

Musings from the Himalayas

Prelude: Ghost Trails

We carry landscapes within us—meadows that vanish, rivers that refuse to stay still. Years later, we return to them not as places but as questions. What does it mean to lose a moment that once held the whole sky?

The Restlessness within Joy

I sat perched on the edge of a bridge over the Beas river in the Western Himalayas, watching the furious river rise violently up to ten feet before collapsing onto the rocks below. I was ending the happiest day of my life—toasting to the odds stacked against such an adventurous possibility—while turbulence churned my insides. In retrospect, the memory of what made the day so special has faded, but the imprint of happiness remains etched on my body. After all, how else do we remember our joy, if not through the impressions they leave on our bodies?

The Meadow That Bridged Loss and Laughter

The heart of that memory rests in a tiny meadow—a gracious host overlooking snowy slopes and icy peaks that teased the whimsical clouds above. I was crouched on wet grass and cow dung, leaning against a rock, reading a book on loss and fractured memories. I laughed with every dark and morbid detail shaped by the author's sharp yet tender wit. It mirrored my inner world—delirious and alive—now embraced by snow-clad peaks on three sides that echoed my joy. Curious tourists interrupted this gaiety, puzzled by the spectacle of a lone, female-embodied person enjoying herself. They quit after a few attempts, and I resumed my tête-à-tête with nature, mediated by the book.

The journey to this meadow was unremarkable. A slushy sheep trail through a dense jungle and thorny bushes is nothing extraordinary in Himalayan terrain. Yet it marked my first solo trek, memorable only for how I felt at its end. In that meadow, a dream took root in my body: a vision of a life brimming with frightening yet hopeful possibilities. Since then, that dream has grown, its terrain slowly merging with reality.

A Toast To Possibilities Beyond Reach

The sublimity of every encounter with the mountains and their rivers and meadows has expanded my imagination, revealing fresh paths for my inner self. The hope of realising these possibilities propels me towards another day of wild laughter, even as the turbulence stirs within.

Four years hence, I returned to the same trek, hoping to retrace every step to that meadow. I never found it. Perhaps meadows, like certain joys, exist only once—a flash of clarity before dissolving into the landscape of memory. Now, I carry its images within my body—the only evidence of that hope.

P.S. The book was *The Gathering* by Anne Enright, a story of lost histories and the ghosts we carry.