

The Fruit Stall, Wheeler Road, Bangalore

(30 lines)

bursts out of brick and dust between
the tailor and the hot chip man, the brightest
rainbow this side of K R flower market.

Heads bobbing over the parapet of
papayas, passion fruit and green oranges
wobble and good-morning the ladies
ca-lip, ca-lipping in their chappals,
fluttering saris of persimmon and pear.

Three men, moustaches and pink shirts, who
crew the kiosk little larger than a rowboat,
will tear the crown off a pineapple for you,
tell you the brown bananas, thumb-sized and
honeyed, are the sweetest, insist their
tamarind surpasses all others.

After a heavy rain, when the filter of dust
flattens, midday's cool air smells like
every kind of lassi.

Space for any vendor, an old woman parks her
custard apple cart at the corner; her friend puts
chilli powder in a cup for guavas. Father and son,
one by one, machete the heads off coconuts piled
shoulder high, present each with a straw.

in April, when the mango kings, Badami and Banganapalli,
march into their royal boxes, queues lengthen like
a jackfruit's sinewy flesh; yellow-stained fingers from
canoodling yesterday's pips fondle bristly lychees.

And jamun and mangosteen and carambola
and sounds that wrinkle western ears and
colours that reflect off pale skin
and greet the sun with sweet harmony.