

1. Sngi Ba Nyngkong, Ba Ar, Ba Lai, Ba Saw.

Sngi Ba Nyngkong

Today I smoked my first cigarette and cringed at what I'm almost certain was a bulge in Mr. Wankhar's pants when he rubbed Nicki's back.

A high-five or a good-old fashioned 'well done, Miss' would have sufficed, in my humble first-day-of-an-internship opinion.

Mr. Wankhar introduced himself as the Director of the organization and made a speech.

At around the five-minute mark he paused and I assumed the introduction and/or speech had ended.

So I clapped.

A clap-and-a-half before I realised the eyes of the room on my smiling and smirking.

I think I shrieked a slightly embarrassed 'oops!', and Mr. Wankhar winked at me.

It was just an extremely long pause.

The introduction and/or speech went on for another twenty minutes.

Then everyone stood up and Mr. Wankhar said a prayer.

Confused and amused at the unison of eyes closed and heads bowed, I withheld with great difficulty a chuckle.

Nicki is one of the prettiest girls I've ever seen.

I think I blushed a bit when she introduced herself.

'Hello, my name is Nicki and I am the Projects Manager.'

The cigarette?

Raplang, office man-friday, lovable, too-fat-for-a-hill-station man offered
it to me and I smoked it.

How did it make me feel?

In a word- awesome, awesome, awesome.

The rest of the day was a lot of Instagramming and Snapchatting.

Sngi Ba Ar

It rained in halves today.

The one before lunch was loud and thunderous.

The one after calming and dreamy.

My internship is a month long and I have to submit a report at the end of
it.

To be completely honest, I prefer writing songs and poetry to whatever
this is.

As the most important part of my internship, I have to submit a journal of
everything.

You read that right!

A JOURNAL OF EVERYTHING!

“To make the exercise easier and as factually correct as possible, the
instructions are as follows:

Write down all your thoughts, feelings, events of importance, etc, at the
end of the day before you go to sleep everyday day of a thirty-day period.

Then proofread, edit and submit for the purpose of research.”

How can one task be so vague and so specific?

While I think I know what this requires of me, what does 'everything'
mean?

And what should the edit and proof-read draft look like?

How much should I omit or leave in?

Megan, chewer of pens, tall and too much makeup, graduate in English
from the state's biggest university and Civil Services aspirant asked me to
compile a list of companies, government departments, politicians, anything, etc,
who had sponsored a music and/or cultural event and festival in the state in the
past three years.

If my knowledge of this place and this afternoon of Googling are anything
to be judged by, it's a lot of mindless and tedious work.

Everything is a fucking music and cultural event here.

I smoked another cigarette today and Mr. Wankhar led the office in
prayer again.

Sngi Ba Lai

I was bored out of my mind.

Rain-lunch-Mr. Wankhar's prayer-cigarettes.

I need to sleep.

Sngi Ba Saw

Here is a list of some things that I have noticed.

- a) There's a clock in Mr. Wankhar's room that looks like it has a spy camera
in it. (I hope I'm wrong!)

- b) The Good-Day biscuits they serve during tea time taste like what I've always imagined counterfeit versions of a thing would taste like.
- c) My table is wobbly and I fear any prolonged resting of my elbows on it will break it.
- d) Megan is the alpha-male of the office and my attempts at befriending her are yielding lukewarm results.
- e) The Wi-Fi sucks. (Which reminds me- I need a new mobile data pack!)

2. Love In The Time Of Authority

I sold country liquor, biscuits past their expiration dates, white lies,
and clichés
to teenagers in school uniforms, and policemen with guns
and little self control.

I sold marijuana to pregnant mothers,
nuns from the neighbourhood convent, moral policeman,
and teenagers in school uniforms.

Those were the good years before
they demonetized my paper-less, undocumented,
and migrant livelihood.

Those were the merry years before
the taxes, heightened nationalism,
and a deliberate chipping away at secularism.

Before they killed Gandhi a second time.

Before they killed freedom and
the internet in Kashmir and the Northeast.

Now I sell dreams and love in equal measure
to a multitude of fathers,
and armed forces personnel in war-time attire.

Last month I was sold a pyramid scheme
and a fancier life away from here
by a well-wisher on his way back from Sunday service
for every rupee saved and some more borrowed.

I was born here, I think. But I have no papers to prove that.

I know very little about God and even less about the religion of which I am a part.

In the streets, murmurs and rumours are galore and aplenty.

About my wrong religion,

my paper-less, undocumented, migrant existence in this country.

About my choice of employment.

I cannot help but think of the dwindling possibilities.

Leave before they come for my papers and family?

Stay and become one of the majority?

For now, I sell love to those of authority.

3. Not From Here

On the first floor of a house built in	nineteen sixty three on land
transferred matrilineally,	dilapidated and a
mismatch of colours and scents of	eighty seven
spices from twenty nine states,	
fifty six year-old Shiningstar Bread Warjri	looks at a broken mirror that
continues to bring bad luck	even in year eleven and counting
past the proverbial seven and	sees regret, eighteen wrinkles,
two light-brown eyes and seven dark spots.	

Regret from five sons and their mother	who speak of him in the past
tense, and a peon's salary wasted	on a half and a quarter of daily
Indian-made foreign liquor.	

Eighteen wrinkles that ages him six years and sometimes ten or eleven
under less than decent lighting.

Two light-brown eyes

from a father not from here,

from a father he'd never known,

from a father of two black and white

photographs he keeps hidden in a drawer,

from a father of his imagination.

And seven dark spots from the tribal sun?

Shiningstar Bread Warjri's skin is freckled,

almost foreign, and a source

of intrigue, gossip and hearsay

in his town of too-many languages,

stunted dreams, and

seventy five houses of Gods who compete

for loyalty,

gullibility, and a tenth of your salary.

His skin is light, almost white,

and the result of a brown half

Khasi half Muslim mother

who ran away from her father's house,

an arranged marriage,

and a share of ancestral property,

and a white English father who ran away from him and his mother,
responsibility and duty,
and a third-world country.