

June 2022

Miss Bihani's enlightenment

They often warn against meeting your heroes so as not to be let down. Urvi did quite the contrary. Though she is a student in the school of Medicine at Imperial College, my path did not cross hers directly during my tenure, despite significant overlap of our networks towards the end. Instead, I got to know her through her artwork- one of which is my favourite bit of art to date, featuring an hourglass with themes of climate change.

We were finally able to meet for coffee recently with the exciting prospect of knowing bits and pieces of each other's lives, but largely, having every line of discussion available to explore. Among other things, I was impressed with her ability to distil discussion to the most significant underlying points, and the tact with which she spoke about mutual connections- not pressing when I mentioned I'd drifted apart from someone but rather acknowledging it with a simple "it happens".

Overall, I left not knowing too much more about the thought process driving the art – that was enigmatic even to herself – but feeling inspired nonetheless, by the refinement of her approach to life. One's company plays such a significant role in one's development and experience, and I feel lucky to have been reminded of where the bar should lie.

Mr Singh's thrall

Desi concerts may as well be classed as orchestral. The sheer number of supporting instruments far outstrips the average western artist's performance, and that alone is reason enough to attend considering how much nicer songs sound compared to album versions.

Combined with Arijit's voice and the quality of compositions, we were treated to three hours of bliss. From Adya and I (and the crowd collectively of course) drumming up the tempo with the TikTok famous lines of Agar Tum Saath Ho to the most chill mosh pit forming to Illahi, there was nothing more to be desired. As my favourite lines from Mast Magan came on, I felt rather than thought. Standing tall, I made sure to leave my mark in the recordings around me by screaming my lungs out, albeit far from on pitch.

There was less explanation behind the origin of songs compared to in Rahat's concert, arguably owing to the Sufi & Qawali inspiration for the latter. Nonetheless, the audience knew the music well and noticing someone a few decades older than me expressing sheer joy as the melody unfolded predictably reminded me how much can be bridged through music [[video](#)].

Miss Nair's lyrical interest

There is something sublime about a song with poetic quality that still musically pleases. Imagine Wilfred Owen and One Direction combined. That is the magic that about a 7% of Bollywood tracks hold.

Over time, as I began to pay more attention, I think Bollywood lyricists played a larger role in defining my Hindi/Urdu/Farsi vocabulary than my parents. Rather surprisingly, I found myself in the minority doing this. It seems most people listen to choruses but only hear the rest of songs, and I often find myself explaining deeper references or meanings in lyrics –

including the classic of Ghungroo likely relating to a one-night stand, or the fact that in Kabira it's his shadow calling for his return, not Deepika.

I was therefore very excited when a random conversation with Anushree led to her pointing out the verses in [Naadan Parindey](#) referring to the Parsi tradition of leaving the deceased to be scavenged by vultures, where the request is for the vulture to eat but his eyes such that he can see the woman he loves in the afterlife. On & off, I've been listening to that song for ten years. Ten years and I'd missed the crux.

After typically being a leader for so long, it felt special to have been walked along the path to dramatic realisation by someone equally passionate. Instantly, it made me want to turn the acquaintanceship into a friendship. Like they say, it's the smallest of things.

Mr Barasia's mint leaves

Rishwin adds mint to his chai, complete with milk and ginger. Mint and milk were a new combination to me, but I was a big fan and soon tweaked my own recipe, though maintaining all the other spices that Rishwin typically doesn't use.

Jasmeen uses a very different fat content and ratio of milk than I, and that can drastically alters both the perceived density of the brew and the intensity of spice even if the colour is visually identical. Slowly, as I had her tea more, I decided to experiment and altered the ratio but not fat content of milk I was using, reaching a new normal I was more satisfied with over the course of a few brews.

Perhaps with each cup of chai accepted, we also accept the possibility of assimilating some of the brewer's traits into the jigsaw that makes us who we are.

Reflections from the end of term

I'm finishing this up the day before I host something for my birthday. That's an important detail because I began inviting people over a month ago, and it forced me to go through a sequential order of who was most important to me. As expected, many people I'd love to have with me are already home but I'm still very excited. Friends are coming from around the country, an effort that makes me feel very special indeed.

I've gone straight into my dissertation at the end of exams. Having my hands full has largely stopped me feeling lonely, similar to when covid first hit and I was busy doing exams and couldn't have cared less about the outside world. I've flirted with accepting this rather simple truth time and again, but I think it'll finally stick this time around. Stay passionately busy.

Unlike most other end-ofs, this time hardly had any emotionally loaded moments because it wasn't acute – I've not gone anywhere for once. I feel more confident I'll maintain relationships with one or two dozen people, and I genuinely care less about anyone else leaving. A crowd of friendly faces is nice in its own way, but perhaps I can finally be satisfied with my fill. End of term also showed some true colours, with stark contrast in people who reached out to try and squeeze a last meeting in to those who only reached out for help.

Always Learning,

Gautam