

silent sentinels



In most human societies, save a very few, the boundary is a critical aspect of structuring societies and thereby bringing the order that allowed for civilization to progress. They have also of late been the point of critical dispute with the crossing of national boundaries by thousands of displaced and misplaced people, not just been the great shame of today's civilization, but has also marked a change in attitude towards each other amongst populations. The points of crossing these boundaries have also become the sites of critical contestation.

In more bucolic times when space was not so critically contested a boundary was often marked by nothing more than an imaginary line connecting mutually recognized landmarks, often a couple of trees, and in later times with the advent of precise surveying and taxing, perhaps carefully marked boundary stones. The crossing points however were clearly expressed to represent the authority that allowed that crossing. Often in the grander estates in the countryside, the only presence in the landscape of any civility was pairs of posts that marked these crossing points.

In the suburban environments where wealthy families gathered around cities, but with still large extends of land, the gatepost came to represent the power and prestige of the occupants within. With the actual houses themselves often hidden amidst extensive gardens and tree cover, the gatepost appeared to represent the personalities of the houses within and thus that of the occupants.

Looking at Adil Writer's work it appears to be a gathering of such personalities in a conclave. Placed together as I first encountered them, they seemed to be jostling for positions within the groups, perhaps comparing notes or even being silently snooty about those who stood around them. Each of the gateposts captures a personality with all the merits and flaws of individuals. Adil has been able to capture individual personalities in each of the works but they become most effective in groups as they may have been down the streets of Goa, Colombo or Bombay, standing sentinel at the points of transition representing the values, virtues and indulgences of those within. Through the work, Adil begins to recognize, identify and celebrate the diversity of the human condition as did those now disappearing silent sentinels in the fast growing and often faceless expanses of urbanity now being thrust upon us.

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