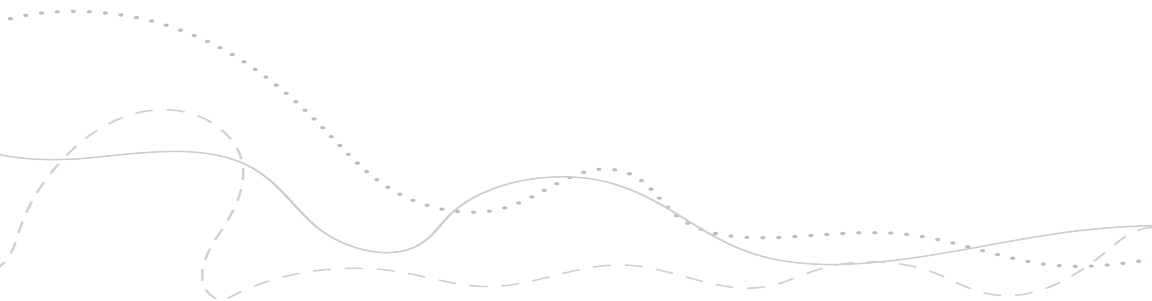


Burping Baby

By Nicola Singh

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I measure space between my fingers.

Striving for precision. And a flowering.

I bring my thumb and index finger together, copying the actions of another. We're practicing a form of movement meditation and despite myself, I succumb. Pollen rising around me.

Chunni draped across my chest. It hangs down towards the back of my knees as I move. My knees who hold fears. The fabric partly covers a tattoo at the centre of my throat which reads FLUID.

I lie down.

One hand of fingers directed towards my vulva which was dry shaven yesterday. By two women. One in a cheap silk midnight blue saree. My other hand of fingers is arranged like a falling wave, resting at the crown of my head.

I've had two missed miscarriages in the space of four months.

Meaning a pregnancy stops growing but the body doesn't register it. It keeps releasing the pregnancy hormones. Doesn't wanna let the embryo a go go.

First trimester 6 weeks 2 days both.

Earth in the first. Fire in the second. Wood in the third.

Staring at the screen of the ultrasound, I try to superimpose those shapes onto my belly, to consolidate them with my bodily experience. At the second scan I want to use my thumbs to close my ear holes and to place my fingers over my eyelids. So that only our Udit can absorb the doctor's information. So that I can slowly peel my senses back earthside in my own time. So that I can look at Udit's face only, for the outcome.



In some contemporary teachings of Advaita Vedanta philosophy, the cinema screen and its projections are used as a basic metaphor. The solid, unchanging structure of the cinema screen is likened to the presence of the divine. An energy that is solid and unchanging. That's the only truth. While the world of our experience, with its ever-changing forms, emotions and events, is the cinema projection. These moving images are the fluctuating illusions of our lives. A movie we should watch with a detached observation, they say.

I search the internet for 'Celebrity Miscarriages.'

I know I knew that last time something was up. Not this time. This second time pregnancy I loss.

I'd been using the index finger of my right hand to ritually check my vaginal discharge. My uterus feeling lush.

Yolk inside me cushion.

The doctor first gets a second opinion, and then gives me a long slow snake of the head. I scrunch up in a howl. My body's still lubricated with the hormones so my mind trynna tell my body believe. Unregulated bellows between these bedfellows. A sublime improvisation punctuated by grunts.

We are sounding different when we hear our recorded voice versus the voice we hear in our head because of our hearing mechanisms. It's complicated by the way in which sound passes differently through bone and through air.

Udit ear to my belly. Udit hello belly. We sing into each other.

Each 6-week-2-days didn't develop a heartbeat. That underwater echo sound. That energy diffuse through me.



The midwife gave me a small tender coconut after confirming the first pregnancy. After the bad news, I drop it back into the ground. A feeling of energy, unborn, had been lingering around the top of my head. I was advised to talk to it. For us both too. Following the second miscarriage it climbs down towards the nape of my neck. It's energy becoming more feminine like.

I draw aether with my fingers.

Udit undulates my flesh, reminding my mind that my body is mostly water. They also shake away at the muscles around my neck. The aesthetician slammed the drugs into me as I took an inhale. My mouth hung trapped open. My body bolted. The muscles around my neck contracted and are now in spasm.

I'm in hospital for this second miscarriage.

I felt it all in that present tense moment passing, as my motor capacities started to leave me. My esophagus tightened so I tried to move my toes and fingers to communicate my panic. My arms and legs had already left me. Hands hold down my struggling extremities, which are cold because my blood won't efficiently carry oxygen around my body.

As the anaesthetic steals consciousness I watch my inner sky. Matchboxes opening out onto matchboxes. Dolls inside dolls.

When I come round, Udit has to leave. I console myself until their return by making small pleats with the fabric curtain that hangs around my hospital bed. I feel the fabric fold, and watch it release rhythmically.

In a round room with twelve windows I am shown a diagram of concentric circles cut from semi-translucent plastics. I am told they represent the physical, emotional and subtle body. I'm in a 'Awareness Through The Body' workshop.



It's something that was developed for schools, as a subject for children to study themselves. The website says that the practice uses the personal body-felt-sense-experience of oneself to assist children to develop soft sustained attention, concentration, self-awareness, self-knowledge and self-regulation. In the workshop we do exercises that guide us to pay attention. The only man there leaves. For the last exercise we are given balloons to keep up in the air. I balance the balloon on my body as I move round the twelve windowed room.

I make a pair of hands out of words, to hug, to hold, to hold blood.

I think - how to find intimacy with fear.

I see an image of my dad flying over the top of my body. He has little wings.

I am not this body. I am not this mind.

I have a heavy black stone in my mouth.

I will give it to the ocean.

Wired and sad, I mentally scroll through the ways in which I may have caused this miscarriage. Two weeks before I'd been making some soundworks for an exhibition I am about to share.

I work as an artist.

The sound works are vocal pieces. I'm using my voice only. Some early mornings in a row I sat in a small hall which is beautiful. One wall of the room is windows, covered by peach-colored curtains.

I sit cross legged on the floor and balance an audio recorder on a tower of square orange colour cushions. Each cushion is



a slightly different shade from being bleached by the sun. The cushion tower reaches the height of my mouth. Or just below. I recite the Sanskrit mantra 'So-Hum' on both the inhale and exhale, producing a ghost-like, reed-like whistling. And I push out Sanskrit consonant sounds Ha Hi Hu. To cast out. To throw. To ignite.

I also sing refrains from 'Bob Marley and the Wailers' song 'Natural Mystic.' I sing it as if I was singing into someone's ear.

Making these vocal recordings for the exhibition is unsettling. It's tempting to believe it was this that caused the miscarriage. Or I side eye it as a karmic cleansing. Just try not to do the thing that makes it hurt.

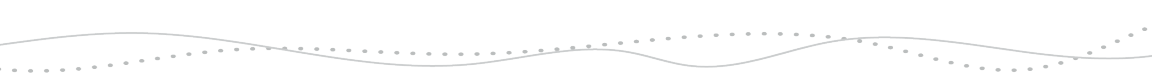
I talk to women who tell me they birthed the soul of a deceased sister, or who in a caring role realised the man they were taking care of was to manifest a child they aborted. I'm told my Vata is too high. That is why this is happening. That the air element pervades my body. That I need to put my hands in the earth. Soil and water welcomes baby.

I switch the lights out and move around on the top of my bed pretending to be soil.

For this same exhibition, a few weeks before, I make other artworks with soft toy monkeys who have tufty furs.

I use a roller to cover monkey with ink. It's front body. Our front body is our feeling centre. Our back body, facing towards the earth, is lifting me toward heaven.

Embryologically, our guts, digestive systems and respiratory organs develop from our front body. Our nervous system and outer layer of skin from our back.



I ink up Monkey. And I massage it face down onto paper. I work from head to toe and then I slowly peel the body back to reveal its print on the page. Startled and electric.

I pour porcelain ceramic slip over another monkey. And dip another. The slip is the consistency of dosa batter. The body of the monkey's go heavy and limp.

These activities unsettle at me too.

Taking me, unaware, to the things that I need.

I am the nature.
Nothing disturbs me.
Nothing can disturb me.

Now.

Tick tock time clock.

I attempt to take control over my weak mind and my weak uterus, of the super-consciousness of my cells. The vitrification of which I perform here. A flasher. Spitting on the lug holes of a wheel.

Stay simple.

Be happy.

Be quiet.

Heat is applied to my lower back. Cold mud placed onto my abdomen. Medicated ghee put up my ass. And warm water flushed up into my large intestine.

I brush my body with tulsi. Patting away at the parts that hold hurt.



She needles me at Kidney 9 - Zhubin - the 'guest house'. I feel it sharply inside my womb, and then I feel faint. I read that Kidney 9 is practised as a karmic pressure point for pregnancy.

I chant chakra clearing mantra. Spine sparkles but I'm then advised against cultivating a downward energy.

Eating greedy handfuls of soaked black raisins.

Feeling nauseous and lacking breath after last night's sex Udit burped me like a baby.

My hand a magnet on their mental.

Shukra - or gold - is considered the seventh Dhatu - or tissue - in the body. It is released during sex. Bright, white and resplendent. The terminal tissue of the body. The most elegant and evolved.

As sugarcane is pervaded with its juice.

As the whole curd consists of ghee.

As oil is present in all parts of the seed.

A small brown creature, like mist but with the outline of limbs.

