

## OF MANY MORE LORDS &amp; LOVERS

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*We have this fallow ability to turn everything we touch this second to history the next nano second: the 'Historical touch', something very similar to Midas' ambivalent Golden touch. Every trace that the tactile encounter leaves behind is a testament of one's being and a fulcrum for someone else's economy of imagination and those become stories that travel time and generations...*

This morning I woke my alarm up; rose and shone even before the sun did to chase the *Sahyadri-sun* instead. The plan was to drive down to Wilson Hill along with my friends *Pranav* and *Sid*. A potential tourist destination and probably the only commercialized hill station(in the making) of Gujarat other than Saputara, located in Dharampur *Tehsil*, 55 Kms from Valsad.

After an hour long drive, we reached Dharampur crossroads. Perplexed by numerous incoherent signage, some of which were picturesquely rusted, painfully corroded, others determined to stay put and stand strong against the wiles of the relentless monsoon, *Sid* stopped the car on the side of the road, *Pranav* peeped out of the window, hailed a passer by and asked for directions, while I sat in the back seat making these observations:

*Pranav: Bhaj*, (brother in Gujarati) Wilson Hill?

Passer by: *Veelson Heel*. (nodding his head elliptically and pointing in the correct direction)

*Pranav* smiled, waved him a gesture of thanks.

We began ascending the hilly road, which at every instance made sure our belief in gravity remained staunchly installed and demanded acknowledgement at every turn, where our car made a growling sound and that way an understanding was made. All this negotiation was making me nauseous but as I let my face out of the car window the customary motion sickness was nullified by divine sight of velvety lushness, milky white threads of rivulets; by morning dew that sprayed my face with its chillness; by nursing winds that brushed away the giddiness. Therapeutic. We reached atop and successfully caught the rising sun. We picked break of dawn also to avoid the hullabaloo of other tourists, and have every piece of uninterrupted serenity to ourselves and so it was just the three of us up there sprawled around to 'pollinate' with our own ideas of nature- *Sid* made bird-calls his trail, like the rats made *Pied Piper's*. I lost track of *Pranav* who probably was exploring the other side of the hill spotting exotic flora or sketching in his note book I assumed. I was sporadically taking photos but mostly observing the sun and the light that it

shone on everything under it and how slowly the same exquisite, ingenious light by mid morning seemed to have lost its charm, how it bleached out with its harshness the brilliant tones of sky. Just like a curdled kinship thought my cynical mind at that moment. I said to myself without uttering out loud: I prefer the setting sun over the rising one for its romantic relationship with the melancholic sky and playfulness in its disappearance, leaving the sky blushing purple-pink light of dusk.

As I stood there analysing the character of mid-morning light for about an hour or so and ungracefully pacifying the prickly pink lumps on my skin made by black and white striped mosquitoes, I began to feel a mild and an unexplained discomposure. I realized I wanted to go back; back to a life that was familiar. I was itching to see people, hear voices of similar frequency and not just exotic chirps and appalling creaks. I silently cursed the cellular network for not reaching out to me at least as a *WhatsApp* ping or a text message beep. In desperation I even thought about and missed my laptop. The boys were no where to be seen and I did not want to find them either. A pair of restless eyes on a sullen face swept around and wandered, like a restless sparrow caught in a four walled space, fluttering back and forth to find an escape. I was looking for a window in the openness and a patch of shade where the uneasy mind could briefly rest. I did find one actually: A trail of cigarette stubs, peanut shells, fragments of broken glass, some plastic wrappers, that led me to an under-maintained monument where in I found solace. This discovery wasn't a *Columbus-ian* kind but a *Helen-ious-Keller-ian* joy! What amuses me and will never cease to is that these traces of existence that are left behind lend so much character to places and stories to imagine.






Now I stood on the periphery of 'history' preparing to step into another time until I very briefly got distracted by a significantly huge, lone dome in the distance reminding me of Kubrick's *Space Odyssey* and that I would later find to be Hotel Wilson Highland Pvt Ltd. I went back to appreciating the story behind our good old monument which was built in the 1920's by King Vijay Deviji to commemorate his friendship with Lord Wilson. Vijay Devji- the last king of Dharampur and Lord Leslie Orme Wilson, (the then 1923-1928, Governor of Mumbai.) had planned to develop the area into a hill station, which failed to take place but what remained is Mr Wilson's name. Businessman Ashish Birendra Sharma who in 2003 formed a company called Hotel Wilson Highland Pvt Ltd with the intension of developing it into a hill resort which is probably why its mildly popular today. Where there is food there are people, isnt it?

This big hearted fractal-esque monument generously fostered within itself many more memoirs of love, friendship, desperation and even aggression painted as graffiti or scrawled as engravings. It is in this archeologist's nightmare I met some wonderful people, 1. the couples, Sandip-Rinal, Kamal-Nasreen, Rajul-Meena, to name a few, 2. the loners who left their cell phone numbers behind with an unsaid message, 3. the existential philosophers who left food for thought to ponder over and 4. the perverted enthusiasts who affluently sketched their fantasies leaving no grounds for imagination. This moment was a delightful schizophrenic carnival and the brain backed me up with quick flashes of a zillion faces that I have either known consciously or must have seen unknowingly, some were crisp and some just vague figures and blur ideas but none were spared, all showed up and I industriously jumbled these pieces to bring Sandip, Rinal, Meena, Rajul, Kamal, Nasreen alive; the names necessitated a face, a body and some personality, that is what I was rigorously fetching also by lending them hair styles, costumes and accessories. Can you imagine how many faces we could be stumbling upon everyday out of the 1.2 billion? leave alone the ones we watch on TV or print. Incredible!

I hit the chord with 'Sandip and Rinal' they seemed friendly and humorous; their names were vividly painted with a glossy yellow enamel paint outlined by a heart with an arrow gashing through giving the line drawing a third dimension. The brush stroke was a fine touch. A pat on Sandip's back for being so thoughtful and to have carried with him a paint that he knew would stand the test of time and wrath of weather. For a fraction of micro seconds I thought could there be a slightest possibility that Sandip loved his kidney that much?! But NO! I was swift enough to withdraw that thought and asserted that Rinal is a very common Gujarati name of a girl and differs from 'renal' by an 'i'. Kamal and Nasreen came across as skeptics, theirs was a desperate but determined confession directly and painfully scratched onto the stone wall in a dingy wet isolated corner, which made me wonder whether their relationship was prey to societal ill for the usual Hindu Muslim reason or more modern, economic reason? The wall was moist and the floor was mossy and wet too, seeming as though tears had been shed. I must let them be, they probably needed space, else why would they choose a forgotten corner I thought... Rajul and Meena's story was young and frivolous, struggled to thrive but they tried, just like the neighboring crowd of chalky confessors. The chalk was fading away and conveniently over written my many others. This was the most populous area, jumbling up names and making the "who" loves "who" incomprehensible and... \*prick\* \*splat\* OUCH! Oh them holy mother of monstrous mosquitoes!

The faces and all the imagined scenarios cascaded down like an unsteady pyramid of cards, but as I stepped out of the monument with many more 'histories' which would probably never be recorded like Lord Wilson's or King Vijay's, I saw the line blur between what some might call vandalism and others who might call it symbolism of their emotions. Having woven in all these stories and as real as they might appear it was time to leave with lingering thoughts and an urge to know more about who they actually are/were. Where did they come from, what do they look like and where are they today? Did the lovers unite? Did the loner's cell phone ring? Was the philosopher able to seek answers? Did perverted enthusiast's fantasies come alive? Was I even a tad bit close to the real version of their stories?

No one would ever know...

1.  divyasinghbalhar likes this
2.  prachipundeer likes this
3.  reshmasaik likes this
4.  sanarao likes this
5.  anitaisola posted this

#### THE DOG



*What's in a name you ask?  
There's a lot, I say.  
A White dog called Noir,  
in a Black neighborhood called Bronx...*

Stumbled upon this image in my photo archive today. As I recall- It was one of those snowy days of New York (December 29, 2012 precisely), when you sit by the window looking out appreciating every single flake that falls ever so slowly and gently, seeming as though it was hopelessly in love with the ground it was just about to kiss...

Through the frosty air I could hear apprehensible, high-pitched giggly voices but could only see a slightly beclouded image of these jovial kids playing with a beautiful dog in the basketball court, so evenly carpeted by fine-shimmery snow, right opposite my house then in Mott Haven, a neighborhood in the Southwestern section of the Bronx (and allow me to gleefully mention; on the lateral side of the house right across the street was the 1905 neo-rennaissance Mott Haven Branch of the New York Public Library! \*feeling privileged\*)

I wrapped the camera in a plastic bag, jacketed myself and hurried up to the basketball court...

These images got me speculating on why did I selectively remember what the dog was called and not the names of the kids or the lady and then the wanderlust-y thoughts traveled (something they often like to do) to what are the significance of names and what are the intensions behind naming a person, pet or anyone/thing for that matter. In this context for instance:

1. The Bronx: the demographics of this neighborhood are characterized by Hispanic majority followed by African American and by the lowest percentage of Whites among all boroughs of New York.
2. A dog, white Pitbull to be specific.
3. An African American family that decided to call their white dog 'Noir' in French.

My onomastic itch is to trace them back to humbly ask, Why, What, When and How? or am I merely formulating a *Seinfeldian* conversation here?

