After words

Curtain

by Avtar Singh

Almost exactly eight years ago, I was hired to put together the team that would bring this magazine to its fruition. I wrote the first editorial a few months later. Now, it falls to me to put the final seal on *Time Out Delhi*. It is a bookend, of sorts; an ending to go with that beginning I was present at. But it's one I wish I didn't have to see.

But this is the way of all things, I'm assured. Especially in this heedless city. Much better to remember all the good times we've had, seen and chronicled; much more apposite to mark the meals we ate, the plays we saw, the music we listened to; much more fitting, finally, to remember the people who made it all worthwhile.

I turn to the first issue of the magazine (it came out in early 2007). Zohra Sehgal and Bhicoo Manekshaw are still alive. Laid-backwaters still serves seafood with a seasoning of Midival Punditz and the Jalebee Cartel, and Tabula Rasa is just opening. Thukral and Tagra have a show on called BoseDK (yes, everything's been done before). Gurgaon doesn't yet have a Metro and south Delhi still doesn't have a BRT. Our cover story is "Secret Delhi".

What stands out to me is our Gay and Lesbian section, proudly titled as such, and with its accompanying listings. Appropriate, given the cover story and our own brief, which was to bring the best of Delhi to our readers' attention, wherever it might be. I'm grateful to have been part of it. But the city, eight years down the line? What of it remains secret anymore?

I came on board before Facebook was even open to everyone. Twitter was a few further characters away. We certainly didn't have a website. In retrospect, you could be forgiven for asking what we were thinking. But back then – and I would argue, still – it seemed self-evident that what Delhi needed, along with information, was educated commentary. The best part was that we learnt what we were being authoritative about on the job itself. We represented the audience: who better to know it and cater to it?

It goes without saying that we're in the middle of profound changes in this city. When we launched, it seemed as if Sheila Dikshit would last forever. When it finally came, the next government lasted less than two months. Then, the CWG was the incipient white elephant lumbering towards the city. Now, it's already four years ago, and people went to jail because of it. Then, spas were an expensive luxury. Now, you get discounts Whatspapp-ed to your phones. Along with an assurance that your therapist will be female. Well, who knew that, a decade ago?

The pace of change is just so quick, now. We think it's glacial, like our traffic: but the opposite is true. Delhi Police has a traffic app. I haven't seen it to test its efficacy, but its existence points to something. This is a group of public servants who weren't noted for answering their Station House phones a scant decade ago. There will be pushback from those with "vested interests", of course. It's already been happening. So what? We'll deal. We always have. And all the nostalgia fetishists need to relax. The last time I checked, you can still find handmade shoes in Jor Bagh and second-hand books in Paharganj. Not everything's going to hell in a hand-basket.

And, while some things are worth preserving – indeed, fighting for – perhaps others have merely reached the end of their cycles. That the "cycle" itself may be shortening due to the pressures of our particular time is a matter for another discussion. For now, I'd like to give thanks for what this magazine did for me.

So I turn again to that first issue. The masthead is full of names I count amongst my friends. There is a piece in it: we sent some writers to get their hair done at various local salons. I know, at every level, that those young people have aged in the intervening period. But they look exactly the same to me. One of the designers who started with me is still there. He became a father twice over on the job. The man who opened the office in the morning and brought us our tea will be the one to close up the very last time.

Then, there are the stories. The first Queer Pride. The fact that we stood for the BRT when everyone else slammed it; that we gave the same respect to EDM as we did to classical music. The films, the books, the drinks and meals, the opportunity to meet people one wouldn't have otherwise. The fact that, as long as it lasted, it was a card one handed out with pride.

Yet none of this would have been possible without our subject matter, and for that we need to remember the city itself. The editors who followed me created their own teams and standards of excellence and I'm humbled that I happened to be the first. I'd like to think I speak for us all when I say, to everyone who made this journey possible, wherever and whoever you are, and finally, and always to Delhi itself,
Thank you.