



ARTIVISM: ISSUE 01

WINNER

SCREENS REMEMBER WHAT STREETS FORGET – ARCHANA GUNAWARDANA

A chant that once shook,
'The Galle Face'!
Now hidden through reels and posts
Hashtags fled faster than graffiti trends
Flickering in the rains of crowd
Yet we still click share
As if the the algorithm were an altar;
an altar of escape.

Beneath the slogans and sweat
Melted the ambiguous smiles,
unfiltered voices
fading faster through the air
to the temple house
and to the building amidst Beira
Faces unburied in pixels
or fear
Solidarity has good WiFi!

'Typing' to rose
The screens hummed
in the echoes of burrowed courage
Riot of retweets

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Yet we called it revolution
Turned anger of ages into stories and posts
Captions of grief in to art
Beneath lies some sponsored smiles
And curated chaos.

A power cut as if they tried to stop voices
beneath pixels
Yet the screens glowed in the dark,
soft and blue like a wounded moon.
I still saw posts fled.

That was April 2022,
when the air was thick with sweat, hope,
and disbelief.
Galle Face looked like a festival
banners fluttering, drums echoing,
children chasing pigeons while their parents
cursed the system.
I remember thinking,
how fragile our rage looked
when set beside a child's laughter.

The screens caught it all.
Photos of toddlers on their fathers'
shoulders,
mothers feeding their babies on protest
mats,
families sleeping under makeshift tents.
They called it the people's movement.
We called it home.

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I joined the thread, typing words I wasn't
sure I meant:

“We rise together.”

It got fifty likes.

Each one felt like a heartbeat.

Or maybe an illusion of one.

Outside, the city slept beneath curfew.

Then came the arrests;

Sudden text from a friend

‘Delete everything’

My screen dimmed, I pressed archive.

So went the reels and captions

Weeks passed

The hashtags grew stale,

the reels faded under new trends.

I see the truth

the screen didn't create the solidarity;

it only tried to remember it.

we were here.

Even if only the pixels remember.

It's strange how the screen remembers
what the streets forget.

Some nights, I look at that photos

and wonder if the revolution failed,

or if it simply grew up

like that little toddler

on their fathers' shoulders

learning to live

with what it means

to be born into someone else's hope.