



Sonal Shukla
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image source : Instagram@abc.gy

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Doyens are remembered by little things.
At least that is how I remember you.

It was the summer of 1989.
Safdar Hashmi had been killed.
Nursing an aching heartbreak and teaching consummately,
I was discovering feminism.
I was young, and somewhat idealist, somewhat fatalist
Performing Om Swaha on the streets of Bombay with my even younger students,
I was looking to find references, in people

I invited you for the college annual day.
Because a friend asked me to
Nervous and excited, I stood at the gate to welcome you
It was my first interaction with a flesh and blood feminist.
Firebrand, they had said.
I waited with bated breath

And then you came.

Well draped- in flaming colours of red, in rich silk

And the perfect pout, the perfectly upturned nose

We chatted.

I was comforted, a little intimidated – because you could do that to many.

As the journalist sought a picture, of us, for the next day's report

You picked out your comb from your stylish hand bag and ran it through your short hair,

Performative as hell, I thought

And then you spoke, and sang, to the young and the old in the audience

Each was moved, more than a little

I thanked you with a smile, then

And will remain thankful forever

For being an early reference

Adieu, Sonal Shukla, Adieu.

