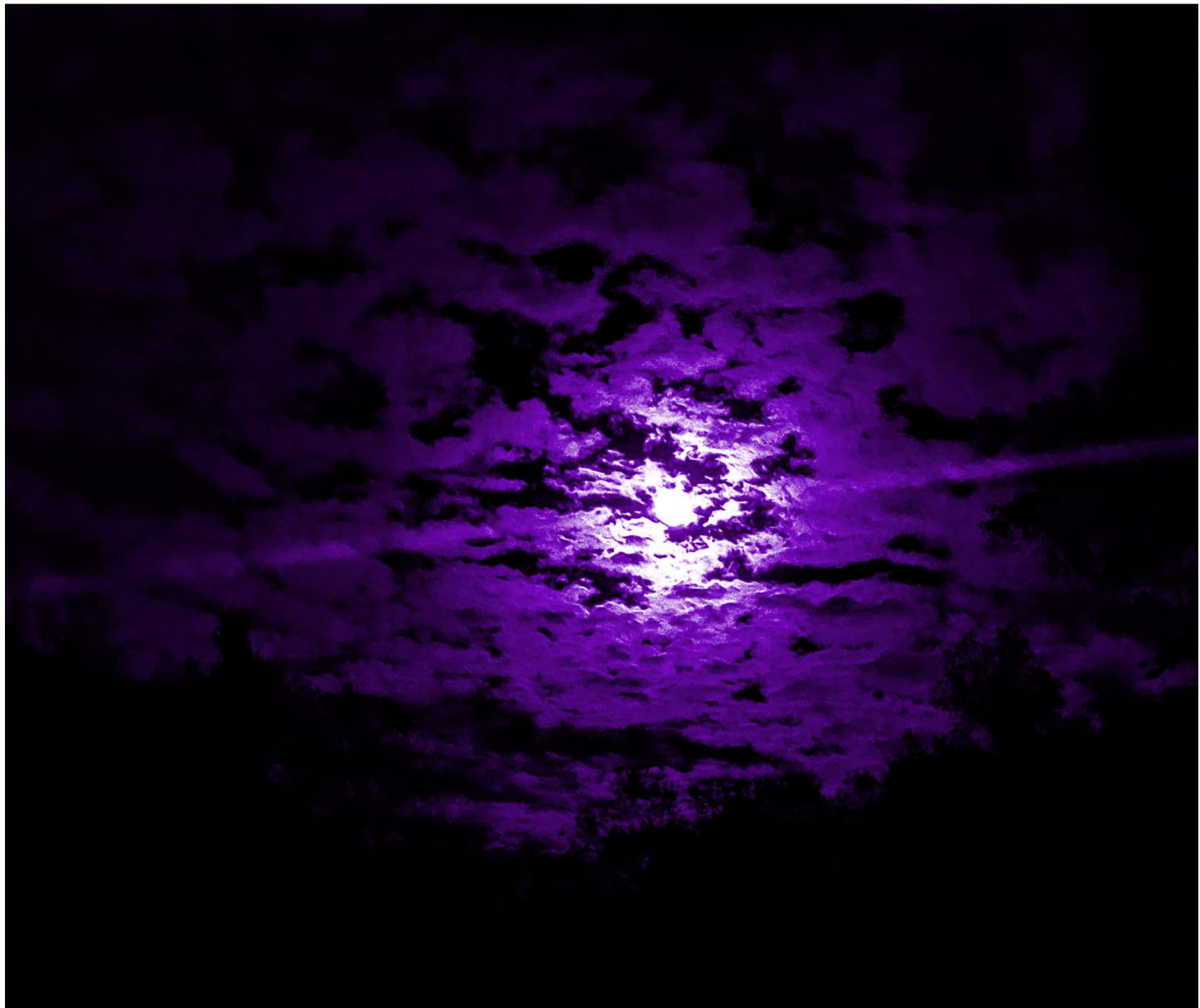


THE SENSATIONALIST: #20

5/23/23

"Have you become a frog in the 31 years since you've been gone?"



This Edition Includes:

- | | |
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| 2: Meh | 4-6: The Collected Works of T.R.E. Life |
| 2: The Ubiquitous Fabric | 7-10: Hyderabad journal |
| 3: Touches | 10: [?] |

Meh

Noodles

Barely a month shy of 60. Sitting in 22A next to a mouth breathing kid with bad breath, hearing every sixth word of a movie through the complimentary wired EarPods because I once again forgot my noise canceling headphones. Work trip. The flight is an hour late due to the need for tape on a fairing. Tape. I now may miss visiting hours to see a friend in her 40s who has been in the hospital for a week from a heart attack. A week. I'm looking at the attractive flight attendant 30+ years my junior but thinking about my new found woman. Constantly. Those thoughts warm me up. At least the beer is complimentary for my inconvenience. I'll have 2 please. It's not their fault; life happens. Barely a month shy of 60.

The Ubiquitous Fabric

Henry Levitt

The fabric, like cloth in mellow breeze,
Sends ripples gently, along its weaves.

The dancing stitches, all intertwined,
Create the illusion of separate minds.

Through these patterns, we like to believe,
Lies the difference between you and me.

But when it's time, like thread undone,
We all return to where we're from.

touches (acrostic)

Hope Nathanson

simple touch (2/3/23)

seeing as the scope of desires is
improbable to transpire at this time, i
manage to settle for infinitesimal
pieces of you,
leaving my heart yearning
evermore

to be in your presence
offers more than imaginable;
unbridled joy manifests itself as a
creeping smile across my face as i quietly
hold your hand

complicated touch (4/25/23)

could it ever be that we find
ourselves
mired in the
pleasures found within our humanness,
learning how to walk the fine line of
intimacy &
camaraderie
allowing what could have been coy gestures
to evolve into an
entanglement of carnal
desires

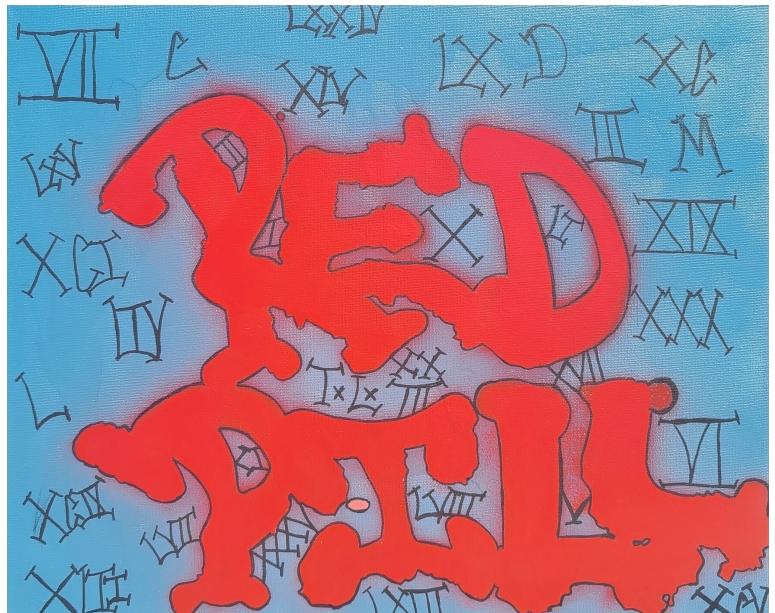
though an infinitesimal portion of
our human forms remain
unexplored, i still value the simple, quiet
connection of our
hands

The Collected Works of T.R.E. Life

“Soul”



“Red Pill”



“Master Key”





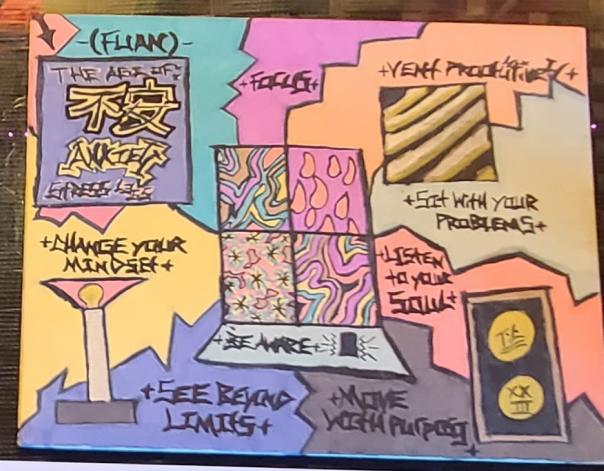
T.R.E.

**Check out the Artist's
Instagram: rb_tre26**

#TRExperience
(The Motion Picture)



Polish



Hyderabad Journal

James Hooker

Monday Feb. 20, 2023 - Charminar

Happy President's Day! After breakfast, Dad and I waited to meet Anil, one of Dad's old work friend's brother. We met Anil and his wife Loveena in the hotel lobby at 11:00. They were an adorable couple, extremely kind and so excited to meet an old friend of Bharat's. Anil was friendly and very welcoming, and Loveena never stopped smiling. I had no plan for the day at this point, which went smoothly as it always does, for Bharat had conveniently asked Anil to show me around Hyderabad! Dad left for his meetings and we got in Anil's car. First, we drove through the Eastern Zone of *Marred Bally*, one of the two zones of *Secunderabad*, and stopped at their apartment's garage to pick up Loveena's motorcycle, which is a very efficient way to get around, since there are essentially no lanes on the roads. Loveena met us at the convenience store they owned, and we opened up. They were adamant in offering me drinks and all sorts of snacks, and refused any help I offered. I was introduced to their store neighbors, Samir and his three brothers, who owned an optical shop. Here, Anil explained his relationship to me, which Samir mentioned was "very convenient" for them. Anil explained his reasoning for so willingly dropping everything to show me around, as his brother had asked: "If we do good, we get good!"

I hopped on the back of Loveena's motorcycle, with Anil driving, and we went to a little store to get *vadas* (deep fried donuts filled with lentils). Hanging on for dear life, I wondered how people were able to sit so casually on these scooters, sometimes on their side, with two legs hanging off the same end. Sometimes a couple would be driving a scooter, with 2-3 kids piled on with them. With incessant beeping, we zoomed through the traffic. I felt like such a traveler, being guided by strangers, with the hot Indian sun directly overhead. It was exhilarating. At the store (which Anil said was famous in Hyderabad, as he did with every store we stopped by), a man asked me where I was from. I said, "I'm from the United States, and you?" (my favorite joke, people always laughed and said "India, of course!") He was looking at me for a while as we ate, and said "Happy Shivaratri!" (pronounced Shiva-tree) when he left. I replied "Happy Shivaratri!" and then asked Anil what *Shivaratri* meant. He said it is a festival for Lord Shiva, one of the supreme deities in Hinduism, in which people don't sleep for the night, and instead hold *puja* ceremonies (worship rituals) all night. *Shivaratri* had just passed recently. I asked Anil if we might see a *puja* ceremony at one of the temples Loveena had recommended, and he said they are usually 2-3 hours long, with all the *mantras* and such. If I was *keen* we could go, if I was very very *keen*, we may go. He seemed not keen at all, so I decided to not press it.

We scooted back to the store and gave Loveena her food, then left in his car to go to the *Charminar*, the landmark symbol of Hyderabad. We drove through much of Hyderabad, and Anil pointed out many of the famous temples, churches, and schools along the way, as well as the street carts set up by the state government where people can buy a full lunch for 5 rupees (equivalent to 6 US cents!) We drove through the area of *Tag Bund*, where there was a Hanuman temple Paul had mentioned on the plane, and the area of *Abids*. The streets were packed with people working stands and selling their wares (usually shoes, vehicle parts, or fresh fruit), old men wandering between cars asking for alms, dogs poking through trash for food (their tails, notably, never stopped wagging), cows and goats chained to fences with signs that read "Dairy Farm", and so much more life I could never begin to accurately describe with words. Driving through the city, it really felt like a self-perpetuating system was at work, where the people just did their thing. There were hardly any police, and everyone seemed to treat each other with respect as they focused entirely on their own work (or survival). Everyone's work was totally intertwined with everyone else's - there was no escape from the cycle. I was interested in the equanimity of everyone's faces: Shoe seller, tuk-tuk driver, and beggar alike all shared a face of total neutrality with a slight positive in the edges of their lips and eyes. Maybe it was due to feeling imprisoned and helpless in their poverty, but I think it may have been due to the determination of fulfilling whatever task was directly facing them - with not enough time or money or need to think ahead of it. It was around a forty minute drive due to the traffic, and on the way Anil gave me some

advice: *Don't give your belongings to anyone, and don't talk to strangers.* I asked him what Hyderabadi thought of Americans, and he just shrugged and said, *no worries, but they may fool you around.*

We found a place to park and I could see the impressive *Charminar* up ahead, maybe a mile away. We were now in the *Old City*, a 1000 year old city with a large Muslim population and a very large general population as well. I thought Times Square could get crowded, but this was something entirely different. People overflowed the already small sidewalks and blended into the streets, walking almost like liquid through the scooters and cars. Compared to outer Hyderabad, where many people wore western-style clothing, though some women tended to wear traditional Indian garb, this inner region was extremely diverse. Monks walked the streets, carrying staffs and water jugs. Old Arabic men wore their long white robes and colored scarves and turbans. Many women wore hijabs, with a good amount of women and girls in all black niqabs. Little boys in matching *Taqiyah* caps and blue and white patterned *kurtas* tugged at my pants, asking for coins. Anil grabbed my arm and led me through the bazaar, saying *Come, James! Come!* He held my hand as we walked through the bazaar leading up to the *Charminar*, making sure I didn't slip away in the crowd and disappoint his older brother. No traffic was allowed in the bazaar, and people sold all kinds of items- mostly bags, jewelry, sugarcane juice, and women's clothing. It was clear at this point that I was the only Westerner in all of Hyderabad. A lot of people just stared, some introduced themselves and shook my hand, little kids stopped playing to look at me, and we exchanged big, goofy smiles. There was a small temple beneath the massive *Charminar* dedicated to Lakshmi (sometimes written as *Laxmi*) the Hindu goddess of wealth and fortune, wife of Shiva. We didn't go in, but Anil and I could see the beautiful icon of Lakshmi, carved from white stone and surrounded by flowers and incense, from outside. We stopped for a moment and put our hands together, bowing our heads slightly, and prayed to the deity.

Entering the *Charminar*, Anil (very insistently!) paid for our tickets- foreigners: 300 rupees, locals: 25. The *Charminar* is an ancient mosque built 400 years ago, one of the largest mosques in India. Its four tall pillars are dazzling in the bright sun, and it stands tall and proud above the bustling bazaar. We climbed a steep spiral staircase to the top, and looked out over the beautiful city-scape. From here, detached from the first-person perspective, the bazaar scene was like an incredible mosaic sprawling and writhing. People moved like lungs, emulating the deep breathing of a bustling city. Across from the *Charminar* was the Masjid Mosque, another beautiful mosque carved from the same stone hundreds of years ago.

We descended, and walked back through the bazaar where Anil bought me a little tourist tote bag. We went to a little store and got biscuits and Hyderabadi tea, which can only be made by Hyderabadi according to Anil. It was similar to the chai masala I had at the hotel in the morning, but it was richer and even more delicious.

Being with Anil was a great opportunity to break certain personal and cultural attachments. He absolutely refused to let me pay for anything, which was hard because I had hundreds of rupees on me and I didn't want to be a financial burden. He was way more stubborn than I was, and I learned to just accept it and be treated. He was also very touchy, and took a *ton* of selfies, which made me feel a little uncomfortable. Maybe it was just him, or maybe a brother's old friend's son is considered close enough for hand-holding and the like. Either way, I decided to just let him be my guide for the day, knowing he was fulfilled in following his older brother's directions to show me around.

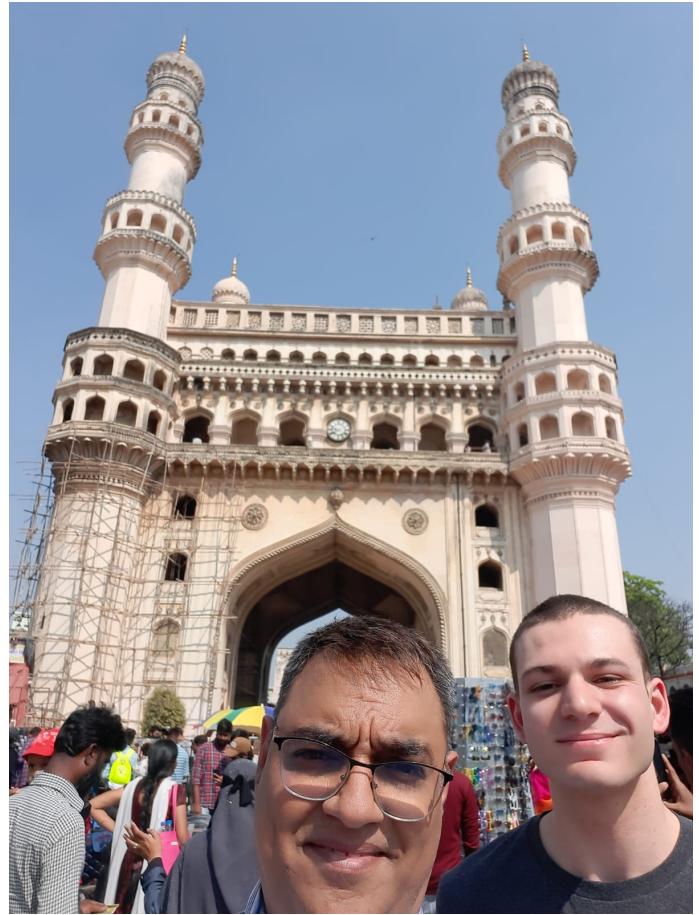
Next, we drove to the Salar Jung museum, a nearby art museum filled with statues and paintings from all over the world, mostly the 15th and 16th century. We arrived at 4:30 and it closed at 5:00, so Anil led me through the whole museum in this time. At this point, Anil had gotten a bit grouchy and seemed to want to check this one off the list and drop me back at the hotel, so we practically sprinted through the museum. We passed by rooms filled with ivory carvings, beautiful wooden sculptures of Buddhas and gods, impressive diamond-encrusted swords and *talwars*. This was another chance to let go and learn to flow with it all. I would've loved to spend those 30 minutes in just one of the rooms and take it all in, rather than rush and see everything in just a blink. Well, that's what I would've wanted. Who's that, anyway? We learned that there was a music show to occur at 5:00. I was so excited to experience some live music here! We found ourselves in

a wide room with maybe a hundred people seated in chairs, and a lot sitting on the ground up front. Perfectly centered in front of the crowd was a golden clock. Everyone was hushed and attentive in the minutes leading up to 5:00. I didn't see any musicians or instruments, but I brought myself to full attention as well. At 5:00, a little bearded toy-man crept into view from inside the golden clock, and with a little toy-hammer struck the cymbal five times. It made a deep, resounding sound with each strike. The crowd erupted into applause, then got up to leave. It was quite the musical show, a one-man-clock-band!

Anil dropped me off at the hotel and we said goodbye. I took a walk on a path by the hotel, and watched the hazy red sun set over the Hussain Sagar lake. I finally understood how one might describe the sun to be "unruly", as John Donne did in his poem "The Sun Rising". I'll have to tell my friend Marty, who once showed me the poem and pondered its meaning.

"I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink,
But that I would not lose her sight so long;
If her eyes have not blinded thine,
Look, and tomorrow late, tell me,
Whether both th' Indias of spice and mine
Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with me." - *The Sun Rising*





[?]

**Ambiguous, intentionally,
Or intentionally ambiguous?**

THIS HAS BEEN THE SENSATIONALIST: #20

“The real strength of brains is when they're used together”