
***The Walls of Delhi: Three Stories* by Uday Prakash, translated by Jason Grunebaum, published by Seven Stories Press in 2014, ISBN: 978-1609805289, 234 pages, Rs 350.**

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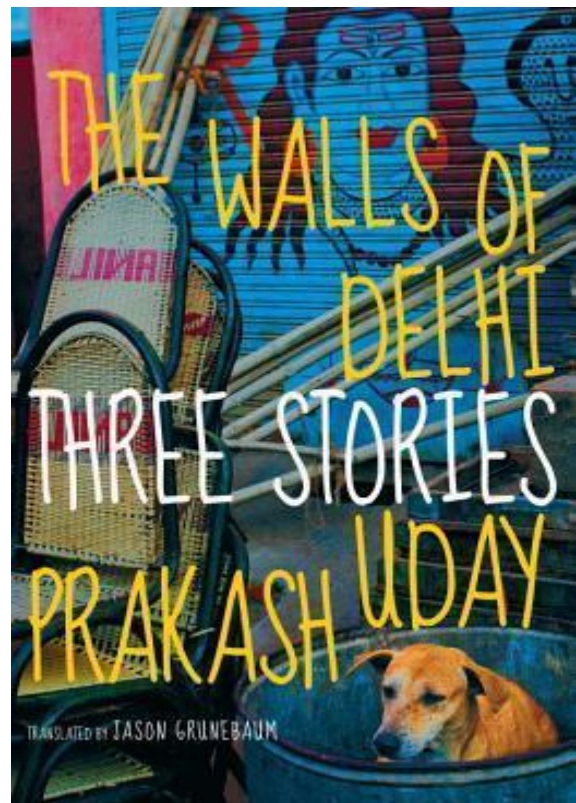
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In *The Walls of Delhi*, Uday Prakash presents three powerful narratives, the self-titled story, *The Walls of Delhi*, Mohandas, and Mangosil. These stories tried to show the lived realities of marginalised individuals that is, the lower class or caste of people, navigating the hierarchical structures of caste, judiciary, and economic instability in modern India. Looking at these narratives through the lens of memory, trauma and humiliation, this book reveals a major question, while institutions attempt to erase or deny marginalised identities, memory becomes a fragile yet it persists where identity, humiliation, and memory are resisted.

The title story, *The Walls of Delhi*, encaptures the experiences of Ram Niwas, a migrant labourer who arrives in Delhi seeking financial stability but instead encounters systematic corruption and moral compromise. Delhi is shown not as a space of flexibility but as a structure that forces and humiliates migrants. Delhi becomes a place where reality of life crushes dreams and it is only withstanding the pretence of a “good life”. Ram Niwas’s memories of rural life and social unfitness create a sharp contrast with the urban environment he lives in, where he learns that money cannot solve anything, once a poor will be treated as poor even if they have money because power, hierarchy and corruption strips away the right of a person. This asserts that memory functions as what Paul Ricoeur describes as narrative identity, the process through which individuals maintain a sense of self through recollection.



Still in Uday Prakash's narrative, this identity and memory become increasingly unstable as the urban social system forces Ram Niwas into situations that questions his morality and selfhood. Delhi is not shown just as a city but it is shown as a cosmopolitan world where there is stark difference amongst things, things like rich and poor, good and evil, justice and corruption but yet people migrate there in hope of better life, Ram Niwas embodies the same thing.

Similarly, in Mohandas the tension between memory, identity and selfhood are seen most explicitly. The story follows a young Dalit man whose identity is stolen when another upper caste individual fraudulently takes his name to secure employment. Mohandas's struggle to reclaim his name exposes the violence and injustice that is ingrained within judicial systems that often show itself to operate through moral and rational legality. Mohandas embodies every poor, lower caste individual who had dreams and hope, who got an education but everything that he did fail him truly, where he was beaten down by the system piece by piece. Memory becomes the only evidence of his existence, his recollections of education, achievement, and aspiration testify to a life that the system refuses to recognise. This story rightfully depicts what Cathy Caruth describes as trauma's repetitive return through memory. Mohandas is forced to repeatedly recount his past in order to prove his identity, yet each retelling only reinforces the humiliation that he felt. Mohandas is shown as someone who has vigour, hope and resistance. He resisted his humiliation, and memory by defying the one who questioned him and his very existence. By the end of the story we see a beat down man who has lost hope in the system and is just ready to give up everything just for his survival.

Mangosil shifts the focus from overt structural violence to the quieter anxieties of aspiration and failure within neoliberal modernity in Indian society. The protagonist Chandrakant's memories of ambition and self-improvement reveal how individuals internalise societal expectations of success. Also, Shobha who is the wife of Chandrakant, where they both ran away together in order to protect her. Sobha faced unnatural trauma from her previous life and we get to know this through the snippets of recollections, where she was treated as a property where anyone can do anything yet she had hope, aspirations from her life. Unlike Ram Niwas or Mohandas, whose identities are threatened by external forces, Chandrakant and Shobha of Mangosil experiences a more psychological form of erasure, one produced by the gap between remembered aspirations and present reality. Their relationship resonates with Pierre Nora's concept of "sites of memory," where everyday recollections preserve experiences that remain invisible within official narratives of progress. Shobha always tries to forget her trauma of her past life and is willing to go far and beyond just to keep herself away from that life.

Across the three stories, we see how Uday Prakash constructs memory not simply as recollection but as a competitive territory where marginalised subjects attempt to assert their existence in the face of systems that deny them any recognition. The repeated experiences of humiliation, and trauma whether through judicial corruption, caste-based discrimination, or financial differences demonstrate how structural power can erase identities at both social and psychological levels. Yet memory works as a form of resistance, preserving fragments of existence and identity that cannot be erased by any external forces.

Uday Prakash's truthful portrayal of humiliation, displacement, and identity theft, *The Walls of Delhi* presents itself as a literary archive of marginalised and traumatic memory. By documenting lives that is often excluded from official histories and belongs to different side of the story, Uday Prakash exposes the violence that inhabits urban modernity of India while restoring narrative visuality to those who lives on the margins.

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