There is some sort of divinity in a bath that has failed to escape even the most determined civilisations. (The frustration and misery of the middle ages could be easily explained as just a response to the departure of Roman caldaria.) When after the first few minutes the 50-celcius water becomes tepid and an hour becomes eternity, nothing matters but the heat currents and other guests, and even sub-freezing air feels like a sea breeze against the power of the bath water. I can almost feel the redness of my face. There are early memories of my childhood in those waters, also, but those seem like a vague undercurrent to the rest of the experience. It is a transporting experience, as one becomes a Roman quaestor in British winter escaping from imperial politics in the *termini* of Bath, Oda Nobunaga before the incident of Honno-ji, or the commonest servant of a Sultan’s harem. It is the most ancient and universal human experience.

It is not an experience cheapened by frequent use, or by inexperience; it is prefect in any or no context. This is not a “hot-tub” or normal bath. One washes before entering, and there are no bubbles or disturbances to the water. And it is for all, from the greatest to the meanest of men. It can exist in a large basin, a spring, or even a domestic bath (to conserve water). When done properly, it has nothing to do with the body, but everything to do with being.

Since leaving Japan and Singapore, I have had a hard time finding that. Nowhere else do they make those tubs or communal *onsen* so perfectly tailored to the ethereal; in most other places, hot springs and communal baths are decadent and material, or they just do not exist at all. It is not something I seek out, or desire after particularly, but it is somewhere I can be completely at ease. When everything else requires constant attention or planning or any sort of worry, that is exactly what I need.