

# *The Poetry Forum*

## *An Anthology*

*Volume VIII*

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
LORETO COLLEGE

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# **The Poetry Forum**

**An Anthology**

**Volume VIII**



**Department of English**

**Loreto College, Kolkata**

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## **Editors' Note**

Amidst the darkest of times, poetry is a vital source of sustenance. For a world that is gradually drowning in chaos and hatred, poetry is the ray of hope that teaches us to believe in love and life. As we remain secluded from one another and our own selves, it is the only thing that allows us to express our hearts' desires and find some tranquillity.

The eighth volume of the Poetry Forum Anthology is being published at a time when the world is crumbling into fragments due to the raging pandemic. These poems were written by the poets during the days of quarantine they spent locked up in their rooms. Just like some poems in this collection speak of the turmoil of innocent people in these trying times, some others look back with nostalgia at the times we have left behind, while others bring us joy and the eternal promise of love and hope.

Consisting of poems written in multiple languages, the collection upholds the idea that there are no good or bad poems. The only thing that makes a difference is the will to express ourselves and pen down our unspoken words.

With the hope that our readers will find the poems in this anthology fascinating, here comes a humble offering from The Poetry Forum,

The Poetry Forum: An Anthology, Vol. VIII.

**Kanika Khetan**

**Monami Chatterjee**

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## Tomorrow Is Just Another Day

### I

I have drunk the elixir of life,  
From a 500 ml *Bisleri* bottle.  
Yesterday I birthed my girl,  
In the middle of a baked highway.  
And started walking homeward;  
Even pain was too ashamed-  
To demand to be felt!  
My bloody hands did not feel heavy  
While carrying *Guria*,  
Perhaps the cord of life shared the weight,  
To give me some respite!  
When curtains fell and sleep eluded you,  
I still walked and eluded sleep,  
I still walked with my daughter.  
Gagging on the gnawing pangs of my stomach,  
And like this, I survived!  
No, please do not thank God,  
For I did not ask for His aid.  
I am too poor to afford his mercy;  
I thanked the constant dread, the pain, the burning heat,  
And the desperate longing to reach home.  
Tomorrow is just another day,  
Of treading and stumbling.



The hunger, the scorching sun will wait,  
And watch me and my child overcome miles.  
They will watch how I will survive again,  
For I have drunk the elixir of life!

## II

I have drunk the elixir of life,  
From the last glass of water  
That my wife saved for me.  
Yesterday I saw my jar penniless,  
Yet thanked Him for having a roof atop,  
Until a snarling beast unfurled its wrath,  
Threw away my thatched ceiling,  
And drowned in the cold rain:  
Our last bits of coarse grains, tattered sheets and hope!  
Only floating were the penniless jar and our fates.  
We screamed in the impenetrable dark,  
To let a brother know we need his help,  
What returned was the howl of the colossal beast.  
It lay death traps ahead of our path;  
Pushed us with all its might to throw us apart.  
But we did tread on and on,  
Until we found an abandoned, dilapidated nest.  
Was this our new home?  
This time, not even He answered.  
We shivered like quivering twigs;

More out of fear than out of claggy cold,  
Wishing with every trembling breath  
That this is just a bad dream,  
And we'll wake up to a new, brighter tomorrow.  
But tomorrow is just another day:  
Of discovering our little shop destroyed,  
Of listlessness, penury and drudgery,  
Of knowing that we survived,  
By fighting the ravages of the beast,  
For we have drunk the elixir of life  
And yet, no more alive!

**Debapriya Sarkar**

## **Dreams**

I'll walk you gently into the realm of my love,  
Your hands, warm in mine.  
I'll marvel at you,  
As you drink the sunset of rose gold around you.

When you slowly let the love fold around you,  
I'll drown you in the sea of tenderness that my arms hold for  
you.  
We'll grace the moonless night,  
With the loving moans of our joy,  
Then we will smoke the night away—  
Talking softly about the stars, the shores, the universe and  
the folklores.

**Tahseen Rizwan**

# Ragnarok

## I

A tragedy knocks at my door,  
To lock it from without and lose the precious keys.  
And within a sacred room does unfold,  
The road to destiny.

## II

A raging plague sweeps across the world,  
Snapping the masks against our lips,  
What mockery! What jest!  
Your brother, I stabbed,  
My sister, you burnt alive,  
Our families marvelled,  
Until we asphyxiated each other and fell in love.

They flung our bodies to the depths of the ocean,  
So that little children could run about and play on our  
carcasses,  
And eat an apple grown from our blood,  
That froze in the soil  
Aeons ago.  
I see a bullet within a fruit,  
And it reads religion on it.

But... I mustn't prophesize.  
For I have only two eyes,

And they see nothing but a screen.  
A screen precisely within the grasp of my bloody palm,  
Advocating the theatrics of peace, peace, peace.  
I recite my suicide note,  
While painting sunflowers for my love.  
I am 'Artist'.  
I dictate odes on a rotten leaf,  
And define the universe in intricacies.  
Being sad is my aesthetic.  
I harbour a distaste for this world.  
I harbour a disgust for that love,  
And I lay sprawling on a bed,  
Raping myself for the 365th time today.  
I hate her.  
I hate her.  
I hate her.  
I hate him.  
I hate me.

### III

It's an agonizing wait for Judgement;  
To answer for all the sins of my father,  
And to prove to the world his purity,  
I stand within a stockade.  
My ancestors bow down from the gilded balconies of  
heaven,  
Their sins peak up from the boiling rivers of hell,  
While I see *Kalki* at the very edge of the earth,

Sword in, mounted on his untameable horse,  
Waiting to penetrate.

If I, swearing on a bundle of papers,  
Proclaimed that Pandora was my mother,  
They'd gift me the same box  
And ask me to devour the last existing item.

So, I lie and blame it on the yarn-knitting sisters.  
On the thunderbolt and the three-faced deity on a lotus.  
I blame the giver of fire and the bringer of rains.  
I blame the weapons of *Shakti* and the drum of *Shiva*.  
I render the divine worth dust under our feet.

And thus, from the ashes of my testimony,  
Did Gaia shake in rage,  
Her very insides boiling forth,  
And from her vomiting bosoms rose,  
The tyger that once held a lamb,  
And from the thundering edge of Uranus,  
Came galloping the black-skinned boy who once fed a calf.

The sky threw down fires,  
While the earth exploded like glass,  
An illusion shattered in the face of the universe.

And not a man was spared.  
Yet hope stood still at the centre, waiting for the truth.

I never prophesied Ragnarok.  
It is mere destiny,  
Yours, mine, ours.  
A mere destiny it is.

**Devi Chatterjee**

## **Fall**

From your arms I reached for the skies,  
And as I held your face, your laughter was thunder -  
And a bit of Heaven broke away from its branches, falling  
like summer rain,

On my face.

**Melanie Alexander**



## Vacant

I feel vacant,  
As my soul has left me unnerved.  
Somewhere I want to be;  
But too numbed by pain  
To reach the luminosity.  
Like a wolf, I look into the dark woods,  
Woods that occupy my hollow bones.  
As I have entered into nothingness now,  
I breathe unto this vacancy.  
Soon this emptiness will be ravaged by fire, and I will turn  
into ashes.  
Ashes which will enter into Hell gate, to be invaded by  
demons,  
And I will ooze into oblivion.

**Srijita Das**

## She

Caged as she is,  
Freedom knocks at her door, on a daily basis.  
She peeks at him through the window,  
But can never muster up the courage to go and open the  
door.

Mind you, she is not jailed  
Nor is she Rapunzel-ed.

Rather, in spite of his frequent scolding, she is her daddy's  
little princess.  
Even with his ceaseless snitching, she is her brother's  
heart's empress.

It is not that she is never let out,  
Because she is, alone too.  
Even allowed to post selfies with a pout,  
But always she is off-limits for someone to woo.  
The princess, although, is not worried about that.

You see, she does not believe in the charms of a prince,  
She is more interested in the game of ball and bat,  
And wearing skirts she is always fumbling in.  
Cosmetics and jewellery make her laziness emerge,  
She puts on make-up, says, "Tears, please submerge".

The tears, when her dreams are deemed insignificant and  
are ignored,  
The tears, when even her own father criticizes her jeans and  
t-shirts,  
The tears, when she realizes that her life is not hers to  
command.

Oh! The hardcore irony!  
A grown-up man's princess,  
A young man's empress,  
She fails to be her own mistress!

Infinite battles she fights every day inside her fort,  
Against the people who matter to her the most.  
Just to keep her will afloat,  
And refrain from succumbing to their demands' ghosts.

She is tired now.

Her dreams, her only allies in this forsaken war are tired  
too-  
She longs for a break.  
For freedom.

But she knows, bonding with him could land her a prisoner  
in Pandemonium.

But, contrary to popular belief,  
The princess is not weak,

But wild,  
Nor is she, a little child.  
Her requests are deft and loud.  
Sometimes soft and stout,  
She is too elegant to shout,  
But her demands cannot be disavowed.

She is a woman.  
She is a lady.

She knows when to keep a promise,  
She understands when to compromise on it.

Her tears are her friends,  
Which give her confidence, again and again.  
She treats freedom like a treat,  
Take it in shards and bits.  
She indulges in risky leaps of independence.  
Those are wide enough, wise enough, and cogent enough.

They are universal currencies,  
That aid a heartfelt insurgency!

**Reshmi China**

## Six Impossible Things

I have learnt how to believe-  
In impossible things.

Like the fact that the sun can be trapped,  
In bright smiles.  
And its warmth can be shared,  
In warmer laughter.

Like the fact that the stars can form a bridge,  
And take us away from our fears.  
That the moon does follow us all:  
A silent but faithful friend.

Like the fact that we are all universes;  
Individual and unique.  
We are all infinitesimal wholes,  
We shine and live.

Like the fact that the sky,  
Resides in the souls of people;  
Stormy and resilient, but  
Comforting and safe.

Like the fact that time can be suspended,  
By the touch of gentle fingers.  
The world slows down  
In those moments.

Like the fact that we are all tied,  
Not by the red string of fate,  
But by our own sun rays:  
Forever to each other.

I have learnt how to believe.  
I have learnt how to believe.

**Banan K.M. Irfan**

## A Dead End

Your vicious silence made me feel,  
That I was destined for his chaos.  
I stared into the Darkness,  
And I saw a figure;  
A figure, carved out of my brain.  
Not out of ingenuity, but out of pain.  
I heard the siren calling out to me,  
"Another night with the morbid stare", quoth she.  
I followed the red skies under the rage,  
The stars were lost; the moon submerged.  
The ghost recited the ghastly page.  
The lightning burst; And I felt your words;  
I embraced myself again; My feelings- metaphors.  
You filled my mind with scorpions,  
You led me to the abyss.  
Your tranquil presence lulled me,  
As I've always been yours.  
It lured as if it beckoned to me,  
O Darkness!  
My right eye twitched- a spasm, maybe.

Your dark snares propelled me to this super *cogitare*,

Like the beating of a dead horse.

Away from the locked cages of the corporeal frame; death  
giveth me the best 'scape.

"Did you try?"

"Yes-- I'm satisfied. It's sufficient".

**Marina Thakur**



## The Good Humans

When I say I want to be a good human,  
people often confuse me,  
as someone who sleeps on a winter night,  
keeping her window sill open,  
and every eye ogles  
in my direction,  
like I'm speaking a foreign language.

Maybe 'good' is not even a word,  
to look for  
in between the pages  
of a dictionary.  
It is the only word missing, and is  
hanging from your wardrobe;  
but people care less to wear it  
around their neck.

In a world where people are  
fishing for words like 'charming', 'ambitious'  
and 'witty',  
'good' sounds like too simple and  
regular a human,  
strolling past you,  
always carrying her tranquil look.

But you don't notice.  
Nobody does.  
Because we're too busy being extraordinary people,  
sometimes even starting  
to hate the good side of every coin.

I want every person to believe  
in the goodness of life,  
where it starts within the human heart.  
I want everyone to know that  
Being good is as rare and extraordinary,  
As the pearl inside the shell.

I want the word 'good' to be looked for,  
Every now and then, in every corner of this world,  
So that one day,  
When the teacher asks my 12-year-old son,  
"What do you want to become when you grow up? "  
Among all the 'Lawyer' and 'Engineers',  
He doesn't feel hesitant to say,  
"A good human being" first.

[goodness isn't over yet]

**Suvechha Seth**

## **Absence**

The Park was missing its vigour,  
The benches lay unattended.  
The pristine lake glistened, though,  
Just for the city lights' sake.

I felt sad, not depressed, though,  
To not see the city I have always known.  
It felt as if a crown was snatched off its jewels.

What was it? Was it an apparition?  
A charm of magic, or just a bad note of observation?  
I long to know.

It surely did feel ghastly,  
To be left in a city with none of one's kind.  
Was it a punishment to see the city of my dreams,  
Missing the element of happiness?

I aspire to know.

**Aritrika Roy**

## Love Is Dark

Love is like a dark rose.  
Not black but dark,  
Like a peach, red, a blue hue.  
Not horrifying like a moonless night,  
But it's dark, like a full-blossomed leaf.  
It's beautiful but quirky.

It's not hopeless but it's weird.  
Weird enough to let you down,  
Or, make you a dazzling Sun.  
It's like a disguise of tempting worries.  
You sleep, you wake up and again,  
You sleep with it, clutching it-  
In the narrow veins of your dear heart!

Love is dark but not grave.  
Neither melancholy, nor despair.  
It's more like the pomegranate extract,  
Looks like the blood which recalls a  
Suffering, mutilated martyr,  
But it's not that painful.

Love is the *Ganges* of life,  
Where the unwashed, stained souls,  
Clean their past expectations.  
And revive solace, calmness and gratitude.

An intangible thing so pertinent in life,  
That neither artists nor their art,  
Can capture a single ounce of it.  
Then why call love dark?  
Because dark is deep,  
And deep is love.

**Disha Ganguly**

## *Sora*

[*Written against the backdrop of 1945 bombings in Japan.*]

Fire still churns somewhere distant,  
Countless humans reduced to dust.  
The sky longs to reach,  
And weep like a widow.  
Puts on her mourning attire,  
Carefully pins the veil.

She descends and walks around,  
Feet never touch the ground.  
Cranes her head in search for something,  
Yet to be known to herself.  
She comes across some ruins,  
A home to someone in the past perhaps?  
Wrecked, yet a bright windowpane catches her eye,  
And she can't help but wonder who might have  
sat behind it,  
Taking in everything for the last time.

She halts.  
A sudden gust of wind blows,  
Leaving bits of ash on her face.  
With trembling hands, she fixes her veil,

Sighs and tries to regain her composure.

Remains of a shrine greet her view,  
Paint chipped off from the gate.  
A broken *Waniguchi* lies on the ground,  
Waiting to be picked up, again.  
And awaken the fast asleep *Kami*.

Once a sanctuary, now placid and gone.

She looks up and then at her ethereal feet,  
Ashes of the maimed covered them.  
The rising sun falls into a deep slumber.  
Coldness grips her heart,  
As she feels a twinge in her bosom,  
Crippling and breaking her down.  
Be gone, she cries looking at the unspeakable.

For no more can she gaze,  
At the violent acts of deranged minds.

**Anashuya Hati Baruah**

## I Cannot Write

I sit here,  
Struggling to string together  
Thread-like words,  
Through the needle  
Of my thoughts.

They escape my grasp,  
Like an excited child  
At the country fair.  
Or a slippery soap bar,  
Flailing in my hand.

Poetry seems to be the evasive prize,  
In a game of hide-and-seek.  
Verses dangle out of reach,  
Perched on the highest shelf  
Of the tallest cupboard they could find.

No thoughts of love, no pain of loss  
No bloody strife, find utterance  
Through my pen.  
No lofty words or rhythmic rhymes,  
Grace my lonely lines.



My page begs for the tales of  
Shakespeare, the songs of Keats  
And the haunting keys of Sylvia Plath.  
But finds itself as white and pristine,  
As the snow on mountaintops.

I cannot write, I wonder thus,  
If Poetry is to be,  
The unrequited, childhood love  
I will someday speak of fondly,  
In my dreams.

Questions of which form,  
Or word or tone or sound,  
Plague my mind, greasing my hand.  
I watch helplessly as She slips right through,  
But clamours back to speak to me.

It is then that she whispers,  
"Do not worry if you cannot write,  
Just close your eyes and be.  
Let your heart and soul run free,  
It is there you shall find me."

**Kanika Khetan**

## **Apollo and Cassandra**

*[An elegy on the 200<sup>th</sup> Death Anniversary of John Keats- Is Cassandra  
but a poetess cursed with the fate of her Keats, or is she a poetess  
welcoming the curse of her Apollo?]*

*Cassandra :*

Do you hear the sounds of fear?  
As near and near they grow-  
The frothing mud, skin, bones and blood,  
The crimson flood of woe?  
O Healer God, my love, my Lord,  
With broken chord so grim,  
A song that hung in the lungs you strung,  
Pulsating, sung a hymn.  
O have you heard in bones unheard,  
The word of ocean roll?  
With autumn hair fair aurium fair,  
Why vow then there your soul?

*Apollo :*

My love -aye love, my priestess dear,  
With cruel mercy in argent knife,  
In bones and marrow and flesh and fear,  
Bird-songs I heard in ceasing life.  
An aubade lulled in anguish rife;  
I am the son of a fading sky,  
That sweetly brushes the cheeks of strife.

When softly love your tender sigh,  
Murmurs love as Luna high :  
In sanguine flesh saw Phoenix plume!

I vow by your sweet bluebell eye-  
Of blush -O beloved blush a-bloom.  
O tell me, heart, my clarion call:  
Won't you hate me, my curse at all?

*With every curse of Phoebus' lips,  
She would but smile, and fall, and fall...*

*Cassandra:*

Your honeyed kiss - aye tender kiss,  
Lulled in bliss your song,  
No mortal bard, Arcadian yard,  
O Bard would do you wrong.  
The stars-they knew, they are made of you,  
Of you the comets drawn,  
O swain of Moon, gone far too soon,  
Blessed the moon you looked on!  
What charm, what breath, you found in death,  
That Death would mend you whole?  
With autumn hair fair aurium fair,  
Why vow then there your soul?

*Apollo:*

How deep? How many ages deep

Is your wound, your ache, your pain?  
Life is a dream and death but sleep,  
All things of love but rain.  
Rain that veils you when you weep,  
My love--aye love, my breath,  
Lulled then mortal Keats asleep-  
And immortal Apollo to death.

My life, my death, was writ in brine,  
Undone chords in discord,  
A failed poet, death alone was mine,  
Writ in water, all anguished chords.  
For a poet starved, hemlock is wine -  
An era for an era, a god for a god.

*With every curse of Phoebus' lips  
She'd fall and fall for her Lord.*

*Cassandra:*

O Phoebus, now you pledged your vow -  
Still sore and sweetly weak?  
If your name, O martyr, was writ in water,  
Each drop has kissed my cheek.  
When formless souls pass on flute-holes,  
Pure verse to your lips is sent,  
The Devil sighs for your fears and cries,  
He'd kiss your eyes and repent.

O your altar greets, O Keats, my Keats,  
Sweet Keats, my dream, my goal,  
With autumn hair fair aurium fair,  
Why vow then there your soul?

*Apollo:*

O I had been the Lord of light,  
I was Icarus when he rose-  
I was that bard in his final fight,  
I was Keats when his eyes did close.  
The Nightingale's singing flight;  
Aye love- sweet home to my fear,  
I bear the yolk of years tonight,  
Not alone, with my violets dear.

Why would you, fair sweetheart brave -  
Adorn your final hearse?  
I had felt the mud, the quiet grave,  
My bleeding lungs and verse.  
Daisies on me - O quiet grave!  
Do you hate me not for my curse?

*With every curse of Phoebus' lips  
Cassandra loved her curse.*

*Cassandra:*

And if I say, to you I pray  
For you I sway my beau,

And if I tell the world and yell  
“I’ll walk through hell for you”-  
Would your anguish ease and torment cease,  
Look up from your purple wine.  
By all your verse, I’ll take your curse,  
Clasp your tired hands in mine.  
O to kiss those hands of wearied romance,  
Brush your hymeneal curls for you,  
Behold the vales, the mounts, the gales,  
Bow down their heads for you.  
All verse anew is cursed by you,  
To be loved by few before sleep.  
Still, your altar greets, O Keats, my Keats  
And I, your priestess, shall love you and weep!  
O had you died but open-eyed,  
How the world for you lamented!  
My angel sore, then and now and no more,  
By those eyes shall Eros be tormented.

O Phoebus divine, with war-paint verse blazing in your soul,  
I am a wound, O love, my love-aye love, pray stitch me  
whole!

*No curses fell on His dying lips,  
Half dust, half deity, one soul.*

**Somoshree Palit**

## Monotony

The clock silently ticks away,  
Like a discarded frame on the wall.  
I pay it no heed.

Dust, like a protective lover, wraps up the glass in its  
minuscule arms,  
Maybe to convince it that it is of some use.

The incessant tick is a constant annoyance.  
And when the night is far too long,  
And sleep doesn't stop by,  
The tick turns into a bully's laughter,  
Cruel and maniacal.

The concept of day and night,  
Changed from a beautiful play of the sun and the moon,  
To just breathing till the heart beats no more.  
Oppressed in my own skin,  
Memories cutting through every inch of me,  
The knives feel like tiny needles now.

Music was a joy,  
Now, these are just lyrics that validate my feelings.  
It tampers with the silence,

Just to remind me that my senses haven't become senile.  
My books now give me paper cuts,  
And hopes of a hopeless love.  
A tunnel, daunting- yet making me lust over the light that is  
at the end,  
But when the run is over,  
Fire burns,  
Started from each word,  
Woven into a loveless dream.

And all that tasted sweet, turned bitter,  
The silence is high-pitched.  
My favourite things have become levers,  
And I stood petrified for too long,  
Now I am just a rusted machine.

**Kajoree Sarkar**



## **An Eve in the Wilderness**

I drove my car alone,  
Down the winding hillside ways,  
When the sky had darker grown,  
At the sunset hours of the day.

With soft radiance, red beams  
Kissed my windshield- shy, they  
Blushed, as I did when my dreams,  
Led me far and far away.

A journey, miles yonder,  
To feed my wanderlust,  
Steered afar to wander,  
Wild, yet I was not lost.

The roads unknown, untravelled,  
A strange part of the world,  
Thick outgrowths of forests dwelt,  
On roadsides straight and twirled.

The wheels in motion swift,  
To keep pace with the winds,  
The fragrance borne to lift,  
The senses and the minds.

To those stations I raced, that-  
Wert unexploited before;  
The fact that nature hath,  
Wilderness to explore.

The evening linnets in flight,  
Their songs so sweetly heard;  
The darkling sky in sight,  
I felt, I too, was a flying bird!

Unperceived beauties that live,  
In terrains- rough and rustic;  
The landscape lone and still-  
An escape for the lunatic.

Feeble powers of the heart,  
At the mercy of romance,  
In the skies, on the earth,  
On the horizon in trance.

And now as the rain mucked  
The eve heavens above,  
With joy at once, I jerked,  
Aye! Nature's lap has love.

Hark! To happy carollings,  
That rule the countryside,

Thence I defy crowded routings,  
Forever uncharted reside.

I defy the journeys unfree.  
Now I feel the eve depart,  
And I feel that I can be-  
My own unique piece of art!

**Saima Taskeen**

## Hands

Soft, caressing.  
Familiar hands reach out to me,  
From the darkness that plagues the unknown.  
Strangely enough, it reeks of hope.

They're right in front of me,  
No fear, nor uncertainty,  
Aching to cradle me from the world.  
"Just reach out," they say, I'll be pulled back to safety.

My hands drift away from my body,  
They float like a lone bottle in an open sea.  
The message? It's lost somewhere.  
Somewhere, where some love used to be.

Suddenly, the current chains my feet,  
I'm drowning, the waves washing over me.  
Resurfacing to sink, breathing to choke,  
I ask, why has fear left me?

Fighting, kicking, surrendering,  
Perhaps to the nostalgic arms of Death,  
"I'm an old friend," she says,  
Whispering a promise of the unknown.

The hands still wait patiently;  
I could paint every crooked line of theirs,  
Blindfolded and with a knife to my mind and a gun to my heart,  
Like it was second nature.

Still safe, still familiar.  
If only they could touch the cold lips of Comfort,  
Softly, fleetingly,  
And usher her to depart.

I would sigh,  
Kiss these words and close my eyes,  
As I pick out a rusty old coffin,  
And bury them somewhere other than my mind.

Their funeral would be a celebration,  
Of freedom, escape and liberation.  
From the roaring agony of time, who begs to stop,  
Silence would greet her, and us all.

My hands drift away from my body,  
They float like a lone bottle in an open sea.  
The message? A voice echoes, "In the darkness, do you see?"  
Blindfolded, I begin my journey.

**Annweshaa Chatterjee**

## **Infinity**

Swathed in their flesh, gazing at the airglow,  
Luna illuminating their soul, and  
The cool breeze made their hearts freeze,  
Enchanted by their glittering eyes.  
Tears rolled as warm as their hands fixed,  
Engrossed in the moment of infinity,  
Their lips stitched as they lost the world,  
Love as pious as their birth.  
The lover whispers to her beloved,  
"We are the presence and absence-  
You are me, me you  
We are infinity!"

**Bidisha Majumdar**

## To the Days I Could Not Bid Farewell To

Time halts every now and then,  
and looks at me in the eyes.  
How much ignorance does it take,  
to bury all you want, and live a life of lies?

Often have I questioned myself,  
about the days left behind,  
when the world was elastic,  
catapulting me from joy to joy — till I could breathe no  
more,  
with exultation enveloping my heart like-  
the scent of fresh jasmine;  
the rain that caresses the parched summer soil.  
Fatigued of the persistent chaos,  
I let my mind stray — it chooses to drift to the past again.  
Streaks of careless fists in the air, a lousy swing of the  
cricket bat-  
and the tirade of an angry neighbour,  
flash and disappear.  
Days of my old grandma's tales are long gone.  
The hum of crickets, squeaks of spotted ochre lizards  
and buzzing mosquitoes remain — and remind.

I could not bid farewell to these days in time,  
and today, they return to me,  
as I sit — forlorn and restless,  
miles away from my childhood,  
lingering a while longer like the little shepherd boys,  
who graze their sheep long after dusk sets in.

**Debasmita Dutta**



## Stay

Sometimes you will just want to disappear,  
With the 'swish and flick' of a wand.  
And shrink into a minuscule particle,  
Or crawl back into a shell, unharmed.  
Hoaxed by people who will make you feel-  
Like a bed of roses trampled underfoot.

Some days you will wait for the sunlight,  
To drape your body and build a fine cocoon.  
But all you will see is the thick effervescence of darkness,  
That never dissipates and leaves a stench,  
Of hopelessness on the skin- you begin to wonder,  
If you are any less than the stars that keep the night sky  
illuminated.

There will be days when you will silently  
Take the bouquet of flowers off your table,  
And there will be no one to notice it.  
You will close yourself up in a book,  
And a mug of freshly brewed coffee.  
Or confide in the pages of a diary,  
And strangely enough, no friend will know it.

It is on days like these,  
You will need to choose yourself.  
Over and over again.  
Beyond everything. Beyond anything.  
You will have to love the vermilion hues of the sky,  
As much as you love the azure ones.  
You will have to learn to make a kite  
Out of your problems and make them soar high.  
You will have to learn to stuff flowers into those vessels  
That hold grief and guilt,  
And let them blossom along with you.  
You will have to remember  
To love yourself enough,  
And stay, because it's easy to disappear in the fog.

And the world still needs every particle  
You hold within.  
Stay.

**Esha Dasgupta**

## The Room

The room I left behind last season,  
Small and crowded and dirty-  
It had quite a lot of visitors,  
Greeting cards stamped with fingerprints,  
And huge silver vases with withered flecks of gold;  
And then there were bread and butter and happiness,  
So much so that it almost overflowed our cups.

But you see, the room was never mine,  
It was for him and her and them and me.  
Several springs have passed since,  
I never would've left it,  
And I should never look back.

Looking back and then losing it is a sin,  
So grave that you cannot even imagine committing it.  
This was placed over the mantelpiece and that,  
Under the pillow, in the furthest corner of the house.  
It's still there and it reeks.

I often fear the neighbours, partly because they're people,  
And partly because they know I know.  
Leaving behind an urban wreck and soot of being,  
For a life as beautiful as a jigsaw puzzle, is no excuse!

And they, the neighbours, often say that you cannot weave  
stories out of gibberish,

They have seen me through stories of them and the room,

And when the party was over,

They left and shortly after,

I did too.

**Swarnali De**

## **The Spirit of the Prairie Replies to Persuade the Reluctant Nymph**

Although the world won't remain young,  
The tale of your love will for ages be sung.  
Yield to his love or forever you'll rue,  
For every sweet word he speaks is true.

Time flows, as rocks wither and flesh ages,  
Flock does roam as the river shifts and rages.  
Philomel dies to be born again and sings,  
Nature's never quiet, but has flows and flings.

Live on the shades, the rosy petal guards,  
Winter brings summer, loving regards.  
His lovely verses and brave heart of gall,  
With your touch, shall stay young for all.

The gowns, the slippers and the caps he made,  
The roses, the kirtle and the posies, he said  
May soon wither with time and become rotten,  
The love they bear shall never be forgotten.

Prithee, don't come for the ivy belts and buds,  
Neither for the jewelled clasps and studs.  
Look beyond and see the promise they hold,  
All the love in his heart and thoughts, so bold.

Youth may age with days but love still heeds,  
Immortal are the memories of joyous deeds.  
If his call of eternal love might thy heart move,  
Then come live with him and be his love.

**Sharmi Chakraborty**

## What is Pain?

As I feel her soft fingers lifelessly leaving my grip,  
I feel a pounding in my head.  
I won't be able to hear her sweet voice,  
Won't be able to look at her smile anymore,  
Won't be able to tell her-  
how much I loved her, despite our arguments,  
That is what pain means to me.  
To see someone mercilessly suffering,  
yet take the very Lord's name who gave her this fate.  
To watch death as closely as yours,  
and still crave for not existing on your toughest days,  
To smile and put up a show,  
To those who can't even differentiate between the real and  
pretence,  
That is what pain means to me.

Those days when breathing becomes heavier-  
than the weight on your shoulders,  
Those days when lonely tears-  
find their solace past midnight on your pillow covers.

Those days when the thought of laughter -  
seems more of a liability than that of an asset.  
Pain for me is when thoughts of self-blaming,

visit more often than self-praising.

Why is it like the way it is?

Why does Pain always remind of its presence,  
yet remains so underrated?

What does it seek from you?

Maybe your rebellious desires or worse, that innocence of  
your heart.

Times when you set the alarm,  
just praying for not opening your eyes the next day-

Times when promises deceive your reality,  
with another lie as the main substitute-

Times when the darkness in your room,  
hauntingly reminds you of nothing but nightmares.

Times when breathing continues along with the striking ache-  
Of a needle in my heart,

Times when time itself becomes the biggest concern to my  
freedom.

Times like these are worse when the pain does not subside,  
rather spreads like infectious  
venom in our veins.

**Rea Sen**



## On First April, 2021

*[Realising that I am an ex-student on the birthday of my alma mater]*

We used to dream. Expansive and bright,  
tinged with sunny pink, rosewood simmer of wants.

How grand a treat to witness,  
after school reopens for a new session.

All cups of joy held,  
mouths prying open to take in more than  
cream, ice, flavours,  
vanilla or strawberry

– teen mouths full of nostalgia,  
and

lathered, softened ecstasy  
as to be sensed in lost futures,  
days like

today  
that I realize how I can touch  
all those days – shedding  
bits of glistening rain pearls  
all over me.

As moonstones monsooned,  
These moments plotted mutinies  
to rebel against this heavy chest –  
However, this never stops as I echo

Within,  
“Happy Birthday Alma Mater”  
and yet,  
There are some things  
that I cannot tap;

Memories and some gaps unfilled, some incandescence.  
I never knew,  
how concrete and walls could uphold spirit,  
and heart,  
and senses-  
I look, still, staring at a picture of my school, and  
the sky as it unfurls there bright and twilight yet,  
Stone-faced and  
Expansive.

And the distances draw closer somewhere,  
Somewhere this belonging grows stronger,  
Still, we love so much, and more and  
Unending more.  
Our *Golconda*.

Our frozen selves  
as  
they were.

Our walled and hearty and preserved and marbled – memories.

**Srijani Mitra**

## Royalty

In a room of heads with crowns askew,  
I would love to be crowned, too.  
Do they sell royalty on the streets,  
Of countries one can hardly name?  
Or is it a complimentary drink offered in First Class,  
To those who feed on hereditary fame?  
Is it a ticket found in clubs, where men play golf,  
And claim that their country is below average?  
Is it the price tag of the purses bought by ladies,  
Who detest politics because of their privilege?

Is it found in fast cars or cosmetics too pure,  
For skins that can ill-afford them?  
Does it lie in the pain of realising,  
There's victory promised in every game?

Students at school wear uniforms every day,  
Yet are never told how royalty lies in the DNA.  
Or how the world isn't what it seems –  
One builds a throne on the other's broken dreams.  
Can royalty buy you Providence to tame familiar skies,  
Taking you to the world of beautiful lies?

**Prakriti Basu**

## Shadow

What a riot in my head!  
Such bonfires thrive!  
There's music around them,  
Tunes from worlds never thought to have been found.  
There's laughter and beer,  
And merry and dare.  
Look--the bonfires!  
They're raging and howling,  
They keep raging and howling.

They could take such shapes:  
Like a lyre under my bruised fingers,  
I want to weave a melody out of each.  
Play them and mould them,  
The flames: I love to control them.  
Shoot them up in the sky;  
Show the world what cosmos lies within me.

What a world it is-  
That loves and understands me.  
Biding time to hear a word from me.  
I'll show them, I'll show them:  
What cosmos lies within me.

Oh no, no, no!  
Why, you ask!  
I don't know- don't know.  
There's something behind me.  
I feel so much-  
I always feel so much!  
Raw, real, red-  
There's a scream!  
-Was that inside me?

I know you want to know.  
I love how you love me.  
Did you hear me?  
Stop, stop.  
I cannot speak *Me*.  
I don't wish to speak *Me*.  
I *dare* not speak *Me*.  
But... did you hear me?

**Sherline Modak**

آئینے بیا دیتی ہے۔۔۔

### *Aaine Bayaan Deti Hai*

یہ دھندلے جالیوں میں لپٹے آئینے اب ہی یہ بتا دیتی ہے۔۔۔  
کوئی ہے جو اب بھی فقط کردار میں دلچسپی رکھتا ہے۔

(Translation)

Yeh dhundle, jaaliyo me lipte aaine, ab bhi yeh baya deti  
hai...

Koi hai jo ab bhi faqat kirdaar me dilchaspi rakhta hai .

**Kaneez Zehra**

## विरह से मिलन तक

दिलों की बेताबीयों के बनते-मिटते नज़ारों  
से आज हम घिर चुके हैं सारे,  
फासलों के चिलमन में छुपे हैं -  
हमारे हिज़्र के कारण सारे।  
आज हम सब अलग हैं,  
कुर्बत के मारे हैं,  
अपने अक्स की खोज में,  
क्या हर पल हम भटकते नहीं है?  
एक दूसरे का साथ ,  
हम सबको चाहिए आज;  
माज़ी से लड़ने ,  
कल को जीतने।  
क्या एक- दूसरे का हाथ थाम के  
नहीं जीत सकते ,दुनिया को, साथ?  
उम्मीद मत हारो-  
औज़ारों से लड़ो।  
सुकून के वो पल ,  
आएंगे बहुत जल्द ;  
जब फ़लक के रुहानी गीत,  
हम सब मिलकर गाएंगे धरती पर ।

**Soumili Konar**

## और वक्त गुज़रता गया

घुटनों पर चलते-चलते,  
माँ की गोद में पलते-पलते,  
फुसलाने पर हँसते रहे हम,  
सबकी नज़रों में बसते रहे हम,  
'और वक्त गुज़रता गया | '

स्कूल में पढ़ते-पढ़ते,  
दोस्तों से लड़ते-लड़ते,  
मन को लुभाते रहे हम,  
यारी निभाते रहे हम,  
'और वक्त गुज़रता गया | '

कॉलेज में मरते-मरते,  
बस संघर्ष करते-करते,  
हर पल रोते रहे हम,  
सब कुछ खोते रहे हम,  
'और वक्त गुज़रता गया | '

दफ्तर में गालियां खाते-खाते,  
कुछ पुराने गीत गाते-गाते,



अकेले जीते रहे हम,  
रातों को पीते रहे हम,  
'और वक्त गुज़रता गया ।'

किसी से दिल जोड़ते-जोड़ते,  
अपने बचपन को छोड़ते-छोड़ते,  
ज़माने के रंग में ढलते रहे हम,  
मोम की तरह पिघलते रहे हम,  
'और वक्त गुज़रता गया ।'

ज़िंदगी को काटते-काटते,  
कुछ गम , कुछ खुशियां बांटते-बांटते,  
कभी सोते , कभी जागते रहे हम,  
बस यूँही भागते रहे हम,  
'और वक्त गुज़रता गया ।'

**Sanjana Khullar**

## প্রেরণা

ঈশ্বরের শ্রেষ্ঠ সৃষ্টি তুমি,  
আন্তরিকতায় ভরা।  
তোমার মনে জেগে ওঠে,  
মাতৃত্বের ছোঁয়া।  
তোমার কোমল স্পর্শে,  
তুমি জগৎ করো আলো।  
সর্ব গুনে পরিপূর্ণ নারী  
তুমি দেশের চালক।  
সবকিছু গড়ে তোল তুমি,  
ভালবাসা দিয়ে।  
পরম সুখে ঘর বাঁধো,  
নিজের স্বার্থ ভুলে।  
দেশের কল্যাণের জন্য সেবা করো তুমি,  
স্বাধীনতা সংগ্রামী হয়ে।  
রুখে দাঁড়াও ইংরেজের পথ,  
আত্মবলিদান দিয়ে।  
তুমি হলে শক্তিরূপা,  
তুমি হলে জন্মদাত্রী,

তুমি হলে স্থান আরামের,  
তুমি সেই প্রেরণাদাত্রী।  
উন্নতির শিখরে তুমি,  
অগ্রগতির পথে।  
অন্যায়ের সাথে আপোষ করনি তুমি  
দায়িত্ব নিয়েছ হাতে।  
শত কোটি প্রণাম জানাই,  
তোমাকে সেই নারী  
আলোর পথে এগিয়ে যাওয়ার  
তুমি সেই কাভারী।

**Dishani Bhattacharyya**

## অনেক কাজ বাকি

ভাবনা তোমার মেলে ধরো,  
মাটির কাছাকাছি-  
সুখের দুঃখ কেন করো,  
ভাবো বৃথাই বেঁচে আছি?  
সুখসংশয়ে থাকো,  
সেই কাঁটা তোমার নিজের,  
বিশ্বের ডাকে ছুটে এসো  
ফুল ফোটাও পাথরকুচির  
গেরিলা যুদ্ধ চলছে যেখানে,  
সবুজ দিগন্ত আড়ালে;  
গোপনে কাস্তে কাজ বদলায়-  
এইতো 'চে' শেখালে!  
কাজ রয়েছে ছড়ানো ছিটানো  
কাজের জন্য মানুষ,  
হাতুড়ির ঘায়ে পাথর ফাটানো  
বিপ্লব আজ জানুক!

**Amrita Das**

## মনের গহীনে একাকিত্বরা

অবচেতন মনে আধখোলা জানলাটার দিকে হঠাৎই চোখ  
পড়লো।

পর্দার ফাঁক দিয়ে আমার অলস দুইচোখ,  
যেন কোনো অজানা বোঝাপড়ার সন্ধানের জানান  
দিচ্ছিলো।

অকারণেই দৃষ্টি গেল ওই আকাশের দিকে।  
মুক্ত, নিষ্পাপ, আবেগভরা সেই আকাশে,  
যেন শূন্যতা বিরাজ করছে।

আমার সেই চেনা আকাশ যেন আজ বড় অভিমানী।  
মুক্তির স্বাদ বুঝি আজ মনে ধরেনা তার।  
ঈশান কোণে জমে থাকা মেঘ,  
বুঝি এবার অভিমান ভাঙিয়ে জমানো কান্নার আশ্রয় নেবে।  
তবে কি এই মুক্তি আজ বেরঙিন?  
সেও কি আজ আমারই মতো একা?  
মনের দরজায় খিল দিয়েই আমরা বোধহয় স্বাধীন ছিলাম।  
জোর করে চাওয়া মুক্তি যেন গুরুত্বহীন, নামহীন,  
অস্তিত্বহীন।

তাই বোধহয় আমার সেই অনেক দিন চেনা,  
এক মুঠো আকাশ আজ এতো অভিমানী।।

Olivia Chakraborty

## স্বপ্নের হাতছানি

একটা ঘোলাটে আকাশ।  
রোদে পোড়া পিচের রাস্তা,  
শেষ সম্বল হিসেবে-  
কয়েকটা শুকনো ঝুটি।  
একটা ছেঁড়া চটি।  
কাঁধে বোঝা।  
খানিকটা বেঁচে থাকার ইচ্ছা-  
আর অবিরাম হেঁটে চলা।

রাতের হাইওয়ে।  
গাড়ীর হেডলাইটের আলোগুলো,  
ছুয়ে যায় এক- একবার।  
ক্লান্ত পথ, বিষন্ন অন্ধকারের মাঝে,  
একটা স্বপ্নের হাতছানি।

দু- মুঠো গরম ভাত,  
একটু কলাইয়ের ছাতু।  
একটা ভাঙাচোরা ঘর-  
উঠোনে কয়েকটা জীর্ণ গাছ।  
মৃত্যুর ছায়া এখনো সেখানে পড়েনি।

এই একটা স্বপ্ন তাড়া করে বেড়ায়।  
বিরামহীন পথে একমাত্র সঙ্গী-  
পুলিশের লাঠির ঘা,  
বিষাক্ত গ্যাসের স্পর্শ।  
সমস্ত শরীরে তীব্র জ্বালা।  
তবু চোখ বুজলে-  
এই একটা স্বপ্ন।

রেললাইনে মাথা রেখে শোয়া-  
কিছুটা শান্তি-  
হঠাৎ তীব্র শব্দ।  
ট্রেনের চাকা শরীর ছোঁয়ার আগের মুহূর্তে-  
আবার ফিরে আসে স্বপ্নটা।

খবরের হেডলাইন।  
কবি, সাহিত্যিক, বুদ্ধিজীবীদের,  
আলোচনার রসদ-  
তবু বাড়ি ফেরা হয়না।  
তবু বাসের টিকিটের দাম আকাশছোঁয়া,  
ট্রেনে পা ফেলার জায়গা থাকেনা।

স্বপ্নটাকে আর কিছুতেই ধরা যায়না।  
শুধু অবিরাম হেঁটে চলা।  
মৃতপ্রায় দেশ,  
মৃতপ্রায় মনুষ্যত্বের-  
ভিড় ঠেলে এগিয়ে যাওয়া।  
চোখে এখনো সেই একটা স্বপ্ন।  
আজীবন-  
সেই একটা মরীচিকা খুঁজে ফেরা।

**Monami Chatterjee**



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