

# **“Kilmoras and Hisalus” & other poems from Mussoorie by Rachna Joshi**

Reading at IHC

From my new book

The poem ‘Kilmoras and Hisalus’,

About my childhood

In Fernlodge Barlowgunj,

And the denizens

Of that village.

By **Rachna Joshi**

**Kilmoras and Hisalus**



Sikandar Hall, Mussoorie  
**Eating kilmoras and hisalus**

On the way to Naala Pani  
Past the Old Brewery  
And Sikandar Hall.

Fern Lodge perched atop a hillside  
With peach and plum trees  
Trailing along a slope.

Below, the cowshed  
Where the gwala comes to milk the cows  
And to keep encroachers at bay  
Who are creeping up the hillside.

Barlowgunj Market  
With Chaman Lala's shop

And the schoolchildren  
From St. George's  
Coming for tuck.

Chachi and Buaji in the kitchen  
On stilts  
Churning out pots of soup.

The old piano in the drawing room  
Which children liked to play.  
Patties and pastries in the evening.  
Granpa's green fingers in the nursery  
Where there were fuschias and begonias  
As well as a beehive.  
Hydrangeas in the gardens

### **Rhododendron Squash**

Mountains are a special place  
Where the mind soars  
Above the mundane  
and how creativity flowers  
among the cedars and rhododendrons.

Granma making rhododendron squash.  
Her deft fingers cutting the flowers  
And cooking them  
In sugar syrup.

This is how I would  
Like to remember  
My childhood  
In Fern Lodge Barlowgunj.  
Mussoorie Modern School



## **Mussoorie Modern School**

I remember

The pipes used to freeze  
In winter in Chaman Estate.

In the hostel dorms  
The matron used to change our clothes.

I remember the Tibetan teacher  
Putting butter and salt  
In her tea  
In the mess.  
Thal jus mukh, kator jus aankh.

Mr. Viegas, the Principal,  
With his wife Shirley and daughter Candy  
In a cottage by the side.  
Framed by flowering beds.

## **Driving to Dehradun**

Driving to Dehradun  
Passing Duckchick  
And Chital at Khatauli.  
Seeing the travelers and itinerants.

Having pakoras and chai,  
With the canal nearby  
And the bridge.

Attending the Doon readings  
At Hotel Aketa in Rajpur.  
With Mountain Echoes, Penguin  
And Doon Library.

Shekhar Pathak, Ruskin Bond  
And Anjali Nauriyal,  
Poetry of the hills.

The stately Rajpur Road  
With Daalanwaala and  
Welham Girl's High School.  
Astley Hall and Ellora's.

The Tibetan monastery  
At the end of the road  
Near Sahastradhara.

Getting caught in traffic jams  
While returning on Easter  
From Dehradun.

### **Seemadwar**

Walking to Seemadwar  
After eating khichri  
And passing Jagdamba's shop  
At Indiranagar.

Mrs. Chaturvedi's house  
And HARC.

Shukla Marriage Bureau  
And Anurag Paudhshala.

Sun Chasers  
Where Sumitaji  
Is having a conversation  
With the owner.  
A budding romance.

## **Ganga Aarati**



Ganga Aarati  
At Haridwar  
With diya floated

On the Ganges,  
And the waving of lamps.  
Chanting and singing.

RACHNA JOSHI

Rachna Joshi is a poet and reviewer who has lived in India and North America. She has written five collections of poems: Configurations (Rupa & Co., 1993); Crossing the Vaitarani (Writer's Workshop, 2008); Travel Tapestry (Yatra Books, 2013); Monsoon and Other Poems (Tethys, 2020); and Unraveling (Authors Press, 2024) She has a master's in Creative Writing from Syracuse University in upstate New York, and has been widely published in magazines and anthologies in India and abroad. She worked as Senior Assistant Editor at the India International Centre, Delhi, for 28 years and lives in Noida, U. P.