

When the streetlights flicker, THINK OF REVOLUTION

ILLUSTRATION: **ABIR HOSSAIN**

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When the streetlights flicker, think of every doe-eyed child that the city swallows in its gluttony, the dread and disease that permeates through and seeps into the hearts of men, and the hopes and ambitions used as bridges for pellets to pass through the sockets that reek of an incurable void or a never-ending death.

When you spot a new leaf poking its head out of a naked tree branch, think of relief, the sound of a little girl's giggle as she throws her arms around her father's shoulders after a long day of separation, the absence of microphones and camera flashes illuminating her naive lamentations.

When the streetlights flicker, think of the empty arms of a mother, cut onto the boundary line that marks the expression of

despair, a line stretched onto infinity, where the screams are met with echoes and the tears turn into stone before they hit the crimson-soaked ground.

When the sidewalks under your feet are carpeted with red, I hope you think of nothing but *krishnochura* petals, not of bygone days when red on the streets etched a name onto a paper with fabricated excuses, *achals* blockading the routes of teardrops trying to reach the earth.

When the streetlights flicker, think of grief, for it is not absolute, but in all its absoluteness, it is the absence (or the lack thereof) of love—absence, not of abandonment, but absence that is etched in yearning, a longing to see the sun shine gently across the horizon—with the tyrants tumbling in on themselves, and the fascists

slowly slipping away with the tightening of the noose.

When you hear a cuckoo calling, think of the air, the ease of breathing when the words on the tip of your tongue are not held down by heavy gases, hands enveloping the faces you love, the open letters to nowhere buried six feet under in every cemetery in your neighbourhood.

When the streetlights flicker, think of the hope that lingered in the aftermath of the dust, the chants and the roars, the colours and the lovers, when the city's breath was one with yours.

When you see the reptiles waking up from their slumbers, remember fondly how you did the same, the face of tyranny no longer a sleep paralysis demon, limbs no longer immovable, glaring into the furnace

of absolutism not another pipe dream.

When the streetlights flicker, think of it all, all that was lost, and all that could be

When the streetlights flicker, think of beginning, again and again and again and again

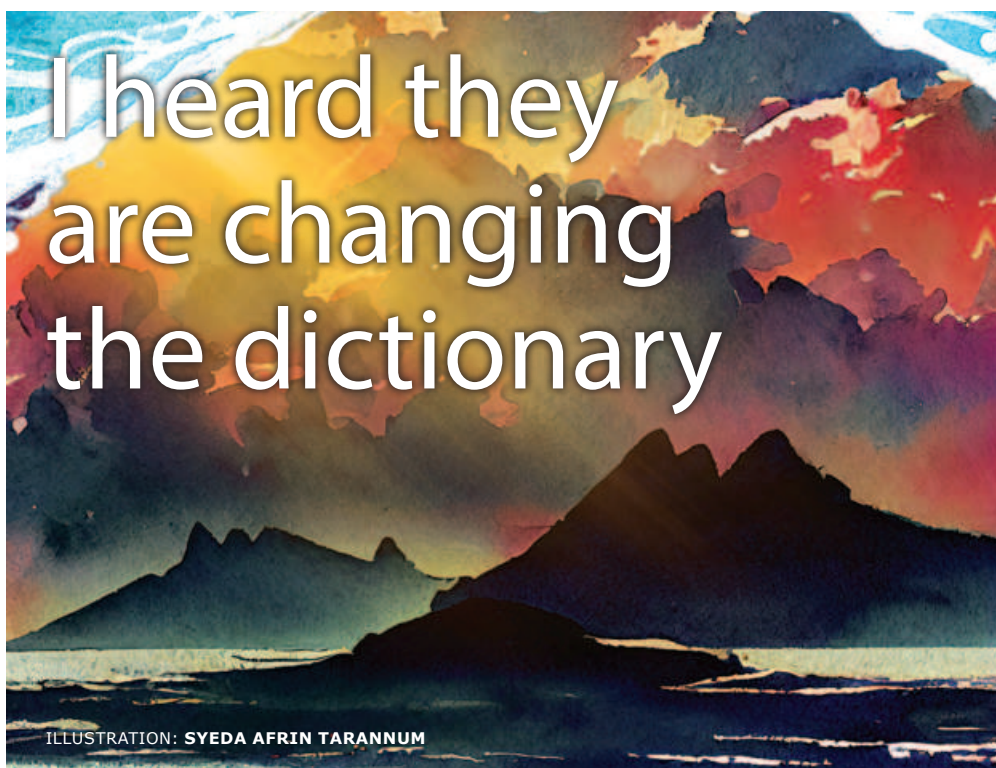
When the streetlights flicker, think of revolution

And when spring finally comes, breathe, sing, scream without abandon

When spring finally comes, mourn, grieve, and recall the names they swore you'll forget

When spring finally comes, double, nay, triple in numbers, and hit the streets.

This poem was written on the night of August 5th, before the new dawn. Zabin and Fahad like frog hats and revolution



I heard they are changing the dictionary

ILLUSTRATION: **SYEDA AFRIN TARANUM**

OHONA ANJUM

I heard they are changing the dictionary.
What will become of the ones I won as prizes?
First, second, third place—my collection grew,
With the Oxford's red, yellow and blue.
Spines lined up.
All the words once meant the same,
But now, they're changing meanings of.
The window, once a portal to the world
Becomes a barricade against the night of fury.
Bullets, once a distant threat in a far-off land
Now whistles and dances while piecing through fragile bodies,

Shattering everything in sight with a brutal ease.
Home, a refuge—
Overlooks a rallying ground where voices rise like flames.
Freedom, once a whispered hope,
Now shouts in the streets with banners unfurled.
Standing tall and fearless against turquoise-skinned puppets.
They once spoke of justice—hollow, blind, and cold.
Which was never a pillar to lean on
But a fleeting thing to chase.
I hope they're changing the dictionary—
Letting new meaning emerge from the ashes of the old.
Each page will be the canvas of a new history
As revolution rewrites the language of our lives.