



Singing the City Awake: Calcutta as Memory, Longing, and Palimpsest in Bengali Urban Songs

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ABSTRACT

Calcutta—now Kolkata—has long transcended its physicality to emerge as an emotional and mnemonic landscape in Bengali urban songs. As a city that is as much felt as it is seen, Calcutta has inspired musicians across generations to preserve its shifting soul through sound. From the wistful camaraderie of Manna Dey's 'Coffee House-er Sei Addata' to the lyrical despair of Kabir Suman's 'Tomake Chai' and the conversational intimacy of Anjan Dutt's 'Ranjana', music has documented the city's changing contours, both physical and emotional. With the rise of *Jibonmukhi Gaan* in the 1990s, the ordinary textures of Kolkata life—its *para* culture, trams, tea stalls, bookshops, and monsoon streets—entered the musical imagination as metaphors of memory, rootedness, and loss. Recent songs such as Anupam Roy's 'Kolkata, Tumio Hente Dekho' extend this legacy, urging listeners to encounter the city not through nostalgia alone but through renewed attention to its stories and silences.

This paper argues that Bengali urban songs function as memory archives, preserving fragments of a city perpetually in transition, and that the musical portrayal of Kolkata offers a lens onto how personal and collective identity are shaped within Bengali modernity. Drawing on urban theory, memory studies, and postcolonial cultural criticism, the paper reads Kolkata as a living palimpsest in which the act of remembering the city becomes, in itself, a form of love.

Keywords: Bengali Urban Songs, Calcutta, Belonging, Cultural Memory, Jibonmukhi Gaan

Introduction

There is a particular kind of homesickness that Bengalis reserve for a city they have never left. To grow up in Kolkata, or to have grown up on its idea, is to inherit a peculiar grammar of loss—one rehearsed daily in conversation, in literature, and perhaps most insistently in song. The city of Calcutta, renamed Kolkata in 2001, is not merely a geographic or administrative entity; it is a dense, emotionally textured landscape within the Bengali cultural imagination, continuously narrated, mourned, and re-inhabited through art. In the domain of popular music,

and especially in what has come to be called Bengali urban song, Kolkata rarely functions as mere backdrop. It surfaces instead as a kind of protagonist—evocative, layered, at once beloved and grieved.

This paper explores how Bengali urban songs work as mnemonic devices that hold onto the emotional, cultural, and spatial transitions of Kolkata even as the city itself continues to change beneath them. Beginning with Manna Dey's canonical *adda* song of the late twentieth century and moving through the confessional register of *Jibonmukhi Gaan* in the 1990s to Anupam Roy's more self-aware contemporary lyricism, the discussion traces a genealogy of longing



that is neither uniformly sentimental nor merely decorative. Rather, these songs enact what might be called critical remembering: they hold the city accountable to its own disappearing textures while refusing to let those textures disappear from memory altogether. The central claim of this paper is that music, because of its intimacy of address and its reliance on repetition and recall, is uniquely suited to archiving urban experience—and that Kolkata, sung into being again and again across five decades, becomes less a place fixed on a map than a structure of feeling shared across generations of listeners.

Theoretical Coordinates: The City as Narrative, Memory, and Palimpsest

To speak of a city as something that can be “remembered” through song requires first unsettling the assumption that cities are simply built environments awaiting description. Michel de Certeau, in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, proposes that walking through a city is itself an act of narration, a kind of enunciation in which space is animated and made meaningful only through the pedestrian's improvised movement across it (Certeau 91). For Certeau, the city planner's map and the walker's lived itinerary are two entirely different texts; the latter is always more unruly, more intimate, and more forgetful of official boundaries. Bengali urban songs, I want to suggest, occupy exactly this second register. They do not describe Kolkata as a cartographer would. They walk through it—down College Street, along the Hooghly, into a shuttered coffee house—the way a person half-remembering a lost friend might retrace an old route without quite meaning to. If Certeau gives us the city as narrated space, Andreas Huyssen gives us the city as accumulated time. In *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, Huyssen describes the contemporary city as a palimpsest, a surface on which multiple temporal layers are inscribed, erased, and inscribed again, so that the strong marker of present space is always already densely inscribed by traces of the past (Huyssen 7). A palimpsest does not erase its earlier writing cleanly; it lets the older text bleed faintly through the newer one. This is precisely the sensation that recurs across Bengali urban song: the tram line under the flyover, the handwritten letter beneath the SMS, the coffee house beneath the mall that eventually replaced it. Kolkata's

songs are, in this sense, exercises in palimpsestic listening—they ask the ear to hear two cities superimposed, the one that is and the one that was. A third coordinate is necessary to explain why this remembering so often takes the specific emotional shape of longing rather than simple documentation. Svetlana Boym's distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia is useful here. Restorative nostalgia, Boym writes, seeks to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps, treating its own longing as a form of truth rather than sentiment (Boym 41); reflective nostalgia, by contrast, dwells in the imperfect process of remembrance itself, cherishing fragments without demanding their literal return (Boym 49). Manna Dey's *coffee house* is restorative in temperament—it wants the old *adda* back, whole and unbroken. Anupam Roy's Kolkata is reflective—it asks the city merely to notice its own scars. The difference between these two nostalgic modes marks, as this paper will show, a genuine historical shift in how Bengali song has related to its city across half a century, moving gradually from mourning toward critique.

Finally, Marianne Hirsch's concept of *post-memory* offers a way to understand why these songs continue to matter to listeners who never personally experienced the Kolkata being mourned. Hirsch developed the term to describe how the memory of a traumatic or transformative past is transmitted to a following generation not through recollection but through imaginative investment, projection, and creation, often via the mediation of art, photography, or story (Hirsch 22). Diasporic Bengalis and younger residents of a rapidly transformed Kolkata inherit the coffee house, the tram, and the *adda* in exactly this secondhand way—not as lived fact but as a felt inheritance, transmitted through song rather than direct memory. Together, Certeau, Huyssen, Boym, and Hirsch supply the interpretive vocabulary this paper needs: the city as narrated, layered, longed-for, and inherited.

Adda, the Coffee House, and the Bhadrak Structure of Feeling

Before turning to specific songs, it is worth pausing on the cultural institution that anchors much of Bengali urban nostalgia: the *adda*. Dipesh Chakrabarty, in his essay “Adda: A History of Sociality” from *Provincializing Europe*, describes *adda* as a distinctly



Bengali, largely urban and middle-class practice of unstructured, purposeless conversation, one that the *bhadralok* intelligentsia of Calcutta elevated almost to the status of an art form and, later, mourned as a vanishing one (Chakrabarty 180-213). *Adda* was never merely gossip; it was a mode of sociality through which literary opinion, political argument, and personal friendship were forged in cafes, *para* clubs, and college corridors. Sudipta Kaviraj's account of Calcutta's public and domestic spatial imagination is instructive alongside Chakrabarty's, since Kaviraj shows how colonial and postcolonial Calcutta organized its sense of "outside" and "inside", public and intimate space, in ways that made the street-corner or coffee-house *adda* a peculiarly charged threshold between the two (Kaviraj 83). It is precisely this threshold space that Manna Dey's song sets out to mourn.

Michel de Certeau's distinction between the panoptic "concept-city", visible from above, and the tactical city produced by pedestrians walking below, offers a productive entry point into why Manna Dey's 1983 lament for the Coffee House still functions as an anthem forty years later. Composed by Suparna Kanti Ghosh with lyrics by Gauriprasanna Mazumdar, the song does not describe College Street's Indian Coffee House as an institution or an address; it reconstructs it as a set of walked, talked, and re-talked itineraries belonging to seven named friends whose lives fan out from that single table into exile, madness, illness, wealth, and death as Nikhilesh settles in Paris, Moidul in Dhaka, Roma is admitted to a mental asylum, Amal battles terminal cancer, Sujata enjoys material comfort, and D'Souza has already died. This is Certeau's *récit*, the city rendered legible only through the stories walked through it, and it explains why the song became, within a few decades, something closer to civic liturgy than personal reminiscence: it is widely regarded as a cult classic and cultural symbol of West Bengal that came to function as the unofficial anthem of the College Street Coffee House itself. On the day Manna Dey died in 2013, that identification collapsed the distance between song and site almost completely; the Coffee House's own waiters were reported moving more slowly than usual, as though the building itself were in mourning, and an actress's public tribute simply repeated the song's own refrain back at the news, as though no other language for the loss existed.

The song, in other words, did not merely represent the *adda*; it supplied the only vocabulary the city had ready to hand for grieving it.

It is worth pausing on what kind of loss this is. The "golden afternoons" the song mourns were never, strictly, endangered by demolition — the Coffee House still stands, still serves its signature dishes, and the tables are still occupied. What has been lost, and what Dey's lyric registers with such precision, is a sociality: a specific texture of *adda*, the loosely structured, digressive, entirely unproductive talk that Dipesh Chakrabarty and others have identified as central to Bengali *bhadralok* civic identity. The commodification of that loss is itself instructive. In 2025, a new Bengali film titled *Coffee Houser Sei Adda Ta* was announced, explicitly built around the song, with its directors explaining that they wanted to imagine the youthful, formative years of the seven friends the song only shows us in retrospect, casting Gen-Z actors to help a new generation access the same spirit of *adda* and nostalgia. This is nostalgia turned into intellectual property, extended backward into prequel, and marketed to precisely the generation least likely to have any lived memory of the original Coffee House culture. A critical reading has to hold both things at once: the song's genuine capacity to keep a form of urban sociality "warm and shareable", in the paper's own phrase, and the commercial apparatus that now profits from repackaging that warmth for an audience being sold nostalgia for an experience it never had.

What makes the song more than a personal elegy is the way it uses the Coffee House as what Huyssen would call a densely inscribed site: a place where the earlier text of youthful ferment is still faintly legible beneath the present quiet (Huyssen 7). The song's melancholy, then, is not simply about aging friends. It is about a form of urban sociality—*adda* itself—that Chakrabarty argues was already being pronounced endangered by the late twentieth century, threatened by the increasing privatization of leisure, the rise of television, and the quickened pace of professional life (Chakrabarty 180-213). Dey's Coffee House is restorative nostalgia in Boym's sense: the singer wants the old table back, filled again with the same voices, and the song's ache comes from knowing this is precisely what cannot happen (Boym 41).



Jibonmukhi Gaan and the Turn Toward the Unglamorous City

If Manna Dey's generation sang the city from a certain elevated space—melodious, orchestrated, occasionally sentimental in a classical film-song idiom—the 1990s produced a decisive rupture. *Jibonmukhi Gaan*, emerged through artists such as Kabir Suman, Nachiketa Chakraborty, and Anjan Dutt as a deliberate departure from both devotional and conventionally romantic Bengali song traditions. These artists wrote about unemployment, failed relationships, corrupt landlords, crowded buses, and the general fatigue of ordinary urban existence, often in a conversational register closer to spoken Bengali than to the more Sanskritized diction of earlier lyric traditions. The shift was not only thematic but formal: minimal instrumentation, near-spoken vocal delivery, and lyrics that read more like diary entries than verse.

Kabir Suman's "Tomake Chai", released in 1992 and widely regarded as the movement's inaugurating gesture, illustrates this shift with unusual clarity. On its surface the song is a love song, its title translating simply as "I want you". But the desire the song articulates is inseparable from its urban setting—the rain-slicked streets, the crowded intersections, the anonymous press of city life against which the singer's longing takes shape. Suman's voice, deliberately unpolished and tremulous, refuses the studio gloss of earlier film-song romanticism; the effect is confessional rather than performative, as though the listener has been allowed into a private, unrehearsed moment. Read through Certeau's framework, the song's lover and the song's city become nearly indistinguishable itineraries: to want the woman is also, somehow, to want the wet Kolkata street on which she is imagined walking (Certeau 91). The city here is not decoration for a romance; it is the medium through which romantic feeling becomes legible at all.

Anjan Dutt's "Ranjana Ami Ar Ashbona", released in 1995, pushes this urban intimacy even further into colloquial territory. Addressed to a woman named Ranjana whom the singer confesses he will not return to see, the song is built almost entirely out of casual, half-finished sentences—the kind of talk one might overhear on a tram rather than read in a poem. Ranjana herself becomes less a specific person than a metonym for an entire vanished social world: the cinema halls

that have shut down, the *para* addas that have thinned out, the friendships allowed to lapse under the pressure of adult disappointment. Dutt's achievement lies in refusing grandeur; the song's Kolkata is not the Kolkata of monuments but of its quiet decays and subtle joys, a city visible only in its small, unremarked erosions. This is where *Jibonmukhi Gaan* performs its most significant cultural work: it relocates urban memory away from official heritage sites and toward the unglamorous, in Kaviraj's terms toward the domestic and semi-public spaces that rarely make it into civic history at all (Kaviraj 83). The tea stall, the rented flat, the second-run cinema hall become, in these songs, as historically significant as any listed colonial building, precisely because they are what actually constituted daily life for the generation singing about them.

Kolkata as Palimpsest: Anupam Roy and Critical Remembering

By the time Anupam Roy released "Kolkata, Tumio Hente Dekho" in 2013, both the city and its musical idiom had changed again. Kolkata by the second decade of the twenty-first century had absorbed the metro rail, the shopping mall, and the smartphone, even as its older infrastructure—the tram network foremost among these—persisted in increasingly attenuated form. Roy's song responds to this doubled city by adopting an unusual rhetorical strategy: it addresses Kolkata directly, in the second person, urging the city itself to walk its own streets and take stock of what it has become. The gesture personifies the city not as a nostalgic object to be pined for from a fixed vantage point, but as an agent capable of self-reflection, even self-reckoning. This is, I would argue, where Roy's song departs meaningfully from both Dey's restorative elegy and the more confessional realism of the *Jibonmukhi* generation. Where Manna Dey wants the old table back and Kabir Suman confesses a private ache, Roy's lyric persona steps to one side and asks the city to look at its own reflection—flawed, patched, half-renovated—without either romanticizing or disowning it. This is closer to what Boym calls reflective nostalgia, a mode that cherishes shattered fragments of memory without insisting they be restored to wholeness (Boym 49). The song's Kolkata is allowed to contain the tram and the metro simultaneously, the secondhand bookstall and



the multiplex, without resolving the contradiction between them. It is a palimpsest permitted to remain a palimpsest, its older inscriptions visible precisely because no one has tried to scrub them away (Huyssen 7).

This palimpsestic quality recurs across the physical landmarks that Bengali urban song returns to obsessively: Howrah Bridge, College Street, the North Kolkata para. These sites function almost as recurring characters across otherwise unrelated songs and decades, precisely because they have accumulated enough historical density to carry multiple, sometimes contradictory, emotional charges at once. Howrah Bridge can be sung as a symbol of colonial-era engineering pride, as a backdrop for youthful romance, and as a site of quiet daily commute exhaustion, all within the same broad musical tradition. College Street can house both the intellectual ferment Chakrabarty associates with adda culture and the more mundane, exam-anxious traffic of students buying secondhand textbooks. Bengali urban song does not resolve these layers into a single meaning; it lets them sit stacked atop one another, the way Huyssen's palimpsestic city permits its earlier texts to remain faintly legible beneath the new (Huyssen 7).

Songs as Archives of Feeling: Memory, Post-memory, and the Diasporic Ear

What allows a coffee house song from the 1980s, a confessional love song from 1992, and a self-reflexive address from 2013 to function together as a coherent tradition, rather than as three unrelated artifacts, is the archival capacity of music itself. Songs are repeatable in a way that lived experience is not; a listener can return to "Tomake Chai" on a given rainy evening decades after its release and re-enter, however partially, the emotional weather of a Kolkata street that may no longer exist in that form. This repeatability is what makes music, more than most other media, capable of doing the work Marianne Hirsch calls postmemory: transmitting an emotional inheritance to those who did not live through its original occasion (Hirsch 22).

This matters enormously for two overlapping audiences that Bengali urban song has increasingly had to address. The first is the Bengali diaspora, for whom Kolkata exists largely as an inherited idea rather than a

daily lived environment; for a Bengali family settled in Delhi, Dubai, or Dublin, these songs often substitute for the city itself, offering a portable, replayable Kolkata that can be summoned in a living room anywhere in the world. The second audience is simply the younger generation born into a Kolkata already transformed—young people for whom the tram is a curiosity rather than a daily conveyance, and the Coffee House a heritage site rather than a living adda. For both audiences, the songs function not as nostalgia in the narrow sense but as a kind of cultural compass: an inherited emotional map of a city that no longer needs to be physically visited, or even historically accurate, to be deeply felt. The fading tram lines of North Kolkata, the melancholic marquees of single-screen halls such as Mitra or Paradise, the ordinary laughter of a college canteen—all of these are, in Hirsch's terms, made available for imaginative investment and projection by listeners who never directly witnessed them, precisely because the songs hold the emotional texture of these places in a form that outlasts the places themselves (Hirsch 22).

It is worth noting that this archival function is not incidental to Bengali urban song but constitutive of it. Unlike a photograph, which fixes a single instant, or a written history, which tends toward chronological ordering, song holds memory in a form that is simultaneously personal and choral—sung alone in private and sung together at gatherings, carried in the body as much as in the mind. This is part of why adda, Coffee House culture, and Jibonmukhi confession have proven such durable subjects for Bengali song: these are themselves forms of collective, repeatable, half-improvised sociality, and song simply extends their logic into a medium that can travel further and last longer than any single evening of conversation ever could.

What the *Jibonmukhi* generation relocated, more specifically, was the site of memory. Where Manna Dey's nostalgia is anchored to a named institution — an actual coffee house with an actual address — Anjan Dutt's early work, beginning with his 1994 album *Shunte Ki Chao?*, moved memory into unglamorous, serial, almost administrative spaces: a phone number functions as a song title in "2-4-4-1-1-3-9 (Bela Bose)", and the emotional charge is generated less by a place than by a residue, a digit sequence that has outlived the relationship it once connected. Nachiketa's



catalogue performs a similar relocation across decades — album and song titles running from *Mukhomukhi* and *Ei Agune Haath Rakho* through *Ekhon Tokhon* and *Din Bodoler Gaan* into the 2010s — repeatedly returning to the ordinary vocabulary of getting by, of “time changing” and “living meaning”, rather than to any single lost landmark. This is memory democratized and diffused across the whole surface of the quotidian city, which is precisely why the movement's own chroniclers keep insisting on its ethical seriousness against the charge that “life-oriented” was merely an advertising slogan: commentators have traced the genre's lineage back through Lalon's defiance of religious orthodoxy and Bhupen Hazarika's songs about the miseries of tea-garden labourers, arguing that Suman and Nachiketa were less inventing a new form than making explicit a tradition of socially engaged song that had always run beneath Bengali music's more ornamental surface. Whether or not one accepts that genealogy in full, it registers something the paper's own argument needs: the *Jibonmukhi* turn is not simply a stylistic shift from orchestral playback to acoustic guitar, but an argument about where in the city grief and dignity are permitted to live — not only in coffee houses frequented by the literate professional classes, but in phone numbers, rented rooms, and unfinished degrees.

Marianne Hirsch's post-memory was developed to describe the relationship of the children of trauma survivors to a past they did not live but that structures their imagination as though they had. Applying it to Kolkata's urban song risks overreach if handled carelessly — the closing of a tram route is not the Shoah — but the concept's core insight travels well in scaled-down form: post-memory names an inheritance transmitted not through direct experience but through affectively saturated cultural forms, songs among them, that create the sensation of memory in those who never possessed the original event. This is precisely the mechanism by which a diasporic teenager who has never sat in the Coffee House can nonetheless feel the loss the song describes as though it were partly her own, and it is also the mechanism the 2025 film exploits commercially, manufacturing “post-memory” for an audience it has itself created — a stranger's grandmother, a diasporic teenager, and a present-day student might inhabit the same remembered corner “for the duration of a single song”, read through Hirsch, is

not simply a lyrical flourish but a precise description of how post-memory operates at the level of the three-minute song form: briefly, repeatably, and without requiring biographical entitlement to the memory being borrowed.

Memory, left to itself, catalogues: it would be content to note that the Coffee House survives while its addas have thinned, that the tram network has been curtailed rather than closed, that College Street's secondhand stalls persist under real-estate pressure they may not indefinitely withstand. What Dey, the *Jibonmukhi* songwriters, and Roy each do instead is refuse to let the catalogue harden into elegy. The refrain “aaj ar nei” is sung, not stated; Nachiketa's ordinary phone numbers and Anjan Dutt's rented rooms are set to music that invites a stranger to hum along; Roy's doubled, ironic address to the city nonetheless still moves audiences to sing it back at concerts decades after release, and even the commercially cynical prequel film cannot manufacture that afterlife without borrowing the original song's genuine emotional authority.

Conclusion: Remembering as a Form of Love

To sing about Calcutta, across five decades and at least three distinct musical idioms, is in some sense to resist its erasure. Urban development, shifting political fortunes, and the general acceleration of late capitalist city life have all pressed hard against the older textures that Bengali song continues to cherish—the adda, the tram, the secondhand bookstall, the single-screen cinema hall. And yet the songs discussed in this paper do not simply lament this pressure; they actively metabolize it.

If Manna Dey's Coffee House song is restorative in Svetlana Boym's sense — it wants the golden afternoons back, or at least wants to keep faith with the fact that they existed — the *Jibonmukhi* Bangla movement of the 1990s enacts something closer to what Andreas Huyssen calls the palimpsestic city: a Kolkata written and overwritten, where memory does not sit beneath the present as a discrete, retrievable layer but bleeds into it. The genealogy matters here. Gautam Chattopadhyay's band *Moheener Ghoraguli* had already, in the 1970s, written unfashionably about poverty, injustice, loneliness, and prostitution against the grain of the era's more melodic mainstream,



planting the conceptual seed that Nachiketa, Kabir Suman, and Anjan Dutta would later develop into a popular movement. When Suman Chattopadhyay (Kabir Suman) broke through commercially in the early 1990s, the genre label itself was contested from within the industry. The controversy is revealing of exactly the palimpsest Huyssen describes — a new stratum of urban song did not replace the old *Rabindrasangeet*-inflected *adhunik gaan* tradition so much as write itself over it, forcing the older layer to become newly visible, and newly defensive, by contrast.

Boym gains precision if restorative and reflective nostalgia are read not as a binary opposing Manna Dey to everyone after him, but as a spectrum along which each generation recalibrates its distance from the city. Dey's song is restorative in wanting the “sonali bikel”, the golden afternoon, reassembled — but it already knows this is impossible, which is why the refrain insists three times that the addas are simply gone, “aaj ar nei”. Even the text of Kolkata nostalgia, in other words, is shot through with the reflective irony Boym associates with modern loss: it does not actually attempt restoration, only the naming of what restoration would require. Anupam Roy's generation, arriving after 2010, inherits this irony as a starting condition rather than a discovery, mostly balancing two simultaneous lives — “Amake Amar Moto Thakte Dao” and “Benche Thakar Gaan” were the response to it. “Benche Thakar Gaan” — “the song of staying alive”, or of getting by — is diagnostic of the shift the paper describes from the *Jibonmukhi* generation's confessional register to Roy's self-aware, doubled address: the title itself refuses the heroic register of survival in favour of the merely durational, the fact of continuing, which is exactly the register in which Kolkata's post-liberalization residents were being asked to relate to their own rapidly changing city. Roy's prolific film-song output through the 2010s — scoring, as he did, dozens of Tollywood soundtracks

while maintaining a parallel identity as poet and prose writer — means his Kolkata songs are always already commercial products circulating through multiplex marketing cycles even as they perform intimate self-address, and this doubled positioning, more than any single lyric, is what makes him the natural endpoint of the trajectory Certeau, Huyssen, and Boym together describe: a songwriter who cannot pretend, the way Dey's generation still could, that the singer stands outside the apparatus that sells the city's nostalgia back to itself.

Moving historically from Manna Dey's restorative wish to restore a lost table of friends, through the Jibonmukhi generation's confessional relocation of memory into unglamorous daily space, to Anupam Roy's more self-aware invitation for the city to reckon with its own doubled, palimpsestic self. Read together, through Certeau's narrated city, Huyssen's layered palimpsest, Boym's two nostalgias, and Hirsch's post-memory, these songs reveal that Bengali urban modernity has never experienced its own city as a settled fact. It has instead experienced Kolkata as a continuously renegotiated feeling, argued over, mourned, and re-inhabited in nearly every generation's characteristic musical voice.

This is, finally, why the paper's closing claim insists on love rather than mere memory. Memory alone would be content to catalogue what has been lost—Bengali urban song does something more demanding: it keeps returning to these losses not to freeze them but to keep them warm, singable, and shareable, so that a stranger's grandmother, a diasporic teenager, and a present-day college student on College Street might all, for the duration of a single song, inhabit the same remembered corner of the same unfinished city. Kolkata, in this musical tradition, survives not despite its transformation but through the ongoing, collective, deeply attentive act of being sung about—which is, perhaps, the most durable form its love has ever taken.

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