

CHAPTER 12

Kaashi: The city that wasn't!

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Abstract

The blog is a candid description of an unusual journey to Kaashi, the land of pilgrimage and salvation. In contrast to the common rhetoric around the land, the blogger attempts to capture different, unexplored facets of the city especially in the mundane activities of its occupants. The blog interwoven with ironical pictures, metaphors, references to literary figures and celebrities (in the most unusual places!) is a unique take on Kaasi, exploring the ironies of both the place and the humans who inhabit it. Through vivid imageries and descriptions, the blogger manages to capture the attention of the readers and takes them along the journey only to find that it ended too quick.

Link to Work

<https://thepenarchist.wordpress.com/2018/10/06/kaashi-the-city-that-wasnt/>

Kaashi, or Varanasi, is one of those places to surely feature on anyone's Freudian bucket list.

It is one of the oldest cities in the world and it makes sure you understand that while roaming about in its organic lanes and by lanes and by by by lanes and so on. My last trip to this place wasn't my first, but I can say that it was the first time I looked at it through my own eyes. I won't be docu-menting the various places of "so-called" worship because everyone does that.

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The hotel where we stayed this time was a remarkable one (hold your hats folks!). It made me wonder about a lot of things, most of all, I wondered if Dante had decided to include the 10th circle of hell, it would have been something like our place! Sounds Warm, doesn't it?

I am not really a shutterbug, but an entire canvas of myriad experiences made me want to document this unusual journey.

I have heard a lot of talks, especially from the foreigners that they come to Varanasi to "find" them-selves! This time I realised a teeny tiny bit of how that happens. One fine evening, I found myself sulking in the audience of the evening prayer, which happens at the ghats. Therefore, I decided to take a walk by the ghats and explore the literal margin of this antique city. I jammed my ear-phones in and started to walk. What song was I listening to you ask? Oh, I was listening to American Idiot by Green Day. Is this Globalisation? Multiculturalism? Post Modernism? Frankly, I don't care.

Look at this boat, sailing the lands forever!



If you stand with your back towards the river and look up towards the skyline, believe me, for a moment I thought I was there in favelas of Brazil!



Nature, I believe, has its own rhetoric. A place called “juice bar” is promoting their brand by show-ing the way to the burning ghat of all places. I am not going to elaborate on this beautiful irony and destroy your poetry.



Let me remind you, this graffiti is in Varanasi, beside the Vishwanath temple, on the lap of the Ganga.

I'm j-u-s-t saying!



These two holy souls are here seen drawing their daily dose of inspiration from a heavenly conflict between Ray Mysterio and Randy Orton.



I have never had the guts to visit a burial ground, you can call me a coward in that respect. But, here, an inexplicable urge led me on towards that “fatal” place. Is this the force that nature has? Was this what Wordsworth meant?

I kept moving, felt more alive as I did. And when I reached I felt a wave of souls moving through my body. Scores of logs were stacked on all the sides, as the vehicles for the dead. Looking at them made me wonder, someday some log would be mine too!

I don’t really know if dusty the real term to describe the place, because the dust has- me, you, and everyone: the biggest family on earth.



Bodies piled on another, wrapped in white, all set to be launched into eternity. A “grave” situation you’d wonder, right? I am not sure if I can say that because as the enlightenment was dawning upon me, my castle of glass was immediately shattered by a nonchalant tea seller nasal screaming “lebuuuu chایی” (lemon tea). Oh yes, who wouldn’t want refresh-ment while disposing of the dead!

The power of this place was such that I wanted to go there day after day to drink life from the dead.

Also, every damn creepy house I saw above a few flights of steps, I thought that it was the abode of the great MOCHLI BABA! ALAS! I never found it. Sad.

I have finally reached a moo point



amar kotha ti furolo

note gaach ti murolo

By the way this was the most stylish guy I found there:



oh, the swagger!

All the pictures as you have already noticed are shaky. No! I am not imitating Mrinal Sen or something. It's just that I wanted to give a feel of the bustling life through these pictures. The city was moving and so was I. This definitely not all, from a personal perspective, this trip also featured one of the best co-incidences I have ever seen in my life. I couldn't believe something so poetic could ever happen to me! What the co-incidence you wonder? Maybe, I will tell you someday over coffee, but it has to be your treat!

I hope you enjoyed this trip.

Contributor Biography

Samya Brata Roy (He/Him) is currently in the final semester of his M.A in English Literature from The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. His interests lie in and around the modalities of Digital Narratives.

He has been writing (read: rambling) here: thepenarchist.wordpress.com for the last five years and has almost 80 entries at present. He leads the SIG on Digital Objects and Media at DHARTI (dhdharti.in), works as a transcriber with The Canterbury Tales Project and as a database contributor with Electronic Literature Knowledge Base | ELMCIP. He feels deeply about accessibility, inclusion, pedagogy and cracking exceptionally poor jokes.