

ragai¹

PUNEET DUTT

why did i think of this
versus another
object of my childhood
when asked to remember

thick guard of beatings
bruiser, toller of bells
of bones, when beaten
coaxed their own

pitch of cry

thrummer of feet running next
to next—catch me
snot running from nose
heart of drum
pounding the ear

it was cloth beater
dye mixer, backbone to every factory
of my grandfather's
Ajeet Dyers, Serving since 1952
all the latest colors when
my father brought home
disciplinarian
no light fell upon it
or was it the absence of light
or it drank all of it, every ounce

hunk of wood, witches broom
without bristles
some wood, any wood
without name would land on us

it is the first touch i remember

it was his way of saying *i do so much for you*

hands grip—anything grab
elbows folded into first prayers
this way, begging please
before learning
palms should touch in temples
instead for this rain to stop
why i played in rain
barefoot while thunder raged
i was many coloured by then
thought, how could anyone fear lightning



1. Translates to *dyeing*, in Hindi