

AMARA: CITY OF ENDLESS STORIES

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The city where I live, where I breathe, where I dream, and where I dismay, is a place full of surprises. This city was built on thousands of unseen, unheard, colorful hopes that fused with the gloominess of shattered dreams. Don't let the blinding glamor fool you. There lies a city inside the city, inside another city, and inside it there is one more city; this layer within layer within layers that goes on infinitely, unable to figure out what is real *Amara*, they prohibit themselves from searching the city.....One can only discover the real city when they dive into the hearts and souls of its inhabitants, which harbor an ocean of emotions, joy, sorrow, love, lust, desire, disappointment, kindness, passion, anger, fear, calmness, boredom, excitement, and more. These emotions combine to form a storm within the core of city dwellers, trapping them in the city. The eternal conundrum of whether to leave or stay remains unanswered. No matter how many people come and go, no matter how many structures perish and establish, no matter how much time passes, no matter how much changes are brought in, the city stands proudly.

I don't know the name of my city given by its inhabitants, maybe I know.... but don't want to remember, don't want to say, I would rather call it *Amara* (Eternal), where the perpetual battle between *puran* (old) and *notun* (new), *jit* (win) and *har* (lose), and *asha* (hope) and *hotasha* (disappointment) resides side by side. This no longer affects *Amarabashi* (residents of *Amara*), they are immune to it, they only want to survive the day and at night they dream of a future, a future that holds everything precious to them, everything of their desire.

Amarabashi (residents of *Amara*) like to divide the city into two, *notun Amara* (new *Amara*) and *puran Amara* (old *Amara*) to define who they are and where they belong. Little do they know that the city is eternal, one cannot bound it. This city might be the same as other cities but

Amarabashi (residents of *Amara*) are the ones who bring *rong* (colors), *jadu* (magic), and *pran* (life) to the city, making it *anantha* (endless) like the universe. The congested decaying structure of the *puran Amara* (old *Amara*) echoes centuries of memories, dreams and cries of the people who are nothing but ghosts now. *Puran Amara* (old city) dances to the tunes of festivals in every season while decorating the old city with new spirit. The festival brings people of all ages, all backgrounds under one roof, celebrating a day of joy and peace together with their loved ones as well as some random strangers.

Streets are embellished with cha dokan (tea stall), fuchka dokan (“fuchka is a street food”, fuchka stall), churi dokan (bangles stall), and so many others, where inhabitants crowd to buy food and things. These old structures, houses, stalls, and

streets carry the memories of the people who have once been there, they carry the memories of their joy and hardships, memories of their laughs and cries, memories of their dreams. People living in the *puran* (old) part of the city, welcome strangers with open hearts, with a big smile, which is big enough to hide their sorrows and troubles. But one must know that even if *Amarabashi* (residents of *Amara*) don't have anything, their pride never falters, they will always hold their heads up and dazzle people with their kindness.

Notun Amara (new Amara), on the other hand, is all about lights, restaurants, cars, and tall designed buildings, where one hardly has a heartfelt conversation. Chasing after wealth, success and power for what it feels like forever, *Amrabashi* has forgotten their childhood dreams. The new city is devouring the old city slowly, constantly challenging the old customs, leaving the simple life that *puran Amara* (old Amara) still cherishes.

Living here in *notun Amara* (new Amara) might feel like a unreal torture at first, but once adjusted, one is grasp by the everlasting charm. *Amarabshi* faces a tiresome war between the rickshaw puller and rider for fare, between bus conductor and passenger for seats, in tea stalls for cha (tea), and in the hospital between life and death everyday. Life in *notun Amara* (new Amara) is all about working from 9am to 5pm, discussing the issues telecasted on TV, and eating cold food like their cold eyes. Maliciousness falls as the night grows darker upon the souls of believers, making them kneel on the hard concrete ground of despair. Only true believers would learn to dream again, breaking walls of hurdles to follow their dream.

However, the residents of *Amara* are unable to leave, as if the city has cast a magic spell on them which binds them to it eternally. No matter how much they wished to leave, *Amarabashi* (residents of *Amara*) just could not escape the magic of the *notun Amara* (new Amara), imprisoning them here in the name of opportunities.

People say that the city of *Amara* is nothing but a labyrinth, a maze, that eternally captures the souls of its inhabitants, trapping them inside the unsolvable puzzle of where they belong. In truth, the city of *Amara* consists of endless stories, embracing the *notun* (new) and the *puran* (old), *asha* (hope) and *nirasha* (despair), and *shopno* (dreams) and *botasha* (disappointment) lie together, making it a dream that came true. For me, I am just a mere observer of the endless stories, taking place everyday, in every corner of the city, invisible to the eyes of the inhabitants but captivating to the eyes of outsiders.