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Banyans of Bidar

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Banyans of Bidar

by Jhilam Chattaraj



About the Author

Jhilam Chattaraj is an academic and poet based in Hyderabad, India. She has authored the books, *Noise Cancellation* (2021) *Corporate Fiction: Popular Culture and the New Writers* (2018) and *When Lovers Leave and Poetry Stays* (2018). Her works have been published in Mekong Review, New Contrast Magazine, One Art Poetry Journal, Calyx, Ariel, Room, Porridge, Queen Mob's Tea House, Colorado Review, World Literature Today and Asian Cha among others. She received the CTI Excellence Award in 'Literature and Soft Skills Development,' 2019 from the Council for Transforming India and the Department of Language and Culture, Government of Telangana, India. She was nominated for the Nina Riggs Poetry Award, 2023.

Banyans of Bidar

Jhilara Chattaraj

Everything is burning—
disintegrating,
upwards into the sky.

Only the Banyans of Bidar
remain.
Two leafy giants meld into each other.

Each day, they come an inch closer,
tangle
histories of roots and trunks.

Leafy arms embrace in the air—
an arc
of hanging hamlets—parrots, monkeys, and bats.

They have seen the world
lose its youth—
from silence to roar,

from palpable to breakable—
glassy screens
capture the majesty of Banyans;

they only find a shadow
of the shade
singing to cymbaled prayers.

Have we seen the wide-armed wonders
with naked eyes?
Spreading sunlit embroidery

on the soil?
One that won't be
delivered to our doorstep?

We must lift our heads
to feel the harmony
of earth and wind.

Men must become to trees
what
Banyans have become to temples.

*Bidar: Bidar is a town in the state of Karnataka. It's also located about 144 kilometers from the city of Hyderabad.