

Written Near the Soan River in September

You are pink bougainvillea,
motorbikes and kurtas the color of tea,
your words on my tongue like syrup and memory,
the place I bow to that kept me from leaving.
You are the seashore's loving call
lit blinding white with seagulls under the moon,
the roadside fields
dotted with egrets and blooming Dead Sea apples.
How kind and how harsh you are,
your minarets and your dark waters,
these deserts that could be my own.
The Margalla Hills jut under my skin
and your falcons circle on the palms of my hands.
You are never not in me,
as if you are both scar tissue and medicine
though here I stand,
a stranger in your streets.
May this peace you've given me return to you,
and may you be the morning I wake to
should I ever believe I cannot rise.