



The Only Open Eyes in the Temple

Sushanth Shyamsundar¹

When every forehead lowered to the flame,
I kept my eyes on every painted face.
The adults knew the posture and the name.
I watched the god who occupied the place.

They closed their eyes as proof that they could see.
I opened mine, too curious to be blind.
No thunder punished disobedient me.
No deity reached down to change my mind.

I did not know this undevoutened gaze
would follow me through every form of doubt.
I learned the hymns, accepted all the praise,
yet looking mattered more than finding out.

The others bowed. I watched the camphor climb.
I still look straight at God from time to time.

¹ Writer and Performer, Chennai, India