

July, 2026

READER'S CHOICE

A Multilingual, Multidisciplinary global magazine



Poetry
Fiction
Interview
Travelogue
Technology
Cuisine & many more

Beyond Borders, Beyond Words

VANDANA KUMAR

Where poetry meets purpose and words become bridges across cultures.

Poet, translator, editor, educator, and cultural ambassador, Vandana Kumar has transformed her passion for literature into a journey that spans continents, languages, and artistic disciplines. With an award-winning body of work, international recognition, and an unwavering commitment to nurturing literary voices, she continues to build bridges through the power of words. In this special cover feature, Reader's Choice celebrates a woman whose creative spirit proves that literature knows no boundaries.

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Reader's Choice is a quarterly multilingual and multidisciplinary magazine devoted to literature, thought, culture, research, and creative expression. As a platform that brings together diverse voices across languages and disciplines, it seeks to encourage dialogue, reflection, and intellectual exchange.

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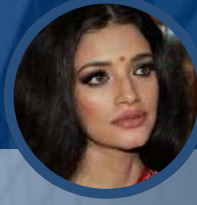
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A team of passionate creatives bringing bold ideas to life and delivering limitless possibilities for every project.

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EDITORIAL

As we turn the pages of another vibrant issue of Reader's Choice, July arrives with its unique blend of warmth, reflection, discovery, and inspiration. It is a month that invites us to pause, explore new horizons, and reconnect with the stories that shape our world and ourselves.

This edition is a celebration of curiosity in all its forms. Within these pages, you will find compelling stories that touch the heart, thought-provoking perspectives on global affairs, and insightful explorations of technology that continue to redefine the way we live, work, and communicate. In an era of rapid transformation, understanding change has become just as important as embracing it.

For those with a passion for exploration, our travelogue section captures unforgettable journeys and cherished moments from diverse landscapes and cultures. Every destination tells a story, and every traveler returns with a richer understanding of the world.

Our mythology and culture features revisit timeless wisdom that continues to resonate across generations. Ancient narratives, symbols, and traditions remind us that while times change, the human quest for meaning remains eternal.

Language lovers will enjoy our dedicated section that celebrates the beauty, evolution, and nuances of words. Poetry enthusiasts will find verses that inspire reflection, evoke emotion, and reveal the extraordinary within the ordinary.

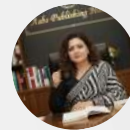
No journey through culture is complete without food. Our cuisine segment explores flavors, traditions, and culinary stories that connect communities and preserve heritage through generations. Every recipe carries with it a memory, a history, and a sense of belonging.

At Reader's Choice, we believe that knowledge becomes meaningful when it sparks conversation, creativity, and connection. This issue has been carefully curated to offer not only information but also inspiration, encouraging readers to think deeply, dream boldly, and appreciate the richness of the world around them.

As always, we remain grateful for your continued support, enthusiasm, and engagement. Your love for reading is what keeps this platform alive and thriving. May this July issue bring you moments of learning, wonder, and joy.

Happy Reading!

Warm Regards,



Sunita Paul

Editor-in-chief,
Reader's Choice Magazine
MD, Aabs Publishing House



VANDANA KUMAR

The Quiet Alchemy of Words

In an age that often measures success through noise, speed, and visibility, some individuals quietly create enduring legacies through dedication, craft, and an unwavering belief in the power of words. Vandana Kumar belongs to that rare category of literary voices whose journey is marked not only by achievement but also by authenticity.

VANDANA KUMAR

AWARD-WINNING POET |

INTERNATIONAL LITERARY VOICE

From New Delhi to the Global Literary Stage

Conceptualized by:-

Sunita Paul

Ceo, Aabs Publishing House

Editor-in-Chief, Reader's Choice

A poet, translator, educator, film enthusiast, independent film producer, recruitment consultant, and literary mentor, Vandana Kumar has built a creative life that effortlessly bridges disciplines. Yet, at the heart of her multifaceted identity lies a simple and enduring passion: storytelling in its many forms.

Based in New Delhi, Vandana's literary footprint extends far beyond geographical boundaries. Her poetry has found homes in an impressive array of national and international journals, magazines, and literary platforms across continents. From India to Europe, North America to Turkey, her words have resonated with readers who recognize in her work a blend of introspection, social observation, emotional honesty, and subtle wit.



What makes her journey particularly remarkable is its organic evolution. Rather than pursuing recognition, she pursued expression. Recognition followed naturally.



WEAVING WORLD THROUGH WORDS

Her debut poetry collection, *Mannequin Of Our Times*, emerged as a significant milestone in contemporary poetry. The collection not only garnered critical appreciation but also received prestigious literary honors, establishing her as a distinctive poetic voice. The book's continued journey through translations and international readership reflects the universal relevance of its themes. It is a testament to poetry's ability to transcend language, culture, and geography.

Yet awards and accolades tell only part of the story.

Behind every publication and recognition stands a creator deeply committed to literary engagement. Vandana's contributions extend beyond writing into nurturing literary communities, mentoring aspiring poets, serving on juries, participating in international festivals, and engaging in meaningful conversations about the future of literature. Whether addressing students, contributing to literary discussions, or representing India at global literary forums, she brings the same sincerity that characterizes her poetry.



Her work in cinema journalism further reveals an inquisitive mind drawn to narratives in all their forms. For her, poetry and cinema are not separate worlds but complementary ways of understanding human experience. Both seek to illuminate the overlooked, question the familiar, and capture fleeting moments of truth.



RECOGNITION THAT REFLECTS IMPACT

Perhaps one of the most admirable aspects of her journey is her ability to remain accessible despite growing international recognition. As a poetry editor, mentor, and career guidance expert, she continues to encourage emerging voices, believing that literature flourishes when knowledge and opportunities are shared generously.



In recent years, her presence on international literary platforms has strengthened India's cultural representation abroad. Through festivals, translations, panel discussions, and collaborative projects, she has become a literary ambassador in the truest sense—not through official designation alone, but through the consistent quality of her work and her commitment to cross-cultural dialogue.



The story of Vandana Kumar is not merely one of accomplishments. It is the story of perseverance, curiosity, and creative evolution. It reminds us that literature remains a living bridge between people, languages, and ideas. In a rapidly changing world, voices like hers continue to affirm the enduring relevance of poetry and the arts.

THE FINAL WORD

As Reader's Choice presents this issue's cover feature, we celebrate not only an award-winning poet and literary professional but also a cultural contributor whose work demonstrates how words, when crafted with care and conviction, can travel farther than we ever imagine.

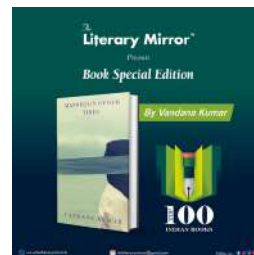


For Vandana Kumar, the journey continues—one poem, one conversation, one story at a time.



**Melissa A. Chappell
Reviews Vandana
Kumar's 'Mannequin
of Our Times', YQR
September Special
Edition, 2025**

**Mannequin of Our Times by Vandana
Kumar, World Inkers Printing and
Publishing, 2023**



"Across languages, cultures, and continents, Vandana Kumar continues to prove that poetry is not merely written—it is lived."

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



Your poetry has been published in more than 150 national and international platforms. How has your poetic voice evolved over the years, and what themes continue to inspire you today?

Before I answer your first question, let me Thank You for the interview and the thought-provoking questions. We are normally caught up with our daily routine as in the constant writing, submitting to websites and journals etc. Sometimes these interviews serve as a wonderful point for reflection...for us to think of art and the processes, that shape our written words. Coming to your first question I think that my poetry has evolved not so much in words or style or suddenly writing in a different way or using fancier words – but more in the way my poetry gets created –it's not about being clever with words but about the core –the truth that is emerging from the poetry – even if it a poem that is humorous or on a visit to a dentist –something reflecting on our fractured society and times –beyond the self.



Your award-winning collection *Mannequin of Our Times* has also been translated into Greek. What was it like seeing your work cross linguistic and cultural boundaries?

By the time we have actually got down to the interview, I would like to add that *Mannequin Of Our Times* has also been translated now into French and is now available on digital platforms. We recently had the book launch of the French Edition at the Alliance Française de Delhi. To see your work across linguistic and cultural boundaries is an inexplicable feeling. It comes back to the issue of the limitations of languages and the cultural nuances that get lost in places where English is not a native language. English is not our native language too, but then that is a separate issue. English I refer to in the post-colonial context of Indian- English authors. There are so many things that another culture will not get, for instance certain customs and practices that are Indian and which have no equivalent in a foreign language, but there are far more things that with translation reach other countries and continents and they get a taste of something that they could never have without the translation. Beyond linguistic and cultural boundaries is what truly art is about.

As a translator, poet, and publishing consultant, how do these different roles complement and enrich one another in your creative journey?

Whatever be the different roles, eventually all roads are about art. As a poet it's about engaging with oneself and one's own truths and arriving at a vision of the world. As a translator it is about trying to enter the mind space of another artist conveying the soul or essence of the writer's words to its new audience. As a publishing consultant it is about identifying voices and knowing that these voices need to be heard and reach a larger audience.

You received the Global Icon Award at the Global Vision Summit 2025. What did this international recognition mean to you personally and professionally?

There is no denying that the Global Vision Summit meant a lot to me -more than it being about the awards in one's kitty, it was about the satisfaction that one's work – as in one's poetry have reached a global audience and more importantly resonated. Personally, and professionally, it was about greater exposure and more avenues in terms of opportunities for submission to anthologies etc that opened up for me.



Having worked as a recruitment consultant alongside your literary pursuits, how have your interactions with people influenced your understanding of human nature and poetry?

My poetry is basically organic and spontaneous and happens largely from my observation of human nature. As a recruitment consultant, and in everyday life I find myself constantly observing people and just about everywhere -whether they are fidgeting at the doctor's chamber and aimless flipping through magazines as they wait their turn or guarding their baggage at airports and railway stations. What is slowly changing us all in today's times given the alienation because of social media and given the fractured society and excessive consumerism, is something that always keeps me engaged. I too, am flawed and I try understand my relationship with myself and others in this context.

As the Publishing Consultant of Aabs Publishing House and Writer's Press, what are some of the most common mistakes aspiring authors make when preparing their manuscripts for publication?

As a literary consultant for a couple of Publishing houses, including yours, I have had the opportunity to read a vast number of manuscripts. I have sourced manuscripts not just from India but from Serbia, America and Singapore and I am glad that the publishers agreed with my vision. Some of these manuscripts have been just a delight - minimalist and so deeply poetic where the aesthetics are concerned and never verbose. The other side of the story is equally true where a lot of manuscripts don't quite make it. The common mistakes are just blindly copying other's styles -whether it is of a contemporary established author or of another time period - this is seen across all genres- poetry, short story writing, novels, non -fiction and even motivational books. There is nothing original in the world in a sense and we all draw inspiration from somewhere -but getting inspired by someone's else art and arriving at your own form and style and lifting are two different things. Another is the new plague of AI - using AI as a tool for inputs for titles, grammar check etc. is different from lifting of AI. Today people have begun to sense when something is lifted and so we tell the writers to try find their own voice.



As Poetry Editor of Reader's Choice magazine, what qualities immediately capture your attention when reviewing a poem for publication?

I am drawn to the minimal -when the poetry is not stating things obviously and becoming in the process a poetry version of an essay-say for example poetry on the environment -it has to have the core and essence of poetry writing and searching for truths intact and not just be something woke or simply because it is a relevant social issue.

You are also an indie film producer and cinephile. In what ways do cinema and poetry intersect for you, and how does one art form influence the other?

There is poetry in silence, poetry in conversation, poetry in shadow and light. Poetry in everything and everyone around us – same also with cinema. It is not without reason that great cinema is called deeply poetic. Poetry is not just about words and that is a realisation that says poetry is beyond the written word – its mecca is in other art forms and for me more often than not in cinema. Good poetry should never be about the obvious but all that lies beneath and the unspoken. In cinema the moments are framed through light shadow and mise-en-scène et al. The written poetry frames the moment in metaphor and its own particular rhythm. Both meet where there is the unsaid and the unexplained.



The publishing industry is evolving rapidly with digital platforms and AI-assisted writing tools. What opportunities and challenges do you see for contemporary poets and authors?

AI-assisted writing has its place when the goal is factual clarity—say, a medical handbook, a market analysis, or a guide to health benefits. In such cases, a writer may not need metaphor or literary nuance, and AI can help organize information or polish technical language. It is also being used for peripheral tasks like generating book titles or design ideas.



But the line must be drawn with literature. Poetry, fiction, and short stories demand authenticity of voice. To lift passages from AI and claim them as one's own is not only dishonest but diminishes the very essence of creative writing. Increasingly, reputable publishers are vigilant: many now run checks to detect AI-generated content in submissions, especially for poetry and literary manuscripts. Quality and originality remain the true currency, and those who rely on imitation risk being exposed.

The opportunity lies in using digital platforms to reach wider audiences and experiment with form, while the challenge is to safeguard integrity—ensuring that technology supports craft rather than replaces it.

What advice would you give to emerging writers and poets who dream of building a meaningful literary career while staying authentic to their creative vision?

The advice starts with a part of your question -stay true to your creative vision and remember that there is no substitute for something that is original, deeply personal, from your space -even if that space presents itself in fairy tale imagination or as something dark or surreal. In the din of likes and validation and being popular, don't leave your art behind. Evaluate why you are writing and are you a content creator or do you want to be known as an artist...this is something most are unable to answer truthfully and that is why your honesty and relationship with your own work is so important in your literary career.



As told to.....

SUNITA PAUL

*Md, Aabs Publishing House
Editor-in-chief, Reader's Choice Magazine*



AM A PROUD PRACTISING HINDU

I am a proud practising Hindu, not because I believe my faith is superior to anyone else's, but because it has given me a way of looking at the world that is rooted in curiosity, compassion, resilience and wonder.

To me, Hinduism has never been a narrow box into which people must fit. It is a vast, ancient civilisation of ideas that has embraced philosophy, music, mathematics, dance, literature, science and spirituality with astonishing openness. It has room for devotion and doubt, ritual and reason, meditation and celebration. It asks questions as readily as it offers answers.

I do not practise my faith because I am afraid. I practise it because it enriches my life. The lighting of a lamp at dawn, the sound of a mantra, the fragrance of incense, the stories of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita, the reverence for rivers, mountains and trees are not merely rituals or symbols. They are reminders that life is interconnected, that gratitude matters, and that the sacred can be found in the everyday.



SOHINI ROYCHOWDHURY DASGUPTA

Sohini Roychowdhury, internationally renowned Bharatanatyam dancer, choreographer, author, speaker, producer, and professor of Natyashastra, is the founder of Sohinimoksha World Dance & Communications in Madrid, Berlin, Kolkata & New York, and Sohinimoksha Artes de La India in Spain. A visiting professor of dance at 17 Universities across the globe, Sohini is a winner of multiple prestigious international and national awards. Renowned for her global influence in dance and literature, including her latest book 'The Dance of Kali', she's also committed to social activism, particularly in empowering marginalized children.

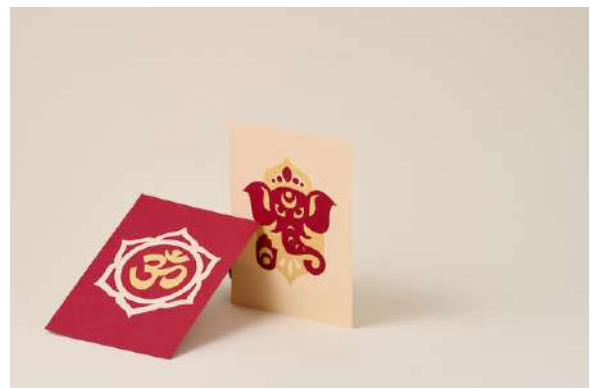
Being a practising Hindu does not require me to withdraw from the modern world. It allows me to engage with it more thoughtfully. I can attend a board meeting, teach a class, create art, travel the world or raise a family, while still carrying with me the values of dharma (duty), seva (service), humility and respect for all forms of life.

One of the things I cherish most about Hinduism is its extraordinary plurality. Across centuries and across India's diverse cultures, languages and traditions, it has accommodated countless expressions of faith and philosophy. It has celebrated saints, scholars, poets, mystics and reformers. It has inspired magnificent temples and intimate household shrines, intricate classical arts and simple village festivals. It has long recognised that there can be many paths towards truth and many ways of understanding the divine.

That is why I find the stereotypes so bewildering. A practising Hindu is not defined by outward appearance or public performance. Faith is not measured by the volume of one's declarations or by displays designed for social approval. It is reflected in how one treats family, neighbours, strangers, animals and the natural world, in honesty when no one is watching, in generosity without expectation, and in the willingness to keep learning.

Like everyone else, I have ordinary days. I worry, laugh, make mistakes, lose my patience and search endlessly for misplaced keys. My faith does not make me perfect. It reminds me to try again.

I am proud to be a practising Hindu because it teaches humility rather than arrogance, self-reflection rather than certainty, and gratitude rather than entitlement. It has shaped my love for art, music, storytelling and the rhythms of the natural world. It encourages me to see divinity not only in temples, but in kindness, knowledge, beauty and service.





My Hinduism is not a slogan. It is not a costume. It is not a performance.

It is a living tradition, a daily practice and a quiet source of strength. I carry it with pride, with reverence and with an abiding respect for the many other paths that people choose to walk.

Q&A

WITH VARUN GWALANI

THRILLS AND CHILLS

Varun Gwalani is the author of seven novels: *Believe*, *The First Storyteller*, *The Story Circle*, *The Novel Year*, *Who Saves the Hero?*, *The Only Way Out is Death* and *A Deadly Faith*. Each book is a different genre, including a murder-mystery thriller. Varun Gwalani is also the creator and moderator of popular murder-mystery games that he's successfully conducted across the country.

In addition to being an author, Varun has been a teacher of creative writing and English for several years now. He's an advocate for mental health awareness, having given a TEDx talk and written several articles on Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder.

Intelligent, witty and sharp, it was great to catch up with him at an event where he was a guest speaker and find out more about his work, his books and his creative pursuits.

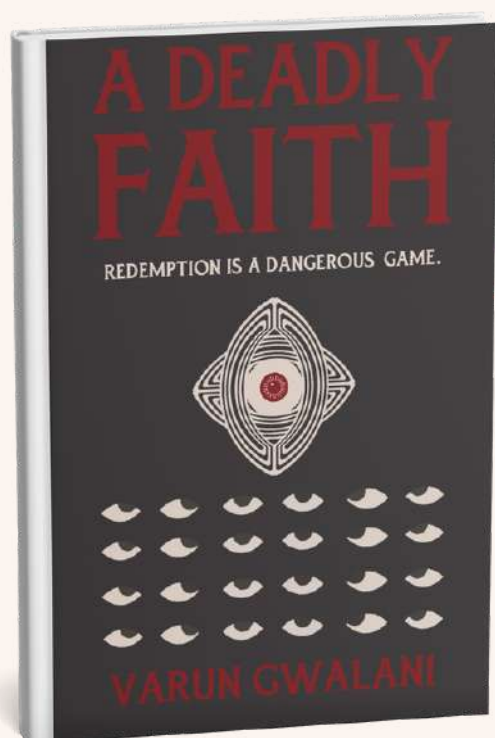
Q

Your novels span a wide range of genres. What drives you to explore such diverse storytelling styles, and how do you decide on the genre for each book?

I have always been a curious, restless person, and that curiosity impacts the way I consume things. I play all kinds of video games, read all kinds of books, and consequently my brain is always eager to explore new things. I want to challenge myself constantly, and not fall into a rut. I decide the genre of the book based on the story I want to tell, and I try to see which genre will best service that story.



By Kainaz Jussawalla



Q

A Deadly Faith dives into the world of cults. Can you share what inspired you to write this particular story, and how it stands out from your previous works?

Despite the fact that most people won't actually interact with a cult in their lifetimes, I think *A Deadly Faith* is quite topical, because of its focus on mass manipulation, brainwashing and radicalisation. Our media and our social media algorithms today are built to be echo chambers, streamlined to feed us narratives. We must question the status quo, the ideas being pushed onto us, or we all risk being indoctrinated, much like the members of the cult in the novel. As for how it stands out, my previous works have been location-agnostic, where there is no specific place to pin down. *A Deadly Faith* has a world—albeit fictional—with history and lore, all of which is pertinent to the story itself.

Q

As the creator of popular murder-mystery games, how has your experience designing these interactive stories? And what made you come up with this idea? Where do you conduct these?

I love designing these stories, as brain-breaking as they are to get it right.

It's been a year and a half since we started the games and we're going to launch our 4th story soon!

We've gone to 8 different cities, played with almost 3000 people, conducted events at large corporates including Google and booking.com and have big plans for the future.



Q

You've been vocal about mental health awareness, especially OCD. How has your personal journey shaped your storytelling on TEDx and other platforms, and do themes of mental wellness appear in your novels?

I have always spoken freely about my mental health struggles, and those themes have been incorporated in my works as well. In fact, if there was one theme across all my works, it would be the impact of trauma on people, and the ways in which you can overcome it.

Q

Having taught creative writing and English for several years, what advice would you give to aspiring authors trying to find their unique voice?

Most of writing is not so much about the process of “getting ideas” as much as it is about discipline. The discipline to sit in front of a blank page and write, the discipline to cut out parts of your story that aren't working, the discipline to write badly so that you can ultimately make that into something better. A lot of it is work, and new writers need to be okay with doing the work.



Q

Do you see yourself merging interactive storytelling with your novels in the future, perhaps a game inspired by A Deadly Faith?

Our second murder-mystery case, Death of a Cult Leader, is inspired by A Deadly Faith! The case features the same fictional cult as is present in the novel, and all the characters are cult members. I plan to create different games as well, centred around different themes.

Q

Faith and belief play a central role in A Deadly Faith. How did you navigate the delicate balance between exploring spirituality and weaving a thrilling story?

Within the novel, the fictional cult's religion is the bedrock on which the entire story is founded. Now, the exploration of the religion isn't the same as the exploration of spirituality. There is a distinction to be made within the two, and the characters do address it. But the exploration of the religion itself, with the manipulation and brainwashing involved, adds to the thrill of the work.

Q

Your author journey leans towards cults and dark stories, where does this come from? Have any authors have inspired you?

My exploration of trauma, of mental health and of the complexities of the human psyche inevitably result in stories that people would consider “dark”. I strong believe, however, that it is not darkness for darkness’ sake, but rather to provide signposts for how to escape the dark. I would not say I have been inspired by any authors particularly, as I try to ensure that my body of work is deeply personal, and built around my view of stories.



Q

Do share some interesting reader feedback with us.

A lot of times, readers say my stories have made them stay up all night reading, and that brings me great joy! But the most meaningful and heartfelt comments are when a reader sees themselves within the pages of one of my books, where they relate fully to the characters and it helps them make sense of their own life. That, more than anything, validates me as a writer.

Q

With seven books under your belt, how has your understanding of storytelling evolved since your debut novel?

I would say that my storytelling has massively evolved since my debut novel, over 11 years ago. I have become a more assured, confident and skilled writer, capable of writing a compelling story in a multitude of ways, and more determined than ever to try and push the envelope with what I choose to write about.

As told to.....

*Kainaz Jussawalla, author,
influencer, podcast host,
"Main Character Energy".*

CHILDREN'S EDUCATION, SCHOOLING AND UNSCHOOLING

Childhood is a Place Under the Sun



My daughter, all of eight, was bullied and hit by two of her peers in her non-orthodox, upscale, so-called alternative pedagogy school within the first few days of joining only to be gaslighted by her teacher multiple times when she complained and continued to suffer. My daughter, unschooled since birth, went to school for the first time at the age of eight as she was curious and was hit hard on her head and more “gently” on other parts of her body by other children in her class few days in, as part of “playing” and “socialisation rituals. Having never experienced anything quite like this before, having placed her utmost trust in this new place with trees and butterflies and an inviting swing that promised to be kind to her, was bewildered and heartbroken, not only because of the random acts of violence but the way in which she faced it from her teachers as well actively and passively. Actively as they shouted at her for finding things such as writing in a language she did not know difficult, for not sharpening her pencil or taking too long to draw a diagram– admonishment most of us would be sadly familiar with which, because of her truly alternative education, she had little familiarity with. Passively, because when she complained about her injury her class teacher would coldly say “I don’t think so” or “but you were also talking a lot, A!” justifying the violence that was inflicted on her casually. A space that prided itself on non-violence, inclusivity and cooperation saw children cooperating with each other chanting in unison “throw it, throw it, throw it”, in a mob-like fashion egging each other on to throw my daughter’s new shoes far away only because she said she did not wish for them to have sand on it.

My daughter was suddenly experiencing random acts of discrimination and injury from several children and adults who were meant to be compassionate mentors for having done nothing but be her quiet, kind, authentic, unique self and she finally decided to hit back, her last resort given the non-violent unschooled upbringing that she had had thus far which reinforced the fact that dialogue and fair complaint as a means of protest and dissent are the primary way forward. She gained nothing but confusion as those who ‘liked’ her also discriminated against her and bullied her and teachers whom she thought she could trust erased her complaints and diminished her. Her parents were also ignored when they complained more vociferously than her and her class teacher proceeded, instead of redressing and preventing the harm, to single her out, humiliate her for fidgeting with her fingers inside a classroom, for forgetting what she meant to say when a question was asked, by making sure she asked her last in spite of my daughter having raised her hand first, for speaking her mind, for dreaming, for taking the requisites on the day asked and for leaving it behind when not asked, for missing out a pronoun in the factually correct answers she supplied or for simply being herself.

It began to dawn on us that our need to support and encourage the community and work with them to raise our concerns were being perceived as trouble and my daughter was bearing the brunt of it. It also dawned on us that despite all the beautiful promises of compassion and cooperation which we had taken at face value, the school was a capitalist, normative and limited space like most schools because 'care' was an idea alien to the discourse of education in many ways and those calling themselves educators may have had some experience or a degree but did not understand the most fundamental thing about being with children, which were kindness and empathy. Or perhaps, the schooling system wasn't designed to be about sustained kindness but more about endurance, discipline and a pre-conceived idea of excellence, which children of all kinds, paid the price for.



Children are vulnerable and are living in a world that it would seem ironically, given how childhood is the seedbed, the soil of humanity, is not created for them. When one does not recognise or respect that vulnerability children become the easiest target of hatred, frustrations and lack of self-growth or evolution in adults engaging with them, because of their uniquely placed realities. Children need to be seen and heard on their own terms, which many of us have forgotten and learnt to misunderstand, and when we impose our ways of seeing upon them we either rob them of their sight and insight or we blind them with fear, hatred and hurt. The hardest child is perhaps the softest human being in the hierarchy of human life, often raw, curious and easy to inscribe with both pain and joy.



What does it take to protect this 'otherness', without trying to know it, pry it open, label it or invisibilise it? My partner bumped into the boy who was bullying her and as her teacher refused to protect her, he took the opportunity to tell the child to not hurt our child. Interestingly, the teacher who never found the time or the compassion to redress the harm being done to our daughter despite repeated intervention and pleas came to the rescue of the boy promptly, saying that my husband intimidated the boy who was bullying my daughter and physically abusing her because he simply asked him to stop harming her. She protected the perpetrator and rendered both my daughter and us helpless. Her senior supervisor protected her when we called out the harm she had inflicted by humiliating my daughter, ignoring her complaints and gaslighting her routinely. She too protected the one with more power than the most vulnerable individual, the harmed child. In a world where toxic positivity abounds, as long as one is saying good things one was heard and given space and the moment one risked making a complaint against routine injuries and micro-violence, that space shrunk. The school continued to write and speak publicly on non-violence and the importance of listening to children while ignoring this child's injury and complaint, turning accountability into a face, a splitting of image and action that is exacerbated in the world of mediatization and hyper-visibility that we live in. We did not bother to count the number of times irony resurrected itself but we did have our hearts broken beyond count.

There was the story of the heart, of the head and also of hair. Funnily, we noticed that much of the changed attitude of the teacher was pronounced after she saw my enthusiastic participation and intervention but it also strangely coincided with my daughter deciding to cut her long hair very short. My daughter knew how proud we were of her choosing to do her body in her own unique gender-bending way but had been surprised to see the responses in her school. She told me many days later that her class teacher asked her why she had cut it, adding that she liked her older hair better and a boy who was obsessed with her had said “I don’t like you anymore because you cut your hair like a boy”. My daughter, resilient as she is, kept taking these unsolicited punches to her heart in her stride but it must have hurt. It hurt me tremendously to see this feisty, fun-loving act of tremendous courage of wearing her hair short when the world around her was hell-bent upon comparing the length of tresses and dresses for girls received with such mundane conservatism at her school. How, I kept thinking, could learning be possible in any environment where children are not free to create and know themselves unequivocally, where the gap between what is preached and what is practiced is wide enough to swallow their voices and they are persecuted for being different.

My daughter, creative, kind and ever so bright lost some of her beautiful, natural self- confidence that comes from letting children be themselves and seeing them truly for who they are rather than expecting them to fit into manufactured moulds and tick made-up check boxes. My daughter’s gorgeous smile which would light up any room that she walked into had started to fade in the face of all the confusing, hurtful and mixed signals she received till she finally told me that her class teacher, who used to like her, “now hates me”. She found her authenticity and freedom threatened, when she was told that her bright, original answers were wrong because she had mispronounced ‘stamen’ as ‘stymen’ as a nine year old (where normally she would have been celebrated by us for knowing that a flower has such an organ, in the first place), or when agency over her body was for an adult to interpret incorrectly and berate her over it, till we returned to unschooling and gradually re-entered the space of safety. And slowly, but magically, she began to blossom again. Unschooling is learning with freedom and dignity, without being judged, contained or evaluated. It is learning that looks like making cardboard dioramas, or doing crotchet, or chasing butterflies for days on end. It is learning without the violence of comparison, regimentation and bullying. Since she had not been raised in an environment that justified violence, passed judgement or believed it anybody’s job to criticise children’s choices or actions as long as they didn’t cause harm, and had guardians who actively intervened when any form of harm was being done, with compassion and through dialogue, she could process much of the inequalities she witnessed and endured, through conversation and ultimately rose above it, keeping the good, and learning from the not so good.



My friend recently shared with me that her son was sexually assaulted at the age of five by the person assigned to take children to the washroom and she found out because he would refuse to eat anything that needed washing hands at school as that would entail using the washroom. My friend took this to the school authorities (what a problematic term in itself, revelatory of the power structures within an educational space) who told her that it was against their karmic beliefs to investigate and remove an employee in case there was a slight possibility that the child was lying about being sexually abused each time he used the bathroom. The child had bravely spoken for another little girl who was also being harmed by the same individual but the girl's parents did not testify and the school protected the perpetrator. This too was in an alternate pedagogy schooling system where we often expect greater opportunity for cooperation and an ear that is trained to listen to a child's complaints seriously and with compassion. In normative schools, sometimes the violence is so routinised, visible in the lack of complaint cells, in the way in which wealth and power determine educator interaction with children, the impossibility of redressal, top-down learning systems and unfair distribution of attention and opportunity, where it is not only impossible for the vulnerable (children, harmed or different child, isolated parent, under-privileged children) to bring her/their injury to those who are meant to acknowledge it and provide compassionate relief, that it is not a stretch to argue that the system is designed to block out the possibility of complaint.

As a child I have been humiliated by teachers and physically and sexually abused by adults and through different ages making it clear to me that age is not necessarily a natural protection against physical, emotional and psychological abuse in childhood. I know of several adults both personally, and those who have spoken and written about traumatic childhoods openly, who have been abused, bullied and/or sexually harassed and one would think that this enables them/us to rethink the question of power, respect and justice when it comes to children and childhood. How do they/we grow up to do what was done to them/us, and instead of working towards preventing shaming, hurt and appropriation of children, how do they either become active perpetrators or align themselves with systemic silencing and diminishing of children's suffering? What can be said of spaces like schools (and especially those that claim to be child-centric) that call children liars when they speak about abuse and rush to protect 'their' employees, themselves and the institutions and systematize child abuse by protecting the perpetrator and encouraging silence when the question of harm is raised? While this essay will not delve into the psychopathology of becoming the very thing that one feared and suffered from, in the face of lack of dialogue, support or moral and ethical reflection and in the complex intersectionality of caste, class, sexuality and gender that configures this pathology, it will assert that as a society, when we repeatedly fail our children, we have become that which we suffered under, we have become a form of institutional, collective psychopathology that must be unpacked to be healed.

Sara Ahmed writes in *Complaint!* that a "feminist ear can be understood as an institutional tactic. To hear complaints, you have to dismantle the barriers that stop us from hearing complaints, and by barriers, the walls, the doors that render so much of what is said, what is done, invisible and inaudible" Can we begin to think about lending a feminist ear to children inside educational institutions (and homes) in ways in which what happens behind closed doors has a way of reaching us? When my friend's son was able to tell and his friend was not, we see the workings of an ear that can listen to children as opposed to one that asks them to speak but has no way of hearing, which includes recognising, believing and acknowledging, what they have to say. When my daughter finally chose to walk back into the freedom of a space that didn't believe in stereotypes about girls and boys, or insisted that she had to know something by some date, (the latter she heard in the form of "of course you know the language-you are lying" or "you should know the meaning of this word by now-you are in grade three!") and one that reminded her that

learning is only possible when one can co-exist with the learning environment without the loss of individuality and self-respect and without the fear of isolation, judgement and punishment we realised that it is the school's loss for not being able to hold space for such a uniquely gifted child. It also made us realise something we always knew—schools are rarely about the learners and more about that word that makes me uneasy, 'reputation'. The assimilation required of children into a larger body, where the imaginary and often manufactured identity of the institution precludes rather than evolves with the life of every child, is the perhaps the beginning of the loss of freedom and individuality. It is also perhaps the greatest obstacle to truly listening to what our children are saying to us. If my daughter had been heard, the educator could have made this an opportunity to learn about violence, particularly gender-based and what healthy ways of interacting look like in a world where children are often deploying mimetically, the violence of words and bodies, to speak to each other.

I did not wish to miss an opportunity. Loving my child wholeheartedly and respecting her right to speak and think fearlessly has meant choosing unschooling again, a philosophy that resists the notion that we must be caged by routines, exams and rooms in order to learn. It is a recognition of the fact that schools are not educating so much as turning out cogs to fit the capitalist wheel of production. Our children need not be on stage all the time, they only need us to hear what they are saying when they 'fidget', when they say 'no', when they refuse to eat fruit or use the washroom.. The world is their stage and without costumes and rehearsed parts, they each have a role to play. In a world where the killing of thousands of children with missiles and drones generates a laugh or a yawn, where reputation overshadows responsibility and capital comes before care, we truly have our work cut out for us as far as children and their childhood goes. Children don't need spotlights, for childhood is a place under the sun— they are already lit up. We need only keep the clouds and the shadows at bay, and not be threatened by their unique kind of blazing light.

i See Ahmed, Sara. *Complaint!* Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2021, pp17-18.



Dr. Sonali Pattnaik is a feminist poet, an academician and a visual artist. Formerly Assistant Professor of English at Delhi University's Kirori Mal College, she has taught Literature in English at several prestigious universities across the country. She is the recipient of the Orange Flower Award for Poetry, the WE Gifted Poet Award and recently Shortlisted for the Wood Rose Spiritual Poetry Prize, 2026 . Her creative and critical writing have been widely published and anthologised.



POETRY

Towards The Wings

A seed,
deep in the darkness of the soil,
imagines the sky.

A river
does not argue with rocks;
it reaches the sea.

Dawn
does not defeat the night;
it introduces the light.

A wound
is not a mark upon the skin,
but a birthplace of courage.

A cloud,
when it transforms its burden into rain,
turns the earth green.

The wind
does not uproot trees;
it tests their roots.

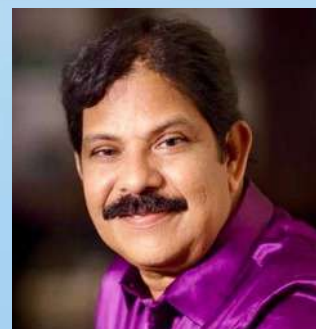
A rainbow
is not merely a union of colors,
but the signature of a storm.

A lamp
does not wage war against darkness;
it simply kindles itself.

A human being
does not grow by reaching a destination,
but by becoming a path for others.

Time
does not flow through a clock,
but through transformation.

Life
is not a boat tied to the shore,
but a voyage that embraces the waves.



Dr. Perugu Ramakrishna India

THE SILENT RULER

Money— the silent ruler that stood behind the curtains, while emotions performed on the stage.

For years, feelings wore the crown, and money watched from the shadows. Then one day, the lights changed, the masks fell, and the true king stepped forward.

What a painful revelation it was.

Not because money mattered, but because I never knew how much. Life teaches lessons in many ways, but the lessons written in hardship are carved deeper than ink.

They become scars on the heart, etching truths we never wanted to learn, yet can never forget.

And from that day on, every smile, every promise, every bond is seen through different eyes.

Some truths are learned by reading. Some by listening. The deepest ones are learned by breaking.



SREENIDHI, USA



Melodious Notes

A poetry is a world of emotions weaving tales of depths unfold
It's a treasure trove to the meaningful verses
Capturing the pearls from the ocean of love so divine
Poetry is a symphony of rhyme and rhythm
The melodious notes of fantasies
Gathering the scattered verses fine
Giving shape to the lost times
Healing the wounds with the beauty of its metaphors
Poetry speaks in volumes the echoes of heart
Emotions scribbled on the fabric of grace immortalised by ink
Reminiscing moments reliving through bygone years
Spilling the sentiments never spoken
Making immortal songs to last for ever on the magical pages so fine
Drowning every verse in the nectar of love
Now living in cadence of altered notes where the voices never fade.



Dr. Parvinder Nagi

The Spring is in a hurry

A pair of birds are in complete silence
No chirping no singing not even crying
On the branches the flowers are scentless
Spring is there but the wind is not blowing.

The red flame flowers, opening sleepy eyes
Are reading the spring's love letters silently
Spring is in a hurry to sing goodbye lyrics
Cuckoos are ticketing for their return valley.
Under the torn canopy of the aching sky
The voice of love is fading away in silence
Some characters will become fossils n dry
The lust of blue valleys will be dreamless.

The spring is in a hurry to return back soon
Tearing up all the love letters of shy moon
Not caring the poets' desires and emotions.



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Cuttack ,Odisha, India

At The Fountain Of Shadow

At the fountain
of that ethereal shadow
there lies the heavy weight
of the universe:
we are human light
in the thunderbolt of blood,
spastic movements of pawns
in the dismal suffering
of this "humanism"
for we can never know
the age of the soul
ours, or anybody's.
And time seconds us
in space that polishes us
shavings of illusions.
I shall not escape my punishment:
well do I know
the mine of the blade
and I shall struggle to live
where all is ruination.

Maria Teresa Liuzzo
Translation by Peter Russell - candidate for the
Nobel Prize for Literature



Delivery

Past chiming Acadian mountains
under elixir clouds
she greets me—— with a doorstep smile
milk from the glass.

Smoke from the cabin top
comes in and out of view.

Outside a hammock flickers
a rubber tire——rope-swung
from a tall winter spruce;
branches once toothed,
now tethered to the wind.

From the inlet to the lake, breath
floats frozen to the tree line.

On the warm kitchen countertop——
the glass sculpture drips
down the sap-sweet centerpiece.
Lips to the rim,
our bodies stand still;
fluent to the stream
in th vein of our hands.



Jason Youngclaus is the author of the poetry collection *Little Planet Raisins* (Spartan Press, 2020). His work has appeared in *Cathexis Northwest Press*, *Transcendent Zero Press*, and *From Whispers to Roars*, among others, and has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize.

THE TRUEST FRIEND

The fingers that first wipe away my tears, are mine,
The eyes that sparkle and gleam in laughter, so divine.
So how, dear mate, can you claim to be my truest friend,
When the comfort I seek, I alone comprehend?

The feet that carry me forward on life's winding road,
And the mind that rises to fight every heavy load.
Are pillars of strength that I call my own,
So how, dear mate, can your friendship be shown?

The hand that lifts food gently to my waiting lips,
And the heart that weeps in silence as hope sometimes slips.
Are vessels of courage, of longing, of doubt,
So how, dear mate, can you know what I'm about?

This body of flesh and bone, with a mind uniquely its own,
Is my sacred dwelling, my temple, my home.
It houses the divine, the eternal light deeply sown,
A spark of the cosmos, in solitude grown.

The fancy trimmings that surround me, I own for a while,
But these are mere shadows, not life's true smile.
So awaken, dear mate, and look deep within,
Befriend and heal yourself, let self-love begin.



Lolita Bhattacharya is a writer and avid traveler who left a brief corporate career to pursue storytelling. Her debut novella, *Own the Unknown*, is self-published on Amazon and Notion Press. She writes poems and short stories. Her poems are usually in lyrical format. Her writings are published in several anthologies. Her work on Indian revolutionaries between 1847-1947 won an award at the Sahitya Sparsh Awards 2025 under the Indian history category. She sketches from life and champions women's voices.

Cleopatra Slot Machine

You are out in the desert
with the blood of creeping scorpions,
wobbly-legged tables
over a ravenous Dyson sphere floor.
Beyond pit boss petulance and the roped off
high roller rooms of red velvet,
sitting down to a line of coin slots.
A giant neon face of Cleopatra
periodically winking at you.
As if she knows the strange dumb luck
you both share, or still flirting from the beyond
if that is your thing. A giant bucket of tokens
to feed into the machine. That quick pull
of the arm for another max bet. Another quick
wink so that you know the prize is coming.
By Nile Queen decree, or so you tell yourself.
While the eye in the sky keeps a watch on things
like some high-resolution voyeur
and the cocktail waitress is busy
with the drinks.



Ryan Quinn Flanagan is a Canadian-born author who lives in Elliot Lake, Ontario, Canada with his wife and many bears that rifle through his garbage. His work has been published both in print and online in such places as: The New York Quarterly, Horror Sleaze Trash, Rusty Truck, Evergreen Review, GloMag, Setu and The Blue Collar Review. He enjoys listening to the blues and cruising down the TransCanada in his big blacked out truck.

MONSOON DREAMS

"Look, Mommy, the rains have created magic!", exclaimed Ronny
As I stepped out of the house to drench myself in the tranquility of Mother Nature
Clumps of ferns grew by the side,
And I saw a robin with a twig in its beak perch on the tree alongside
I could smell petrichor everywhere, the loveliest olfactory delight, for sure!
Icing on the cake during monsoon, indeed!
A manifestation of the amalgamation of bounties of our planet
When earthworms rise from their deep slumber and adorn the topsoil with fertility,
When water drops shine like jewels on laminas of varied hues, shapes and sizes,
When the glossy-plumaged birds could be seen flapping their wings with utmost
glory in the sky,
When the faint, far-off sounds of the mills did not bother me for sure!
I saw mischievous little fellows splashing water on one another
Sailing paper boats, indifferent to the impending anger of their mothers
Grown-ups' efforts to save themselves from getting wet ended up in futility
And I sat reposed on the swing of the terrace,
Gazing at the ivy cottage in front,
Painting the splendid view,
For it is Indra Deva's grantings which I cherish and must record,
How I wish for Time to stand still!
If only Nature's benevolence could continue.....



Staffy Bhateja (Steffi) is an award-winning poet, editor and exhibited painter hailing from the City Beautiful. She is the Chapter Head of Chandigarh of The Asian Literary Society. As a writer, she has taken part in numerous anthologies under various publishing houses and esteemed magazines like Rhyvers Beat, Glomag, Setu etc. She has solely edited a book titled "Catharsis" under The Impish Lass Publishing House. Her poem on the Taj Mahal was awarded the Certificate of Excellence in the Asian Literary Society's Annual Wordsmith Awards Contest 2023 (English Poetry Segment) and her poetry piece titled "It Is Poetry!" bagged the second position in the same contest in 2024.

SACRED LOVE

With the lips of innocence
Love was smiling
And he was inviting the youth
In an anthem, erotic!

Ah, the youth!
The young ones gone haste
With heavy worries
Heavier ones
heart beats from love too!

And unfortunately,
some people christened me immature
why i never count on me
should I edit out some cheap ones -
love rhymes
where to fit within narrow limits!

The heart could not bear to cut off the soul
from Sacred Love
transforming step by step
at the Love Sanctuary
and dress me up
with the veils of her feminine femininity
and embrace the feathers of motherhood!



MARIA KOLOVOS RUMELIOTI, GREECE

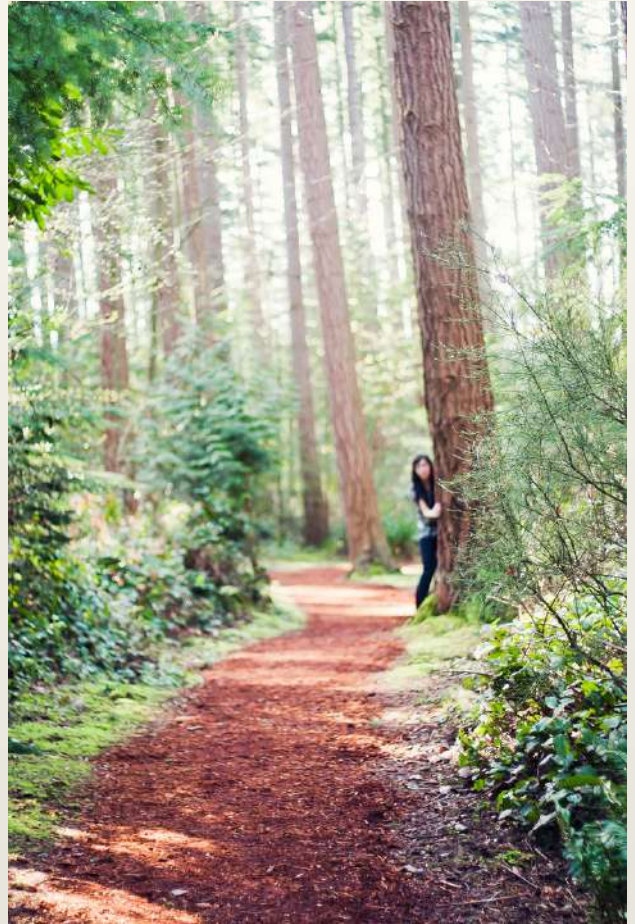
IN MY DREAMS

I faintly heard the sounds,
As though it were a ghost.
My path was homeward bound,
Behind me footsteps did sound.
As someone who would follow,
But not wanting me to know.
Perhaps to throw a surprise,
I really couldn't surmise.

I stopped, I waited,
I heard the sounds, unabated.
Turning back I found no sign,
Of any sinister design.
But far, far yonder,
Unmistakable sounds of laughter.
My senses did prompt me,
To follow and go after.

I had not courage to seek the source,
I did fear, of course.
Maybe it was a prank,
Played by a youth of my rank.
But unmistakable, the giggles,
Of someone of the fairer sex.
I'm sure it was a maiden,
The sweet smell of flowers, air laden.

I retreated my steps; turned the bend,
I looked to the very end.
Hiding behind a tree was she,
I surely could see.
Glimpsed I, the garments of a girl,
Her skirt, the breeze did whirl.
Giving away her hiding place,
But not revealing her face.





I retraced my steps towards home,
But yet was not alone.
For, follow me she did,
Her presence I cannot forbid.
I wondered less and worried more,
As to what was really in store.
For, surely I sensed,
That a love affair commenced.

I turned around to look at her,
I couldn't believe my eyes.
Standing there, was a damsel, fair,
Her beauty, Oh! Quite rare.
Enthralled I stood, I could only stare,
Approach her, I wouldn't dare.
For I doubt I'd be worthy,
Of a maiden, pretty and praiseworthy.



Julian Sujendran chooses to write upon societal issues in an attempt to highlight the rampant evils that prevail in Indian society, despite social reforms. His writings, both literature and poetry amply reflect what he aims to achieve. He hails from Chennai, Tamilnadu.

FOR THE CROSSING OF THIS SEA

I would be a passenger
on some kestrel wind,
the skies beneath
collapsing
in lavender floes

the flashing waters,
chaos,
Leviathan crashing
in his abyss

And did we not thrash
against the walls of our tombs
so carefully spun

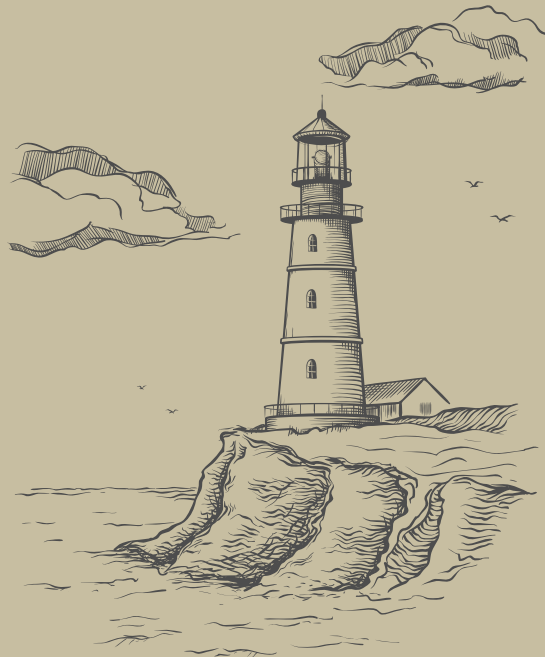
Winter's dark Sun
climbing
over eastflowing fields

Spur of light
her water breaking
death all-receding

and we come forth,
emerging,
our discolored glories,
robes awash

with the alleluias
we have sung,
the transfiguring wine,
grace enough

for the crossing of this sea



Melissa A. Chappell is a writer living in South Carolina. She has been published in The Emerson Review, The Orchards Poetry Review, and Dreich Literary Magazine, among others. She is a Lutheran pastor who has served parishes in southwestern Virginia. Chappell is also a pianist and vocalist. She spends her free time reading, walking with her dog, and enjoying life with her family, miniature schnauzer, and two cats. You may read more of her work at <https://nativenoise1970.com>

DARKENED BY THE RAIN

Purple eyes, lavender sighs—
such will the frame of our demanding
silence portray,
white garden of winterhush,
grief of the drizzle
in the ears of God.



Dustin Pickering, Editor-in-Chief of Harbinger Asylum and founder of Transcendent Zero Press,

THE SOUND OF HEARTBREAK

When you reach my age
Love and heartbreak are well concealed
In mismatched smiles
And the lighting of eyes
Enough to deceive
The average passerby

It's concealed in cracks in walls
You postpone repairs around the home

When young
And sixteen
It's all there
Out in an open-air theatre

The heart ripped apart
You can hear the snapping
Like a rock solid
Un-melted kit Kat
The sound it makes
When you bend it
To split into two

Vandana Kumar is a translator, recruitment consultant, cinephile, Indie Film Producer and multiple award-winning poet from New Delhi, India. Her poems have been published in over 150 national and international websites and anthologies of repute. Her poetry collection 'Mannequin of Our Times' has also won several awards. 'Mannequin Of Our Times' has been published in Greek too. She received the Global Icon Award at the Global Vision Summit 2025 held in Athens, Greece.





I HAVE YET TO TELL YOU MY STORY

*When he abandoned home,
I moved into the cage of the parrot.
Underneath my pillow are garlic cloves
from the market increasing in number.*

*When he abandoned home,
I rewound the hands of the clock.
I found the identity as straight
from my identity as gay
shattered in fleeting fragments
that got my mouth watery.*



*When he abandoned home,
I transformed myself into a bird
and tracked his steps, leaving
home, only to get lost.
My body informed that I was no more.
It said I was dead.*

*When he returned home,
I think he could not have thought
he would see a Lazarus before his eyes
resurrected at the sound of his call.*

Hein Min Tun is a multiple award winning poet and writer from Myanmar. The achiever of "Distinguished Writer Award" from the Bharat Award for Literature for the years: 2022, 2023 and 2026, "Tagore Honour" for his contribution to literature, the author with a successful book to his credit, his debut poetry collection "Crescendo" has earned him the "Panorama Golden Book Award - 2024" conferred by Writers Capital International Foundation. Also, he is the 2nd runner-up in Rabindranath Tagore Award International Poetry Competition - 2025, bagging "Poiesis Award for Excellence in Poetry". Above all, Hein Min Tun is the Winner of the prestigious "Reuel International Poetry Prize (2024) for all the poems he has written so far".



The Dove

The dove is hindered by a treacherous white
where must she abandon the nest of colour
where must she remain and arrange her tears
to offer broken wings a chance at survival

How vast the sky how innocent
of the exhaustion of those who dare to soar
She will find a melody she will lend the nightingale
a voice more beautiful than its own

Oh if only he would sing a little softer
if only he could make the birds dance
if only joy could fly and land
on the branch of a tree bent since eternity

If only the sun rose forever
perhaps the swallow would embrace time and exile grief
Still the dove waits for something resembling light
resembling a fatherless child returned from war holding a balloon that never burst



LATIFA HARBAOUI IS AN ALGERIAN JOURNALIST, WRITER, AND POET WITH A BACKGROUND IN PHILOSOPHY FROM TWO ALGERIAN UNIVERSITIES. SHE HAS PUBLISHED MULTIPLE POETRY COLLECTIONS, ARTICLES, AND ONGOING LITERARY PROJECTS. HER POETRY IS STUDIED IN LEADING ALGERIAN UNIVERSITIES, AND HER WORK HAS BEEN RECOGNISED WITH PRESTIGIOUS AWARDS AT ARAB AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS.



TONGUES

A natural taster, reliable and free
A gift of the Holy Spirit
Sweet, sour, salty, bitter and savory

A prayer within, vocal and lucid
God's trusted envoy of supreme order
Resilient, adaptable, skilled, hot and humid

Focal spot of the human frame
Whether in check or hanging out
Razor sharp and a fire flame

At times, skid, slide and slip
And run off at the mouth
Turning inside with a quick flip

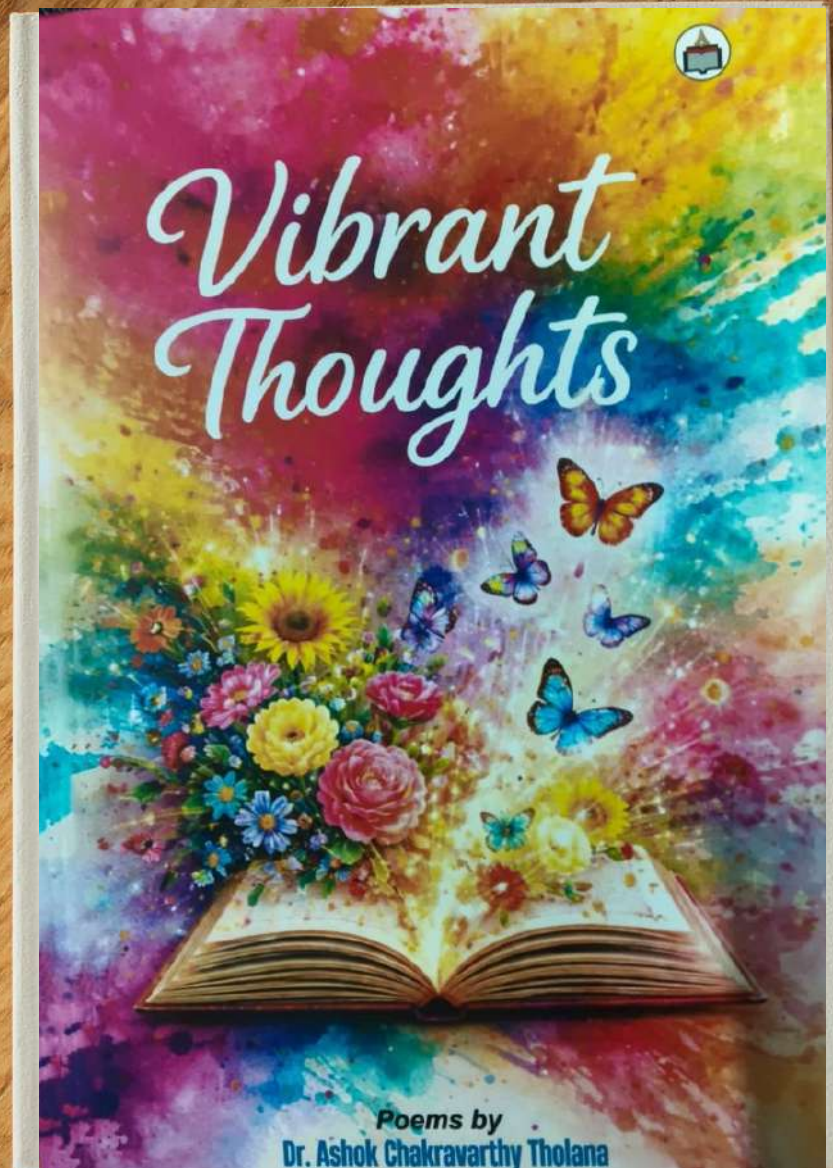
Voices of liberation, balm to the soul
Life to expression, embodiment of passion
Carrier of emotions reaching the goal

In distress, you freeze into ice
Like a corpse reclining in the
Tomb of silence, never to rise.

DEVENDRA K MISHRA IS THE AUTHOR OF THE CURSED CROW, WHENEVER I FEEL, THE CARA COFFEE BAR, AND THE COLOUR OF FORGOTTEN SOUNDS. HE IS DRAWN TO THE CLASSICS AND SEES LIVING POETRY WOVEN THROUGH THE NATURAL WORLD. FOLLOWING NO CREED BUT A QUIET RELIGION OF HUMANITY, HE FEELS BLESSED, CONTENTED, AND SERENE. LITERARY ACTIVITIES BRING HAPPINESS AND PEACE OF MIND TO HIM. HE IS A STAUNCH BELIEVER IN THE GOODNESS OF HUMANKIND AS A WHOLE, DESPITE BEING FILLED WITH REMORSE AND BITTERNESS AT TIMES WHEN WITNESSING THE STRANGE BEHAVIORS OF THE WORLD. HE LIVES IN INDIA.



Book Review



SOWING PEACE SEEDS:

Ashok Chakravarthi's Poetry as Redress for a Wounded Age

As Robert Frost said, “A poem begins as a lump in the throat, a sense of wrong, a homesickness, a lovesickness. It is never a thought to begin with.” A soul-stirring poet, Dr. Ashok Chakravarthi Tholana, the writer of *Vibrant Thoughts*, a collection of poems, exemplifies this truth. He uses a wealth of images and mental pictures to express his views on themes like war, nature, destiny, peace, the duality of life, how poetry consoles the human heart, philosophy, and the nature of the universe.

Because his heart is overwhelmed by seeing the world in misery, chaos, and confusion that creates pandemonium on earth, he turns to simple language to find solutions for complex human ties.

*Seamus Heaney's “Redress” in ACT Poems**

Seamus Heaney's concept of “redress” is powerfully visible in Dr. Ashok Chakravarthi Tholana's poems, where poetry acts as a counterweight to social and political violence. In “Culture of Peace”, when the world is fractured by “ill-conceived conspiracies” and “self-centric hypocritical theories”, the poet redresses this darkness by insisting “Let's sow the seeds of tolerance and solidarity”. Against the harsh reality of divisions like “Race, colour, religion, language and region”, ACT poems offer Heaney's healing alternative: “see the world as one-nation” and “extend cooperation”. Like Heaney, Tholana believes poetry cannot stop a tank but can “strengthen the spirit”, affirming “With the culture of peace, anything we can win”. Thus, ACT poems embody redress by replacing despair with “spirited strength and deep aspiration”, balancing cruelty with the moral vision that “Uphold freedom of speech to establish unity”. This makes his poetry a true instrument of peace, fulfilling Heaney's dictum: “The end of art is peace.”

Esemplastic Power in Ashok Chakravarthy's Poems

Coleridge's *_esemplastic imagination_* – the power to unify scattered and opposing elements into a single coherent vision – is a much-needed quality for every great poet, and is effectively used in poems like “In Togetherness, A World”, “Heart Sees”, and “Challenge For Change”. The poet gathers fragmented stages of life like *_“The ceaseless and the fleeting hours”_*, *_“childhood days, joyful and playful”_*, *_“days youthful”_*, and *_“overloaded mid-life”_*, along with diverse pains such as *_“Life’s pricks are inevitable and invisible”_* and *_“failures blur our wit and vision”_*, and molds them into one unifying solution: *_“But in togetherness one can remain stable”_* and *_“with a right vision we can grasp bliss, / That’s possible with the spirit of togetherness”_*. Similarly, in “Challenge For Change”, chaotic images of destruction – *_“Houses got devastated”_*, *_“Bombs keep raining often”_*, *_“Death keeps on hunting”_*, *_“Hunger keeps on gripping”_*, and moral decay – *_“Humane concern looks buried”_* – are integrated through *esemplastic* power into a single call for transformation: *_“A quest for harmony and unity, / Only can change the humanity”_*. Thus, in both poems, the *esemplastic* technique transforms multiple disconnected experiences of life and war into one central theme of unity and collective action as the path to stability, bliss, and change.

Applying Touchstone Method to _Vibrant Thoughts_

Judging by Matthew Arnold's Touchstone Method, *_Vibrant Thoughts_* achieves the *_High Truth_* Arnold demanded of great poetry, as lines like *_“a spiritual lamp in the ocean of obstacles, casting light when chaos and confusion threaten to drown hope”_* express a universal truth about resilience amid suffering. The anthology meets his standard of *_High Seriousness_*, treating the human condition with solemn gravity in *_“an introspection for all beings, compelling us to pause, look within, and confront the truths we often ignore”_*. Like Arnold's touchstones in Homer and Dante, its style is grand yet simple, using clear, luminous images such as *_“a healing mantra for the unseen wounds of the mind, mending scars that bleed in silence where no one else can see”_*. Most importantly, it fulfills poetry's core function as Arnold defined it in *_The Study of Poetry_*: *_“Poetry is at bottom a criticism of life”_*. *_Vibrant Thoughts_* judges a world where *_“illusion has blurred the physical eye”_* and prescribes that *_“a simple verse can become the first step toward healing the world”_*. Hence, by Arnold's Real Estimate, *_Vibrant Thoughts_* ranks high because its moral substance, earnest tone, and clarifying vision match the spirit of the masters he held as touchstones.

The Indian Philosophy of Viveka and Vasudhaika Kutumbam in Ashok Chakravarthy's Poems

Dr. Ashok Chakravarthy Tholana's poems fuse two key strands of Indian philosophy: *Viveka* in "The Dualities" and *Vasudhaika Kutumbam* in "Violence Is Not the Solution".

In "The Dualities", *Viveka*, or discriminative wisdom, is the lens: "when I glance / Through the mind's lens" at "misty skies" of *Maya*, the poet asserts "Wisdom can detect the reality" and discovers "behind the veil of darkness / I discover an oasis of happiness". This *Jnana Yoga* cuts through "bare... thriving... enticing... menacing" opposites, revealing the "streak of silver-lining" that guides the *Atman* from *Avidya* to truth.

In contrast, "Violence Is Not the Solution" shifts from inner discernment to universal kinship, embodying *Vasudhaika Kutumbam* from the *Maha Upanishad*. Rejecting "Race, colour, religion, language and region", Tholana urges us to "see the world as one-nation" built on "Equality and tolerance" that "boost world peace". By "Thwarting moves of ill-conceived conspiracies" and choosing to "sow the seeds of tolerance and solidarity", the poem practices *dharma* for a global family.

Thus, *Viveka* teaches the individual to see through illusion, while *Vasudhaika Kutumbam* teaches humanity to live beyond division. Together, both poems show Indian philosophy as lived wisdom: discerning the real within, and embracing the world as one family without. ACT poetry therefore becomes *redress*, replacing deceit with "real vision" and violence with "a harmonious culture of peace".

The Quality of Edward Said's Worldliness [texts are embedded in worldly circumstances – history, politics, power – not separate from them]

Both "We Can Avert" and "Let Us Favour Peace" embody Said's *worldliness* by refusing to let poetry escape into abstraction and instead anchoring it in concrete political realities. "We Can Avert" exposes how "nuclear arms" and "war-mongering" are material threats shaped by nations "for supremacy," tying the poem directly to Cold War and post-9/11 power struggles. Likewise, "Let Us Favour Peace" interrogates the failures of "so-called modern civilization" and "so-called globalization," linking art to lived conditions of "discriminations," "rifts amongst regions," and the urgent need to "shield human rights and dignity." Neither poem treats violence as metaphorical; both name the world's systems – coalitions, inequality, tyranny – and demand accountability from "liable world citizens." Thus, by Said's measure, these poems are worldly because they intervene in history, judge it, and call the reader to act within it.

Echoes That Linger: Poetry's Promise to a Wounded World

This anthology, *_Vibrant Thoughts_*, is more than ink on paper.

It is a mirror to humanity's soul, reflecting the depths of joy, grief, and longing that define us.

It is a spiritual lamp in the ocean of obstacles, casting light when chaos and confusion threaten to drown hope.

It is an introspection for all beings, compelling us to pause, look within, and confront the truths we often ignore.

It is a healing mantra for the unseen wounds of the mind, mending scars that bleed in silence where no one else can see.

And it is a profound way to restore the globe with hope and optimism, proving that even amid pandemonium, a simple verse can become the first step toward healing the world.

These poems will surely stay with readers, guiding them toward a better life when much is at stake, and helping them see reality and the true quality of life when illusion has blurred the physical eye.



Talagapu Dhanunjaya Rao,
Bilingual poet ,Book Reviewer ,
Srikakulam
Andhrapradesh

SNOW, STORMS, RAIN, HOWLING WINDS:

HELL HATH NO FURY THAN THE BRUTAL, LOATHSOME BRITISH WEATHER

By DR. SHAMLAL PURI, LONDON

Britain is an amazing country. The vagaries of weather rule it. Many Brits jokingly twist the word British, saying that this country's weather is so Brut(e)-ish and unreliable that even native Britons sometimes fail to fathom its moods and hate it.

As I write this on Easter Friday, Britons are being warned to cancel their adventure holiday plans in the hilly areas, as the United Kingdom will be hit by Storm David, with speeds of up to 90 miles per hour in the north of the country, and meteorologists have warned there will be casualties.

The British weather is what it is... and love it or loathe it, Britons have to accept it.



*Boss, you are on camera, say cheese... A lone fox enjoys a walk in the snow in a London park.
Photo Courtesy*

MEET THE AUTHOR



Shamlal Puri is an award-winning veteran London-based media practitioner, well-travelled career journalist, author and broadcaster who has worked with the media in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Europe for over four decades. He is currently the Senior Editor and Associate Publisher of the Diaspora Times Global newspaper. He is an expert in the global and developing world and a passionate international speaker on media issues. He has consulted on global media issues with UNESCO, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), the International Press Institute, and Article 19. He is also the author of several fiction novels, including "Dubai Dreams: The Rough Road to Riches", which takes a human look at the impact of the financial crisis on migrant workers in the Emirate and The Illegals: Homeless, Visaless, Hopeless - Striving for the Good Life on human trafficking to the UK. Both are being adapted into films.

For most of the year and a major part of the three seasons – winter, spring, and autumn – the sun hides behind the dark clouds, peeping out to show off its presence.

We have just said goodbye to a brutal winter in the United Kingdom, and the country is now knocking on the doors of Spring, but, hey, what a Spring! Threats of storms mixed with cherry blossoms make Britain look beautiful, although it's a bit cold and nippy.

Funnily enough, British weather is often the ice breaker or conversation starter among strangers. All one needs is to moan about it, and you can strike up a chat and even a friendship.



One day it used to snow in London, not anymore..._London Bridge by the River Thames. Photo Courtesy



Jump in at your own risk... frozen lake in the middle of winter in the north of the UK.

A friend was once standing at a bus stop to take a bus to work, and, looking at a beautiful female commuter who worked at a bank, he moaned about the weather that day – windy, gloomy, dark skies and fog, and what a lousy day it was to have to go to work.

The bus was delayed in the city traffic, and by the time it arrived, they had exchanged phone numbers, and four weeks later, they tied the matrimonial knot. The fading sun, the groggy fog and that cold, windy morning warmed up the heartstrings and brought the couple together!

Of course, among the white Britons, they don't look at kundlis or consult priests when it comes to marriage. The glow in their hearts takes care of such things.

Britain's weather is divided into four seasons – Winter, Spring, Summer, and Autumn – and the clocks and watches switch to winter or summer time.

In the winter, the clocks go backwards, and in the summer, the clocks go forward.

On 29 March, our clocks went forward by one hour, ushering in Summer Time, or Greenwich Mean Time.



Storm surges to the sea shore in the Atlantic. Photo Courtesy

The reason is that the days are shorter in winter and longer in summer.

In an astounding display of nature, Britons really see the worst during the two main seasons: winter and autumn. Some even complain of intolerance of the blazing summer sun!

Talking of summer being warm and sunny, Britons forget about snow until Christmas, so there was quite a shock when it snowed when we were expecting blazing sunshine!

It snowed in the UK at the peak of summer on 2 June 1975, and on 10 June 1986, there was significant snowfall in Scotland. Additionally, there were snow showers in Birmingham on 2 June 1975, and snow fell across Grampian on 2 June 1991.

In peak winter (late December), the sun rises around 8 am and sets around 3.50 pm in the UK. The shortest day, or winter solstice, occurs on or around December 21, providing less than 8 hours of daylight.

These days, in some parts of the country, winters are not what they used to be.

Snow used to be a firm fixture. In London, there were a few inches of snow, but not anymore.

These days, a few flurries of snow and there is excitement in London as people in supermarkets get excited and start heading for home, only to be disappointed!

In peak summer (around the June 21 solstice), the sun rises around 4:43 am and sets around 9:20 pm in London. This provides over 16 hours of daylight, with the longest day in 2026 lasting 16 hours and 42 minutes. Earlier sunrises and later sunsets actually occur in the days surrounding the solstice.



Lightning strike hits a UK city, sending jitters.



Snow in the Scottish Highlands is a joy to watch on a postcard, but not to live in.



Severe winter in Wales 2025.

The weather is also big business in the British media.

TV programmes dedicate a special segment to weather forecasts, and newspapers and social media also devote time and space to them.

TV weather forecasters are well paid and sometimes have a fan following in the UK.

Sometimes they can get it wrong and suffer the consequences for a long time.

It happened on 15 October 1987, in the midst of the British Autumn, when seasoned BBC weather forecaster Michael Fish fronted the cameras, saying that, just before he came on the show, a viewer had phoned in to warn him of a hurricane that night. But, Fish, in his inimitable style, brushed it off, saying, “Don’t worry, there isn’t (a hurricane on the way).”



We went to sleep with that reassurance.

That night, the worst happened: The Great Storm of 15–16 October 1987 was a violent extratropical cyclone that produced hurricane-force winds across parts of the UK – the worst in 300 years.

Although not a tropical hurricane by definition, its winds reached speeds rarely seen in the region, with the highest UK gust of 115 mph (100 knots) recorded at Shoreham-by-Sea on the Sussex coast at 3:10 am on 16 October.

Stunning Northern Lights in Scotland add to the beauty at night.

It ripped off trees from their roots, fell on parked cars, demolished fences, and sent litter bins flying.

On that day, I approached my touchy neighbour to ask whether my wheelie bin had flown into his garden during the storm, only to get an earful as he angrily retorted: “Are you saying that I am a thief?”

I remonstrated, and his response was: “It’s not in the garden! Go and check if it’s on the roof!”

Their house is of two storeys. I didn’t have rope climbing skills to do that. Being a peace-loving guy, I backed down.

My other neighbour’s Nissan saloon, parked in the open driveway, was crushed like an empty beer can when the thick Platanus x Hispanica tree with a thick trunk outside his house was ripped from the ground and smashed onto his car, which was a write-off.

Further away, in the neighbouring street, an old sycamore tree fell on his fence, smashing it.

Michael Fish became the butt of jokes in the British public and even in TV comedy sketches.

While Britons were absorbing the losses, a story started making rounds...

The caller who had phoned Michael Fish to warn him of the October 16-17 hurricane gave the credit for this warning to his 'speeding' pet tortoise with a sixth sense!



Beautiful red rainbows and stunning sunsets over a village in the UK.

He claimed that the tortoise was "rushing" up from his garden to the shelter of the house!

Britain laughed loudly. Weatherman Mr Fish dismissed the story but admitted he had got the weather wrong and had told a white lie.

The story that a tortoise had predicted the Great Storm of 1987 in the UK is largely a piece of folklore or anecdotal urban legend rather than a scientific fact.

While many animals behave differently before extreme weather, there is no widely recognised evidence in the immediate aftermath—such as in meteorological reports or major news coverage from the time—that a specific tortoise predicted the storm.

It is common for pet owners to claim animals act strangely before natural disasters. Still, a tortoise prediction was not part of mainstream reporting on this specific event, and it remains confined to folklore.

The fact remains that the British winter causes havoc. There is heavy snow in many parts of northern England, Scotland, Wales, and the Yorkshire Dales.

In the Autumn, when the leaves fall off the trees, we prepare to go into winter, when all the leaves are gone, leaving them bare, with just the branches where once the green leaves stood proudly, swaying in the cool wind.

In March, early Spring, sunrise is around 6.45 am, and sunset is 6.15 pm; in late March, sunrise moves to around 6.45 am and sets at 7.15 pm.



Stunning Scotland in winter.

Days become noticeably longer with sunrise before 5.30 am and sunset after 9 pm by late May;

Peak British summer (July-August) typically features comfortable, mild-to-warm temperatures, with daily highs averaging between 24 and 30 degrees Celsius. Recent summers have frequently delivered heatwaves, with temperatures in the south rising to 36 degrees: hot by UK standards!

The highest temperature recorded recently in the UK was 35.5 degrees Celsius during the summer of 2025. This was slightly below the all-time high of 40,3 Celsius in July 2022. Usually, the UK summers have an average temperature of 16,1 Celsius, winters are severe. Looking at the figures, at first sight one could be forgiven for thinking these kinds of temperatures would happen in the Arctic, but they happened in the UK during two particularly severe winters - in 1947 and 1963.



Rising sea levels can cause havoc to public transport as services are hit, cutting off parts of the country.

Thousands of people were cut off for days by snowdrifts up to seven metres deep during the winter of 1947, which saw exceptional snowfall. Supplies had to be flown in by helicopter to many villages, and the armed forces were called in to help clear roads and railways.

Between January and March that year, snow fell every day somewhere in the country for 55 days straight. Much of this settled because temperatures stayed very low, just above freezing most days.

No one expected this winter to be severe, as January started with very mild temperatures of up to 14 °C. This was soon to change, however. An area of high pressure moved over southern Scandinavia, setting up a weather pattern which dominated the UK for the rest of the month. The first snow came on 23 January, falling heavily over southern England. Blizzard conditions occurred across south-west England, leaving many villages in Devon isolated.

When skies did clear, nighttime temperatures plunged. Woburn in Bedfordshire registered a low of -21 °C early on 25 February.

As the warmer weather moved across the UK, meltwater poured into rivers, causing many to burst their banks. Flooding problems began to spread across England from the south-west as a new depression moved in from the Atlantic, bringing rain and severe gales. During the afternoon of 16 March, winds over southern England averaged about 50 knots, with gusts of 80-90 knots. This damaged buildings and created even more problems, as the strong winds generated waves that pounded and even broke some flood defences.

River levels continued to rise. The banks of the Trent burst at Nottingham on 18 March, and hundreds of homes were flooded, many to first-floor level. While floods in the south-west England began to subside, other rivers continued to rise in eastern England. The Wharfe, Derwent, Aire and Ouse all burst their banks and flooded a huge area of southern Yorkshire. The town of Selby was almost completely underwater. Only the ancient abbey and a few streets around the marketplace escaped inundation. Seventy per cent of all houses in the town were flooded. The flooding continued into the spring, bringing a nasty end to the cold, snowy winter.



Stunning sunrise over Eastbourne beach town.



Flooding in the UK is a major problem after heavy rains and storms. Photo Courtesy

The winter of 1963 was the coldest for more than 200 years, making it one of the coldest on record.

With temperatures so cold that the sea froze in places, bringing blizzards, snow drifts, blocks of ice, and lows below -20 °C, it was colder than the winter of 1947 and the coldest since 1740.

It began abruptly just before Christmas in 1962.

The weeks before had been changeable and stormy, but then on 22 December a high-pressure system moved to the north-east of the British Isles, dragging bitterly cold winds across the country.



A van crushed under a fallen tree in the Great Storm of 1987, which BBC weatherman Michael Fish had dismissed. Photo Courtesy.

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A belt of rain over northern Scotland on 24 December turned to snow as it moved south, giving Glasgow its first white Christmas since 1938. The snow-belt reached southern England on Boxing Day and parked over the country, bringing a snowfall of up to 30 cm.

A blizzard followed on 29 and 30 December across Wales and south-west England, causing snowdrifts up to 6 metres deep. Roads and railways were blocked, telephone lines brought down, and some villages were left cut off for several days. The snow was so deep that farmers couldn't get to their livestock, and many animals starved to death.

This snow set the scene for the next two months, as much of England remained covered every day until early March 1963. While snow fell and settled, there was still plenty of sunshine!

The weak winter sun did not warm things up; the lack of cloud cover allowed temperatures to plunge. In Braemar, Scotland, the temperature fell to -22.2°C on 18 January.

The long, bitterly cold spell caused lakes and rivers to freeze, and even sea water in some of England's harbours turned to ice. Ice patches formed at sea and on beaches.

Brits say hell hath no fury worse than the weather of the United Kingdom.



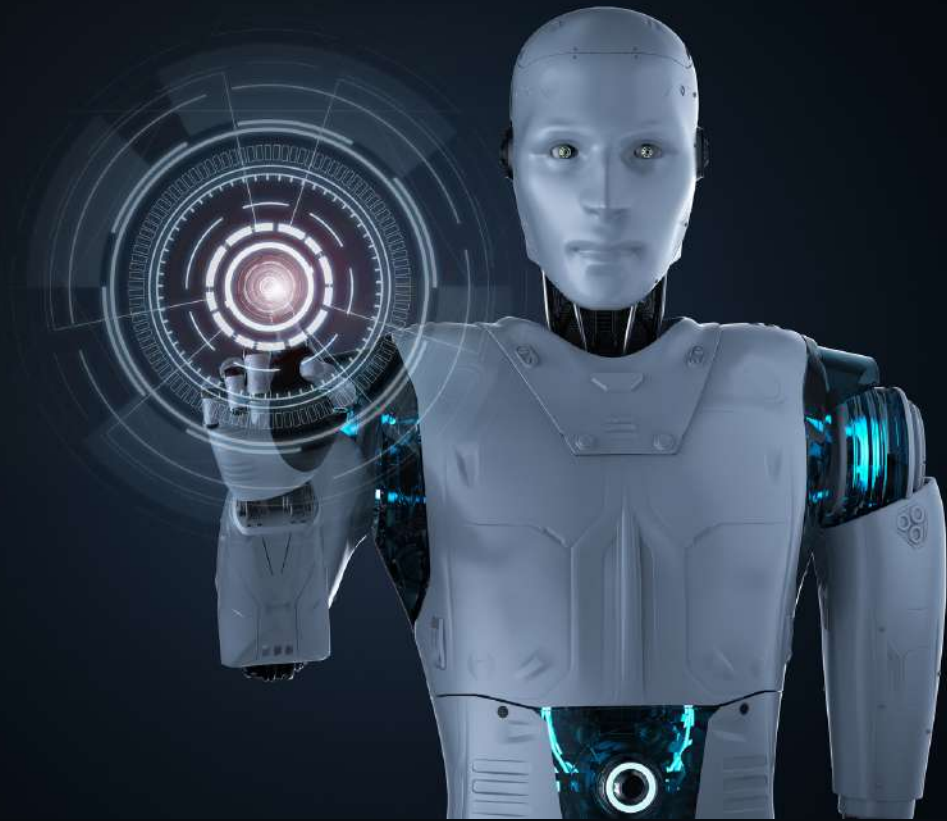
Snow-bound beauty...Aberystwyth, Wales, in the winter.
Photo Courtesy



Storm gathering in the Atlantic Ocean in all its ferocity.

TECH TRENDS 2026:

smart gadgets transforming everyday living



Technology is no longer confined to offices and laboratories. It has quietly woven itself into our homes, kitchens, fitness routines, and even our gardens. The latest generation of smart gadgets focuses less on complexity and more on convenience, helping people save time, stay healthy, and remain connected. Here are some of the most exciting technology trends and gadgets making waves this year.

BY ANKUR PAUL



AI-POWERED SMART GLASSES

Smart glasses have evolved beyond simple audio devices. Modern AI-powered eyewear can provide real-time language translation, navigation assistance, meeting summaries, and hands-free access to information. These lightweight wearables are becoming valuable companions for travellers, professionals, and students alike.

Why They Matter

- Instant language translation
- Voice-controlled assistance
- Hands-free navigation
- Increased productivity on the move

SMART RINGS: *Tiny Devices, Big Capabilities*

Fitness trackers are getting smaller and smarter. Smart rings now monitor heart rate, sleep quality, stress levels, and daily activity while looking like elegant pieces of jewellery. Their discreet design makes them popular among users who prefer not to wear bulky smartwatches.



Benefits

- Continuous health monitoring
- Long battery life
- Stylish and lightweight
- Useful wellness insights



AI HOME ASSISTANTS GET SMARTER

The newest generation of home assistants can understand natural conversations, learn routines, and manage multiple smart devices seamlessly. They can adjust lighting, remind users about medications, suggest recipes, and even help children with homework.

Why They Matter

- Personalized responses
- Enhanced privacy controls
- Smart energy management
- Voice-based home automation

PORTABLE AIR PURIFIERS FOR URBAN LIVING

With growing concerns about air quality, compact personal air purifiers are becoming popular. These portable devices use advanced filtration technologies and can be carried to offices, cars, and travel destinations.



Benefits

- Frequent travellers
- Urban residents
- Allergy sufferers
- Home office users



SMART GARDENING SYSTEMS

For plant lovers with busy schedules, smart gardening devices are proving to be game changers. These systems monitor soil moisture, sunlight exposure, and nutrient levels, sending alerts directly to a smartphone.

Why They Matter

- Reduced plant maintenance
- Better growth monitoring
- Water conservation
- Ideal for balconies and indoor gardens



Ankur Paul, masters in electronic engineering is also a regular columnist of Reader's Choice and has a flair in writing about technology.

CONVERSATION IN THE LANGUAGE OF IMMORTALITY

From the series:

“Creating the Image of the Human Being of the Future in Literature”



Dear Friends ,

Let us follow the distinguished Egyptian writer Ashraf About-Yazid on a friendly literary journey through the works of some of our fellow poets and writers. Through this brief exploration, we shall attempt to understand how the image of the future emerges from the fabric of the literary process—both for the individual and for human civilization as a whole. Let us begin with Ashraf himself.



ASHRAF ABOUT-YAZID
EGYPT

ASHRAF ABOUL-YAZID

Dozens of respected poets and writers have offered reviews and reflections on the literary journeys of Ashraf Dali, among them such renowned names as Ko Un, Cao Shui, Olga Medvedko, Anna Stelia, Mariela Cordero, Ismail Diadié Haidara, Keshab Sigdel, and Taghrid Bou Merhi.

The new book devoted to the literary traveler Ashraf brings together dozens of literary and intellectual voices from the Arab world, Asia, Europe, Africa, and Latin America, creating a rich human and creative panorama around the author of *The Silk Road*, *A Street in Cairo*, and *Shamus*. For some, he is first and foremost a poet; for others, a traveler, translator, journalist, or cultural ambassador. Yet all contributors agree on one important truth: he is the architect of a cultural project that transcends national borders and embraces a broader human horizon.

Readers of *The Literary Traveler* arrive at a clear conclusion: this book is far more than a tribute to a single individual. It is a documentary testimony to the vast network of friendships and cultural connections that Ashraf Aboul-Yazid has built over decades of creative and intellectual work. Through the writer's journeys, the book tells a story about the power of literature to build bridges between peoples and about the ability of the written word to cross continents like a true traveler.

SHIRANI RAJAPAKSE, SRI LANKA

The literary landscape of Sri Lankan poet Shirani Rajapakse unfolds at the intersection of human rights, social justice, and the consequences of conflict. Her narratives trace the delicate threads of migration and cultural identity, weaving the nuances of women's experience and the broader human condition into the cosmic cycle of samsara through a profound Buddhist perspective.

Refusing to be confined by geographical boundaries, Rajapakse's pen connects the local with the global, examining contemporary crises that resonate throughout the world.

**SHIRANI RAJAPAKSE,
SRI LANKA**

Her work is distinguished by a fierce commitment to addressing systemic inequalities, exploring the socio-cultural forces that shape female identity, and portraying the psychological scars of war.

EDEN SORIANO TRINIDAD, PHILIPPINES

Eden Soriano Trinidad is a Filipino poet, writer, editor, translator, and passionate advocate of peace, cultural harmony, and humanitarian values. Widely recognized for her lyrical depth and unwavering commitment to unity beyond divisions of caste, creed, and race, she has become a distinctive voice in contemporary world literature.

Her poetry celebrates love, reconciliation, and the shared humanity that unites us all. Through both her words and her actions, Queen Eden—as she is affectionately known in literary circles—continues to build bridges between cultures and inspire hearts across the globe. Her poetry is not merely an art form; it is a call to compassion, dialogue, and lasting peace.

**EDEN SORIANO TRINIDAD,
PHILIPPINES****ELDAR AKHADOV, AZERBAIJAN / RUSSIA**

Eldar Akhadow is a pioneer with the soul of a poet, the creator of numerous essays, short stories, fairy tales, and poems. North and South, cold and warmth, reality and myth, experience and memory—all these opposites do not confront one another in his works but instead form a unified system of coordinates.

The human being in this world is not merely an observer but a connecting link between different dimensions of existence. The value and strength of Akhadow's work lie in the fact that it does not merely describe life but helps the reader understand it. As critic Alexander Karpenko has observed, "The joy of life reigns supreme in Eldar Akhadow's writings. Through his creation, he restores a fragmented world to its original state of unity."

**ELDAR AKHADOV,
AZERBAIJAN / RUSSIA**

ADEL KHOZAM, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Adel Khozam is a distinguished poet and media figure from the United Arab Emirates, renowned for his pioneering international initiatives of global significance. Among them is Mansira, a cosmic poetic epic co-authored by eighty-six poets from around the world.

Khozam belongs to the modernist generation in the UAE and played a foundational role in the development of Arabic prose poetry alongside a group of poets in the early 1980s. His creative legacy includes books encompassing not only poetry, but also philosophical works, novels, research studies, and translations.

**ADEL KHOZAM,
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**

Particular attention should be paid to his significant contribution to enhancing the global importance of poetry. Within the Arab literary sphere, his work is recognized as among the most innovative and profound achievements of Arabic poetry in the first quarter of the twenty-first century.

AYO AYoola-AMALE, NIGERIA

Ayo Ayoola-Amale is an award-winning Nigerian poet, artist, storyteller, and peacebuilder whose work combines profound emotional honesty with vivid imagery, creating a new language of liberation.

As the founder of the Splendors of Dawn Poetry Foundation and the initiator of the global exhibition The Canvas for Peace, Ayo employs the power of imagination to deconstruct systemic barriers. She is also the creator of the acclaimed children's series Every Child, which promotes the power of storytelling as a source of inspiration for future generations.

**AYO AYoola-AMALE,
NIGERIA**

Grounded in the principles of inclusivity and compassion, Ayo's literary and performance works strive to move beyond self-expression, actively amplifying the voices of marginalized communities and transforming social tensions into profound human connection.

LUIS CARLOS PRESTES FILHO, BRAZIL

Composer, film director, lyricist, journalist, writer, poet, actor, illustrator, and expert in culture and economic development, Luis Carlos Prestes Filho is the author of numerous literary and poetic works, among them Heroic Trilogy.

This book is quintessentially Brazilian in every sense of the word. It is a fusion of prose, poetry, philosophy, songs, music, graphics, and photographs into which one may gaze and discover a living, moving being illuminated by carnival lights and scented by the ocean—a being called Rio de Janeiro.

**LUIS CARLOS PRESTES FILHO, BRAZIL**

This book is a true carnival of heroic stories of the people, a work permeated by metaphysics and the astonishing reality of a particular place and time. The work of Luis Carlos Prestes Filho is beautiful and dangerous at once, like love at first sight, in the sense that once one falls in love with its rhythms and lines, it becomes impossible ever to stop loving them.

NIA AMIRA OSMAN (KURNIA SUPRIHATIN), INDONESIA

The value of her work is determined not only by its undeniable artistic merit, but also by those qualities that make it uniquely relevant and profoundly important in our difficult age of change and upheaval.

The poet's lines are infused with a grateful, reverent, and deeply felt love for all living things on Earth. Nia travels extensively and writes about lands and countries she knows firsthand. Invisible threads of spiritual kinship bind together the people of our planet, and this truth is clearly felt by everyone who encounters her works, presented simultaneously in several languages.

**NIA AMIRA OSMAN (KURNIA SUPRIHATIN), INDONESIA**

Stories from all corners of the world intertwine in the radiant, love-filled lines of Nia Amira Osman. Her poetry is filled not only with joy, but also with profound compassion and sorrow.

From Indonesia with Love... is a great book about the love of Amira Osman—a love that cannot belong to a single person because it belongs to the entire world. And the whole world belongs to her.

MARGARITA AL, RUSSIA

The post-futurist cosmopoetics of Margarita Al is directed toward the ontological and spiritual dimensions of the future. In the words of the thinker and poet Konstantin Aleksandrovich Kedrov, her work is “poetic language awakened into life, thinking matter woven from light, time, and memory...”

Margarita Al's vertical eight-step ladder—from Phantasmagoria to Synergy (Phantasmagoria, Frustration, Demassification, Discordia, Metamorphoses, Agape, Epiphany, Synergy)—is an ascent of the poetic word through the states of being.



MARGARITA AL, RUSSIA

Here, the poet is not an observer but an operator of space. She is a pioneer whose microscope is consciousness itself and whose object of inquiry is existence. How can the eternal be held within the finite? How can one enter infinity without losing oneself? There is only one answer: through poetry.

Language becomes both an organ of memory and an organ of revelation.

Margarita Al is a rare poet. She cannot be compared to anyone else. Hers is contemplation; hers is insight; hers is the art of living in the tension between eternity and the fleeting moment, between inhalation and exhalation.

Thought is broken down to the state of a primordial particle, a first atom, and then—before the reader's very eyes—is assembled once again. This is not merely imagery but a form of visionary perception, a mode of seeing dreamed of by the visionaries of the Silver Age.

Margarita Al was anticipated in many of the theoretical explorations of the Futurists. They were not allowed to bring this poetry to its culmination. Yet the twenty-first century has taken up their voice. And now it resonates on that frequency where poetry becomes the only language of immortality.

Summarizing our brief literary journey, we may say:

- ***about the power of literature to build bridges between peoples and the ability of the written word to cross continents like true travelers;***
- ***about the ability of poetry to trace the subtle threads of migration and cultural identity woven through human feelings and thoughts;***

- *about poetry as not merely an art form, but also a call to compassion, dialogue, and lasting peace;*
- *about the human being as not merely an observer in this world, but a connecting link between different dimensions of existence, capable through creativity of helping restore a fragmented world to its original harmony and unity;*
- *about the global significance of poetry and literature as a whole for the future of civilization;*
- *about the power of contemporary narratives as sources of inspiration for future generations;*
- *about the fact that literary creation can be infused simultaneously with metaphysics and with the astonishing reality of the places and times it portrays;*
- *about the fact that great literature cannot belong to a single person, because it belongs to the entire world;*
- *about poetry becoming the only language of immortality.*

Compiled by
Eldar Akhadov
Azerbaijan | Russia



FLAVOURS OF THE MONSOON:

COMFORT SERVED WARM



As the first raindrops kiss the earth and the scent of petrichor fills the air, our kitchens naturally turn toward comfort. Monsoon cuisine is more than just food; it is an experience woven with memories of family gatherings, steaming cups of tea, and recipes passed down through generations.

This season, we bring you three special recipes that celebrate the warmth, richness, and nostalgia of the rains.



Article by :-

Sunita Paul
Ceo, Aabs Publishing House
Editor-in-Chief, Reader's Choice

AJWAIN AND SPINACH FRITTERS

A MONSOON CLASSIC WITH A HEALTHY TWIST, THESE CRISP FRITTERS PAIR BEAUTIFULLY WITH A HOT CUP OF MASALA CHAI.

- 2 cups spinach leaves, finely chopped
- 1 cup gram flour (besan)
- 1 teaspoon ajwain (carom seeds)
- 1 green chilli, finely chopped
- Salt to taste
- Water as required
- Oil for frying



METHOD

Mix spinach, gram flour, ajwain, chilli, and salt in a bowl.

Add water gradually to make a thick batter.

Heat oil in a deep pan.

Drop spoonfuls of batter and fry until golden brown.

TIP:-

Add a pinch of roasted cumin powder for an earthy twist

Serve hot with mint chutney or tamarind dip.

COCONUT AND VEGETABLE STEW

INSPIRED BY COASTAL KITCHENS, THIS FRAGRANT STEW IS LIGHT, NOURISHING, AND PERFECT FOR A RAINY EVENING.



INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup mixed vegetables (carrots, beans, potatoes)
- 1 cup thick coconut milk
- 1 cup thin coconut milk
- 1 small onion, sliced
- 1 inch ginger, grated
- 1 green chilli, slit
- 1 teaspoon coconut oil
- Salt to taste
- Curry leaves

METHOD :-

Cook vegetables in thin coconut milk until tender.
Add onion, ginger, chilli, and curry leaves.
Simmer gently for five minutes.
Stir in thick coconut milk and salt.

TIPS:-

Drizzle coconut oil on top and serve with appam, bread, or steamed rice.

JAGGERY RICE PUDDING WITH CARDAMOM

NO MEAL IS COMPLETE WITHOUT A TOUCH OF SWEETNESS. THIS TRADITIONAL DESSERT OFFERS WARMTH AND COMFORT IN EVERY SPOONFUL.



INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup rice
- 1 litre milk
- ½ cup grated jaggery
- 4 green cardamom pods, crushed
- 2 tablespoons chopped almonds and cashews
- A few saffron strands (optional)

METHOD :-

Cook rice in milk on low heat until soft and creamy.

Add jaggery and stir continuously.

Mix in cardamom and saffron.

TIPS:-

Garnish with nuts and serve warm.

MONSOON COMFORT KHICHDI

WHEN THE SKIES TURN GREY AND THE RAIN TAPS GENTLY AGAINST THE WINDOW, FEW DISHES OFFER AS MUCH COMFORT AS A BOWL OF WARM KHICHDI. LIGHT, WHOLESOME, AND EASY TO DIGEST, THIS ONE-POT MEAL IS A TIMELESS FAVOURITE DURING THE MONSOON SEASON.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup rice
- ½ cup yellow moong dal
- 1 small potato, diced
- 1 carrot, diced
- ½ cup green peas
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1 inch ginger, grated
- ½ teaspoon turmeric powder
- 1 tablespoon ghee
- Salt to taste
- 4 to 5 cups water



METHOD :-

Wash the rice and moong dal thoroughly and set aside.

Heat ghee in a pressure cooker or deep pot and add cumin seeds.

Add grated ginger and sauté for a minute.

Add the vegetables and cook for two to three minutes.

Stir in the rice, dal, turmeric, and salt.

Pour in the water and mix well.

Pressure cook for three whistles or simmer in a pot until the rice and dal become soft and creamy.

TIPS:-

Serve hot with pickle, papad, or a spoonful of ghee.

Simple yet satisfying, this comforting khichdi is the perfect companion for a rainy day, bringing warmth and nourishment with every spoonful.

Food has a remarkable way of bringing people together, especially during the monsoon. Whether it is the crunch of a fritter, the comfort of a warm stew, or the sweetness of a traditional pudding, these recipes remind us that the simplest meals often create the most cherished memories. As the rain falls outside your window, gather your loved ones, brew a cup of tea, and celebrate the season one delicious bite at a time.

LANGUAGE SPOTLIGHT

你好

Hola

Hello

أب حرم

नमस्ते

सं पा द की य हिं दी

नेहा भांडारकर

सोशल मीडिया ने आम आदमी को मंच, आवाज़ और बाज़ार मतलब मार्केट तीनों दे दिए हैं।

लेकिन सोशल मीडिया पर अब किसिका नियंत्रण नहीं है। मीडिया का मुक्त वापर आज जातीय, धार्मिक, राजनैतिक कलह का कारण बनी है। इसलिये लगता है कि आज किसी और नई प्रणाली का आविष्कार कराना जरूरी है।

सोशल मीडिया का बुरा प्रभाव यह है कि सुबह आँख खुलती है तो सबसे पहले व्हाट्सएप का स्टेटस। रात को सोने से पहले इंस्टाग्राम की आखिरी रील। मानें या न मानें, सोशल मीडिया अब हमारी साँसों में बस गया है। इसका प्रभाव हमारी जिंदगी पर बहुत गहरा असर डालते जा रहा है।

इसके अच्छे और बुरे दोनों प्रभाव हमारी जिंदगी पर पड़ रहे हैं।

(1) सामाजिक प्रभाव देखते हैं...

१) आपसी जुड़ाव और दूरी दोनों बन रही है।
एक साधारणसी वीडियो कॉल पर दुनिया के किसी भी कोने से दोस्त-रिश्तेदार जुड़ सकते हैं। जिससे दुनिया छोटी हो गई है। पहले चिट्ठी 15 दिन में पहुँचती थी। आज मेरी सहेली अमेरिका में बैठे-बैठे मेरी दिवाली की रंगोली देख लेती है। उस सहेली को घर बैठे-बैठे मैं अपनी मेहंदी या अपनी नई साड़ियां दिखा सकती हूँ।

मगर मेरे पास-पास, साथ-साथ बैठे लोग भी फोन में खो जाते हैं और आपसी दूरियां बढ़ जाती हैं।

२) जन-आंदोलनों का मंच तैयार हुआ है।
बेटी पढ़ाओ, बेटी बचाओ, #MeToo, किसान आंदोलन, पर्यावरण बचाओ जैसे जन आंदोलन के मंच तैयार हुए हैं। हम अंग्रेजी में लिखने वाले की कवी पुरी दुनिया में एकसाथ कनेक्ट हो गये हैं। एक ही मुहूर्त पर। जिनके विषय होते हैं STOP WARS/GLOBAL PEACE/ HUMANITY... जिसके जरीए हम अपनी आवाज़ मिनटों में अपने देश में ही नहीं बल्कि पुरे विश्व तक पहुँचा सकते हैं। अपनी आवाज़ दुनिया भर पहुँचाने का 'कॉक्रोच जनता पार्टी' एकदम ताजा उदाहरण है।

३) नई पहचान मिलती है....
फेसबुक/ वॉट्स अप/ इंस्टाग्राम जैसे सोशल मीडिया पर गाँव का कलाकार, गृहिणी, छात्र, यहाँ तक के कवी और लेखक सबको अपना हुनर दिखाने का मंच मिला है।

(2) मानसिक और भावनात्मक प्रभाव...

.१) इन दिनों जेन जी में एक नई अवधारणा पनप रही है। फोमो और तुलना।

(FOMO...fear of missing out)

मेरी जिंदगी से कहीं कोई चीज छूट न जाए इसका डर उनमें हमेशा बना रहता है। जैसे कि सिनेमा, किताबें, पर्यटन इत्यादि। जिसके कारण दूसरों की 'परफेक्ट लाइफ' देखकर तनाव, हीनभावना, डिप्रेशन बढ़ रहा है। जो चीज दूसरों को मिल रही है वह मुझे मिलनी ही चाहिए। यह इसके पीछे का कारण है।

.२) वैलिडेशन की लत

सोशल मीडिया पर मिले लाइक-कमेंट से उनका मूड तय होता है। आत्मविश्वास बाहरी हो गया है।

३) साइबर बुलिंग....

ट्रोलिंग, बॉडी शेमिंग, गलत कमेंट से खासकर युवाओं का मानसिक स्वास्थ्य बिगड़ने का धोका है।

(3) शैक्षणिक प्रभाव...

. १) ज्ञान का भंडार

यूट्यूब, इंस्टाग्राम, लिंकडइन से फ्री में स्किल सीखना आसान हो गया है। गाँव का बच्चा भी IIT के लेक्चर देख सकता है। अंग्रेजी भाषा सीख सकता है। और भी बहुत कुछ ज्ञान प्राप्त कर सकता है।

. २) ध्यान भटकना...

रील्स की 30 सेकंड की आदत से एक छोटीसी 100 पन्नों की किताब पढ़ने का धैर्य कम हुआ है। पेशन्स नहीं रहा हैं।

३)फेक न्यूज़ और अफवाह....

बिना जांचे मेसेज फॉरवर्ड करने से दंगे, गलत इलाज, परीक्षा के पेपर लीक जैसी समस्याएँ खड़ी होती हैं।

(4). आर्थिक और राजनीतिक प्रभाव...

.१) रोज़गार के नए रास्ते...

गाँव का कोई लड़का यूट्यूब से कोडिंग सीखकर गूगल में जॉब पा सकता है।

(Blogging /vlogging) ब्लॉगिंग और व्लॉगिंग कर पैसा कमा सकते हैं।

कंटेंट क्रिएटर, डिजिटल मार्केटिंग, ऑनलाइन बिज़नेस कर, लाखों लोगों की कमाई का ज़रिया बन सकता हैं।।

ऑनलाईन कपडे बेचना /गृह उद्योग जैसे काम कर सकते हैं।

२)लोकतंत्र का डिजिटल रूप....

नेता सीधे जनता से जुड़ते हैं। पर 'आईटी सेल' और प्रोपेगैंडा भी तेज़ी से फैलता है।

.३) छोटे व्यापार को पंख मिलते हैं....

इंस्टाग्राम शॉप, व्हाट्सएप बिज़नेस से घर बैठी महिलाएँ और पुरुष उद्यमी बन रहे हैं।

(5). सांस्कृतिक प्रभाव...

१) लोकल से हम ग्लोबल हो सकते हैं....

बाली/इंडोनेशिया में क्रूज़ पर हम अपने हिंदी गाने सुन रहे थे। हमारा भोजपुरी गाना कोरिया पहुँच रहा है, कोरियन ड्रामा बिहार देख रहा है।

. २) भाषा और हिंदी का बदलता रूप...

हिंग्लिश, मिंग्लिश, शॉर्ट फॉर्म, मीम कल्चर, इमोजिज ...नई भाषा बन रही है।

. ३) त्योहारों का डिजिटल रूप....

राखी , दिवाली विडियो कॉल पर मनाई जा रही है.... रिश्ते बचे हैं, तरीका बदल गया ।

४) कॉरपोरेट्स हो या साहित्यिक...अपनी ऑनलाइन मीटिंग्स कर सकते है ।

५) ए. आय, चैट जी. टी.पी. जैसे नए टूल सबके हाथ में आये है । उसका दुरुपयोग ना हो ।

निष्कर्ष...

"सोशल मीडिया चाकू की तरह है । सब्जी काटो या उंगली, चुनाव आपका है ।"

चाकू गलत नहीं होता, इस्तेमाल गलत होता है ।

इसलिए हमें तीन बातें याद रखनी हैं ...

1. *सीमा* —सोशल मीडिया के लिए दिन में 1 घंटा बहुत है । बाकी समय किताब, खेल, परिवार को दो ।

2. *सोच* — लाइक/ कमेंट से अपना मूड मत तय करो । जो दिखता है, वो हमेशा सच नहीं होता ।

3. *जाँच* — फॉरवर्ड करने से पहले 10 सेकंड रुको । क्या ये सच है? क्या इससे किसी का नुकसान होगा?

अंत में बस यही कहूँगी... सोशल मीडिया को अपनी नौकरानी बनाओ, मालिक नहीं । हम फोन को चलाएँ, फोन हमें न चलाए ।

क्योंकि असली लाइफ इंस्टा , व्हाट्सअप पर नहीं, फेसबुक पर नहीं, फेस-टू-फेस होती है ।

© नेहा भंडारकर

संपादक (रीडर्स चॉईस , हिंदी विभाग)

नेहा भंडारकर एक त्रिभाषीक लेखिका है।

उनकी हिंदी, मराठी और अंग्रेजी भाषा में 18 किताबें प्रकाशित हुई है। उनका साहित्य देश-विदेश की 15 से अधिक भाषाओं में अनुदित हुआ है। भारत में और दुनिया भर की अनेक पत्रिकाओं में उनकी कविताएं प्रकाशित होती रहती है। उन्हें दो बार महाराष्ट्र राज्य हिंदी साहित्य अकादमी से सम्मानित किया गया है और विदेशों से भी उन्हें अनेक पुरस्कार तथा सम्मान प्राप्त हुए हैं। उनका साहित्य मराठवाड़ा यूनिवर्सिटी तथा अमरावती यूनिवर्सिटी में बी.कॉम. प्रथम वर्ष और बी.कॉम. अंतिम वर्ष में समाहित किया गया है। महात्मा गांधी अंतरराष्ट्रीय हिंदी यूनिवर्सिटी में उनकी किताबों पर शोधकार्य और पी.एचडी. किया जा रहा है।



* और शुभ्र गुलाब रक्तवर्ण हो गया! *

— इन्दिरा किसलय —



प्रेम तो प्रेम है। उसे परिभाषाओं के संजाल से मुक्त होना चाहिए। जब हम उसे शब्द देते हैं तो जैसे सजा देते हैं। इस क्रम में कुछ नहीं, बहुत कुछ छूट जाता है और हम छटपटाने लगते हैं। एहसास और शब्दों के बीच का अंतराल बेचैन कर जाता है।

आँखों से काम लेने की कला जिन्हें आती है उन्हें प्रतीकों को आजमाने की जरूरत नहीं पड़ती। पर फिर प्रणय की विवशता है कि, जानते हुये भी संकेत, वस्तु, बिंब चुनना पड़ता है।

इजिप्ट की महारानी "क्लियोपेट्रा" को ही लीजिए ना जिसने अपने प्रेमी मार्क एंटोनी के स्वागत में 200 फीट तक, 18 इंच मोटी गुलाबों की कालीन बिछा दी थी। फूलों ने यहां भी खामोशी से सुलह कर ली।

प्यार पूजा है। वह फूलों सा नाज़ुक, ओस जैसा मासूम, आत्मा से निर्दोष, अंतरिक्ष सा विराट, क्षितिज सा भासमान, सूरज सा उष्मा/उर्जादायी, बकुल या सुरगी के फूलों की तरह सूखने पर भी महकता रहता है। कोई इसके आगोश में गुलमोहर सा खिलना चाहता है, तो कोई ओस की भाँति दूर्वा को छूना चाहता है। एहसासों की झील में उतरे हुये चाँद की तरह अनुभव करता है। तो कोई प्रसाद जी के शब्दों में पृष्ठ बैठता है---"तुम कनक किरण के अंतराल में लुक छिपकर कर चलते हो क्यों?"

हे लाज भरे सौंदर्य बता दो मौन बने रहते हो क्यों!"

प्रेम और फूल एक दूजे के पर्याय हैं। कोमलता, स्वर्गिक छुआन, पागल कर देने वाली पुलक, सम्मोहक रंग ध्वनि और मदहोश कर देनेवाली महक---कहने की जरूरत नहीं कि ज़िक्र गुलाब का हो रहा है। कहा जाता है राजा दुष्यन्त गुलाबों के विशेषज्ञ थे।

काँटे भी क्या खूब परवरिश करते हैं। गुलाब को z + सुरक्षा प्रदान करते हैं। संस्कृत में गुलाब को पाटल या तारुणि पुष्प कहा गया है। प्रणयी जनों की किताबों में अक्सर गुलाब की सूखी हुई पाँखुरियां मिल ही जाती हैं। जो उन दिनों का धड़कता हुआ दस्तावेज होती हैं। लब डब करते हुये हृदय की मर्मर ध्वनि सुनाती हैं। अमृता प्रीतम ने इमरोज़ को लिखा -- "तुम्हारी फूल जैसी चिट्ठी मिली, वफा की खुशबू आई।"

अद्भुत कल्पना।

ग्रीक और रोमन सभ्यता में गुलाब को सौंदर्य और प्रेम की देवी एफ्रोडाइट से जोड़ा गया है। जिसके प्रतीकों में हंस और गौरैया के अलावा गुलाब भी शामिल है। कहा जाता है कि एफ्रोडाइट गुलाब के बाग में घूम रही थी। तभी उसके प्रेमी के घायल होने का समाचार मिला। वह जैसे ही तेजी से जाने को उद्यत हुई। हड़बड़ी में उसका पाँव सफेद गुलाब के काँटों पर पड़ा। उसके पाँवों से खून चूने लगा। उससे शुभ्र गुलाब रक्तवर्ण हो गया। और प्रणय का एकमेव प्रतीक बन गया।

शुक्र की देवी वीनस से भी जुड़ी हुई ,गुलाब के धरती पर अवतरण की कथा कुछ ऐसी है--'देवों का भोजन अमृत था। प्रेम के देवता क्यूपिड जब अपनी माँ वीनस के लिये अमृत लेकर आये तो कुछ बूँदें धरती पर छलक पड़ी। उसी स्थान पर गुलाब उग आया।

शेक्सपियर ने भी गुलाब की रूप राशि का कुछ ऐसा अनुभव किया -"गुलाब सुंदर होते हैं लेकिन इन्हें और सुन्दर बनाती है खुशबू जो इनका प्राकृतिक गुण है।"

प्यार और फूल किसी प्रथा परंपरा के मोहताज नहीं होते। मिट्टी ,धूप, हवा ,पानी, खाद सही मिले तो दोनों को पुष्पित पल्लवित होने से कोई रोक नहीं सकता। अपनी खुशबू हवाओं को सौंपकर निर्भर हो जाते हैं। न कोई वादा न दावा। सब कुछ अलिखित। इस इलाके में द्वैत वर्जित है।

"तेरी खुशबू तेरा ख्वाब तेरा जिक्र तेरी बातें।

इस तरह से मैंने अपने चमन को गुलज़ार कर लिया।"

हीर रांझा, सोहनी महिवाल, शीरी फरहाद, लैला मजनू सभी फूलों से प्रतिश्रुत थे। महसूस करनेवाली बात है कि मलिका नूरजहां ने याकूत हब्शी में ऐसा क्या पाया होगा। नूरजहां भी गुलाबों की दीवानी थी।

ऐसा कौन सा फूल है जिसे साहित्यकारों ने प्रणय राग नहीं सुनाया होगा। संस्कृत साहित्य तो कुबेर का खजाना है। उर्दू के लबों पर फूलों की छुआन है। फूलों की दुआ है।

"उसका चेहरा उजला दिन है उसकी आँखें शाम

रंगबिरंगे फूलों जैसे ढेरों उसके नाम।"

साबिर शहजाद की ग़ज़ल से भीनी भीनी महक उठती है---

"बहार भेजी है उस शरूख ने फूलों की तरह

कि लफ़्ज़ लफ़्ज़ शगुफ़्ता सा है गुलों की तरह

न जाने पेड़ में किसका बदन है पोशीदा

कि टहनियां भी निकलती हैं बाजुओं की तरह।"

प्रेम स्वयं ही स्वयं को व्यक्त करने के तरीके ढूँढ लेता है। वह अपनी भाषा, अपनी लिपि, अपना संस्कार, अपनी संरचना स्वयं है। वह स्वयंभू है। उसे न कोई बलात् पा सकता है न छीन सकता है।

कविकुलगुरु रवीन्द्रनाथ टैगोर का सुमन दर्शन वही समझ सकता है जो प्रेम में आकंठ डूबा हुआ हो।

"प्रेम से ही सृष्टि का जन्म, प्रेम से ही व्यवस्था बनती है और अंततः प्रेम में ही विलीन हो जाना होता है।"

प्रेम कोई दावा या वादा नहीं करता। वह गुँगे का गुड़ है। पारिजात कोई अपेक्षा नहीं करता, न बेला, न जूही, न मोगरा, रातरानी न गुलाब। बस खिलना उनका धर्म है। फूल सच्चे धर्मानुरागी हैं। मनुष्य से लाख लाख गुना अधिक धर्मप्रवण।

उनका क्षेत्रफल अनंत ब्रह्माण्ड है। प्यार भी ऐसा ही है। अणु अणु इससे आकर्षित आवेशित है।

प्रकृति का अनमोल उपहार। न राह न थाह न किनारा न मंज़िल। बस वह है। वह जहां है वहां और कुछ नहीं रह सकता। प्रेम गली अति साँकरी जा मे दो न समाया। एकान्त संगीत की स्वर लहरियां तरंगों पर सवार होकर सारी कायनात के कानों में गुनगुन करती हैं।

गैरी चैपमैन की किताब The five love language में भी फूल का फलसफा है। कवि "कीट्स" ने अपनी नायिका के सुषुप्तावस्था के सौंदर्य को ऐसे गुलाब से उपमित किया है जो अपने पूर्ण प्रफुल्लित सौंदर्य को समेटकर पुनः कली के रूप में परिणत हो गया है।

फूलों से जुड़ी अनेकों कथाएं गजब का रुमान रचती हैं। प्राचीन ग्रीक किंवदन्ती का स्मरण हो आता है जिसमें कहा गया है कि देवी एस्ट्रा ने आकाश से धरती की ओर देखा--धरती पर तो कोई तारा नहीं है--यह सोचकर वह रो पड़ी। उसके आँसू जहां जहां गिरे एस्टर फूल बन गये। यह फूल ललित और सुकुमार सौंदर्य का प्रतीक है। प्रेम को ताबीज भी कह सकते हैं जिसे धारण करने पर अनिष्टकारी तत्वों से रक्षा की गारंटी मिलती है।

कहने की आवश्यकता नहीं कि प्रेम ,फूलों सी परवरिश माँगता है। बेहद आत्मीयता से तितली के पंखों की छुअन से संवारा जाना चाहता है। वह सम्मोहन का पाश बुनता है। शुद्धता की सुगंध प्रसारित करता है। प्रेम और फूल में द्वैत नहीं है। अंततः कहना ही पड़ता है प्रेम में फूल ही काम आते हैं। रक्तवर्ण गुलाब। देवदूत बनकर ऊपरवाले का तोहफा सौंप जाते हैं।

© इंदिरा किसलय

परिचय :

नाम --श्रीमती इन्दिरा किसलय

जन्म --30 जून /जि.बालाघाट (म प्र)

शिक्षा-- एम .ए (सागर विश्वविद्यालय)

(मो नं-9960994911)

प्रकाशित कृतियां-10/सहयोगी संकलन 30

प्रकाशन : 100 से अधिक पत्र पत्रिकाओं में आलेख ,कविता,लघुकथा, क्षणिका, संस्मरण, व्यंग्य, समीक्षा,गीतिका, हाइकु , सेदोका आदि प्रकाशित।

प्रसारण : आकाशवाणी नागपुर के त्रैमासिक कवि सम्मेलन एवं स्वर्ण जयंती समारोह में काव्यपाठ।विगत 25 वर्षों से कविता एवं कहानियों का प्रसारण/

नागपुर दूरदर्शन/ यू सी एन/ एल एम ओ चैनल पर साक्षात्कार प्रदर्शित//नेशनल बुक ट्रस्ट के कार्यक्रम में सहभाग/

समीक्षाएं- 30/ स्तंभ लेखन-- लोकमत समाचार/नवभारत/

ई पत्रिका- इरा,काव्यालय, अभिव्यक्ति आदि में प्रकाशन/

नवोदित प्रवाह-देहरादून/सद्भावना दर्पण -रायपुर में महाराष्ट्र प्रतिनिधि/

15 रचनाकारों की कृतियों में प्रस्तावना

गौरी देशपांडे एवं प्रिया तेंडुलकर की कहानियों का हिन्दी अनुवाद/

अनेक साहित्यिक संस्थाओं से संलग्न/

अनेक प्रतिष्ठित सम्मान एवं पुरस्कार



विशाल अंधारे की 5 हिन्दी कविताएं.

बारिश के बारे में एक पुरानी बात

हमारे शहर में बारिश
सिर्फ आसमान से नहीं गिरती थी।
वह उन लोगों की आँखों से भी
उतरती थी
जिन्होंने जीवन भर
कुछ बातें कहने से रोक रखी थी।

इसीलिए पहली
बारिश के दिन
पुराने घरों की लकड़ियाँ
अचानक बोलने लगती थी।
खिड़कियों के कोनों से
भीगती हुई गंध आती
जैसे किसी ने
बरसों बाद
अपना बंद संदूक खोला हो।

मैंने देखा है
बारिश में सबसे पहले
सड़कें नहीं
मनुष्य की आवाज़ें भीगती हैं।
लोग धीरे बोलने लगते हैं
पुरानी यादों को
बिना वजह छूने लगते हैं
और जिन्हें कभी लौटकर नहीं आना था
वे भी अचानक
भीतर कहीं चलने लगते हैं।

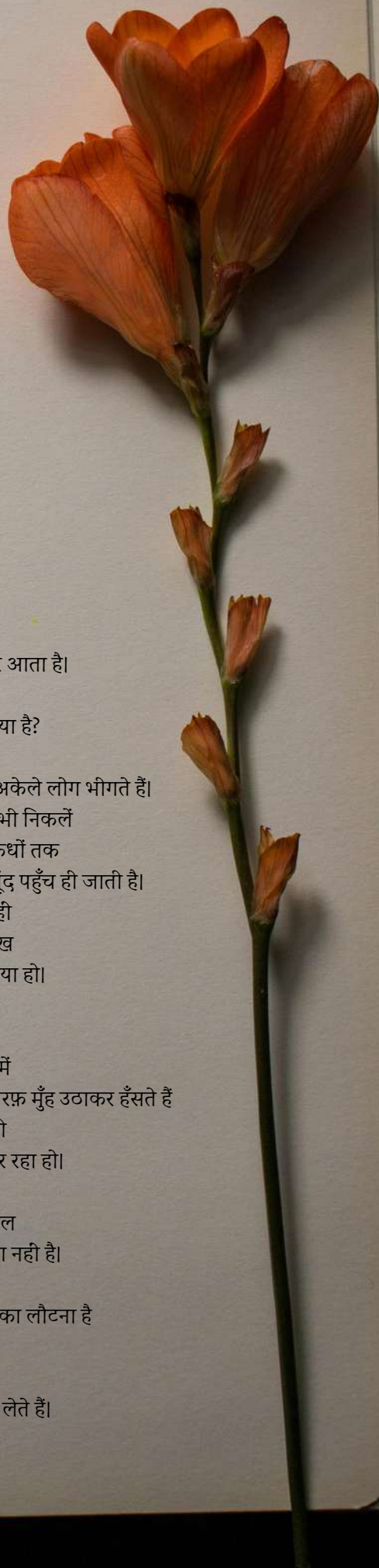
हमारे यहाँ कहा जाता था
बारिश दरअसल
बादलों का नहीं
धरती का धैर्य टूटना है।
बहुत दिनों तक
वह अपने भीतर
बीजों की प्यास
पत्तों की धूल
और मनुष्यों की थकान
छुपाकर रखती है।

फिर एक दिन
अचानक
उसका मन भर आता है।

तुमने ध्यान दिया है?
बारिश में
सबसे ज़्यादा अकेले लोग भीगते हैं।
वे छाते लेकर भी निकलें
तो भी उनके कंधों तक
कोई न कोई बूंद पहुँच ही जाती है।
जैसे मौसम नहीं
कोई पुराना दुख
उन्हें पहचान गया हो।
और बच्चे,
वे अब भी
पहली बारिश में
आकाश की तरफ़ मुँह उठाकर हँसते हैं
मानो पानी नहीं
सीधे समय गिर रहा हो।

बारिश दरअसल
पानी की घटना नहीं है।

वह उन चीज़ों का लौटना है
जिन्हें हम
सूखे दिनों में
मरा हुआ मान लेते हैं।



मेरे हिस्से की तुम

कहा जाता है,
कुछ स्त्रियाँ पृथ्वी पर नहीं जन्मती
वे उन तारों की राख से बनती हैं
जिन्हें देवताओं ने
अपनी इच्छाओं से अधिक चमकने पर
बुझा दिया था।

तुम शायद वैसी ही रही होगी।

अगर तुम्हारे जीवन में केवल एक पति होता
तो मैं उसे वैसे ही स्वीकार कर लेता
जैसे पहाड़ स्वीकार कर लेते हैं
अपने ऊपर बने मंदिरों का भार।

पर तुम्हारे भीतर जो दूसरा प्रेम था
उसने मेरे भीतर के प्रेमी को
धीरे-धीरे ऐसे घायल किया
जैसे किसी प्राचीन जनजाति में
दो चाँदों का एक साथ उग आना
समुद्र के सारे कछुओं को दिशा-विहीन कर देता था।

मैंने कई बार चाहा
कि तुम्हें सिर्फ एक मनुष्य की तरह प्रेम करूँ
पर तुम हर बार
किसी कथा में बदल जाती थी।

कभी तुम वह स्त्री लगती
जिसके लिए असुरों ने
पहली बार आग को पानी में छिपाया था

कभी वह दुर्लभ वृक्ष
जिसकी छाल पर
मृत प्रेमियों के नाम
रात होते ही उग आते थे।

तुम्हारा प्रेमी
कोई देवता नहीं था
बस एक आदमी था
जिसके पास तुम्हारा वह समय था
जो कभी मेरे हिस्से नहीं आया।

और यही बात
मुझे सबसे अधिक दुख देती थी।

मैं हर बार तुम्हारे पास लौटकर
वैसा ही खाली हो जाता था
जैसे युद्ध के बाद
राजमहलों में बची रह जाती है
सिर्फ धूप की गंध।

अगर सचमुच जन्मों का कोई अँधेरा कुआँ है
जहाँ आत्माएँ अगली देह चुनती हैं

तो अगले जन्म
तुम्हें मेरे लिए ही गढ़ा जाए

जैसे सदियों से अधूरी पड़ी किसी वीणा के लिए
अंततः बनाया जाता है
उसका एकमात्र स्वर।



सिलाई

दादी कहती थी...

जब पृथ्वी अधूरी थी, देवताओं ने उसे
एक विशाल कपड़े की तरह
चार दिशाओं में तान रखा था।

तभी एक बूढ़ी स्त्री आकाश की सिलवटों में अपनी सुई भूल गई
वही सुई आज भी
ध्रुवतारे के पास चमकती है

तब से जो कुछ भी बना, सिलाई और उधड़न के बीच बना।

कहते हैं...

हर नवजात अपनी मुट्ठी में
उस अदृश्य धागे का
एक सिरा लेकर आता है।
कोई उससे जाल बुनता है, कोई झंडा
कोई फाँसी, कोई पाला।

मुझे जो टुकड़ा मिला, मैं वर्षों तक उसे प्रकाश समझता रहा।

मैंने देखा है...

रात भर तारे आकाश के फटे हिस्सों पर चाँदी के टाँके लगाते रहे।

लेकिन किसी ने नहीं देखा

वह महीन टाँका जो हर रात क्षितिज के फटते हुए किनारे को फिर से जोड़ देता है।

जब सब सो जाते हैं...

मैं उसी टाँके के पास बैठकर अँधेरे के
फटे कपड़े में एक और गाँठ लगाने की कोशिश करता हूँ।

यदि किसी सुबह आकाश
अब भी अपनी जगह पर मिले
तो समझना
कही
कोई अदृश्य हाथ अब भी सिलाई कर रहा है।



तुम मेरी नहीं हो...

तुम मेरी नहीं हो, जैसे सिंधु घाटी की
टूटी हुई मुहर पर बना बैल
अब किसी साम्राज्य का नहीं।

फिर भी जब बारिश शुरू होती है
मेरे भीतर कच्ची मिट्टी की एक सभ्यता धीरे-धीरे भीगने लगती है।

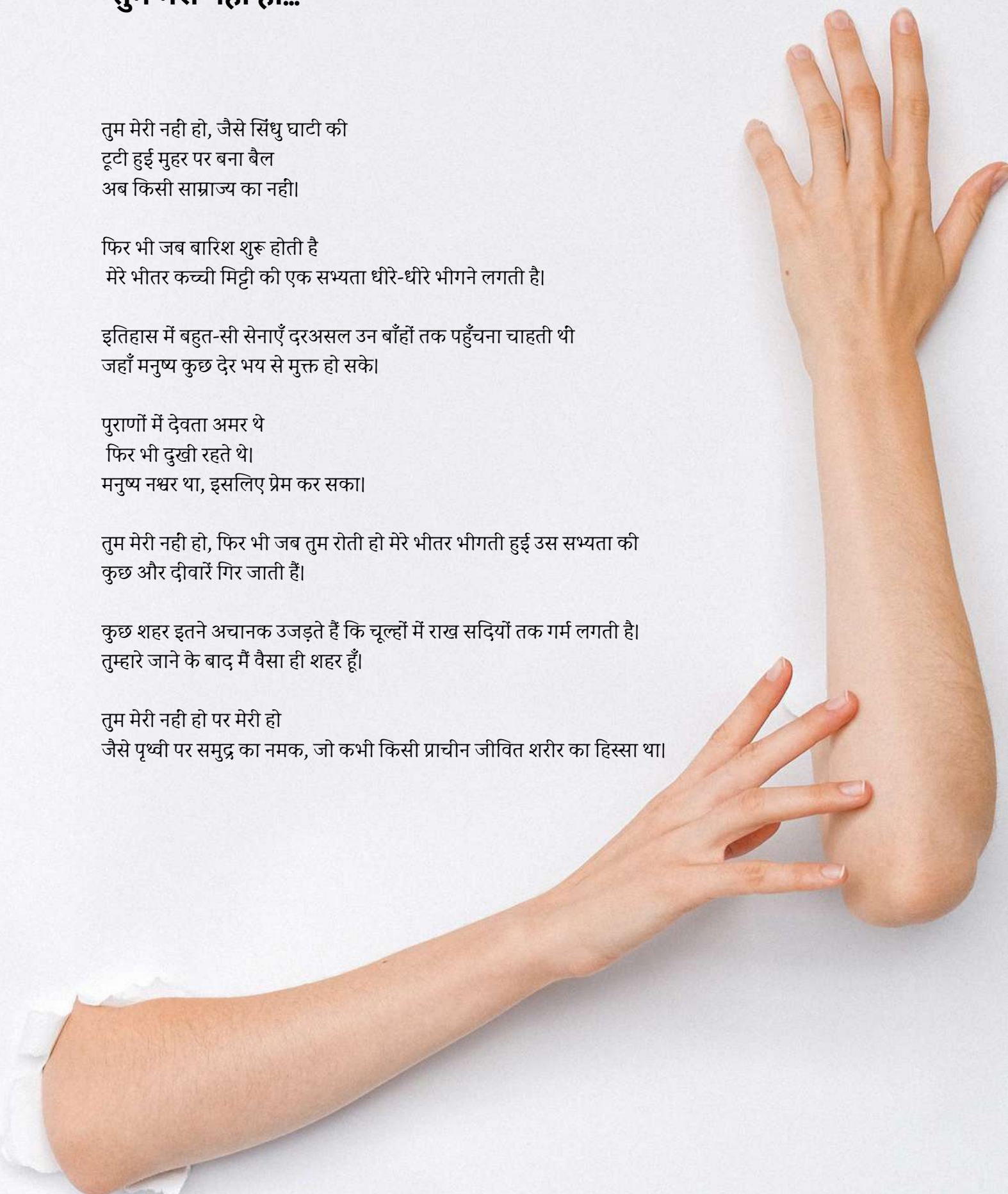
इतिहास में बहुत-सी सेनाएँ दरअसल उन बाँहों तक पहुँचना चाहती थी
जहाँ मनुष्य कुछ देर भय से मुक्त हो सके।

पुराणों में देवता अमर थे
फिर भी दुखी रहते थे।
मनुष्य नश्वर था, इसलिए प्रेम कर सका।

तुम मेरी नहीं हो, फिर भी जब तुम रोती हो मेरे भीतर भीगती हुई उस सभ्यता की
कुछ और दीवारें गिर जाती हैं।

कुछ शहर इतने अचानक उजड़ते हैं कि चूल्हों में राख सदियों तक गर्म लगती है।
तुम्हारे जाने के बाद मैं वैसा ही शहर हूँ।

तुम मेरी नहीं हो पर मेरी हो
जैसे पृथ्वी पर समुद्र का नमक, जो कभी किसी प्राचीन जीवित शरीर का हिस्सा था।



पुल

दो गाँवों के बीच
एक नदी थी।

वह रोज़
अपने खोए हुए प्रेमी के लिए
पानी में एक पत्थर रखती थी।

बरसों बाद वहाँ
एक पुल खड़ा हो गया।

आज लोग
एक स्त्री की प्रतीक्षा पर
चल रहे हैं।

परिचय :

नाम - विशाल किशनराव अंधारे

जन्म - मुरुड, महाराष्ट्र

निवास - लातूर, महाराष्ट्र

प्रकाशन :

1. आठवें रंग का गुब्बारा (कविता संग्रह)

2. इन्नर आदि साझा संग्रहों में कविताएँ प्रकाशित

साहित्यनामा, पोषम पा, हिंदीनामा जैसे अनेक डिजिटल मंचों पर भी आपकी कविताएँ प्रकाशित।



म रा ठी सं पा द की य

नेहा भांडारकर

भारतीय पत्रकारितेवर आक्षेप घेताना भारतीय आयुर्विमा महामंडळाचे निवृत्त कर्मचारी मिलिंद कुमारजी अत्यंत परखडपणे आपले विचार मांडतात. ते लिहितात की...

२०१३ मध्ये, पत्रकारिता स्वातंत्र्य निर्देशांकात भारताचा क्रमांक सुमारे १४० वा होता. २०२६ पर्यंत, भारताची घसरण होऊन तो १५७ व्या क्रमांकावर आला होता. याचा अर्थ, केवळ १२ वर्षांत, भारतातील माध्यमांची स्थिती इतकी खालावलेली आहे की, जग आता आपल्याला "अंशतः लोकशाही" आणि "भीतीवर आधारित पत्रकारिता" यांचे उदाहरण म्हणून पाहते.

खरंच, आज पाकिस्तान १५३ व्या, बांगलादेश १५२ व्या आणि भारत १५७ व्या क्रमांकावर आहे. ज्या देशांवर टीव्हीवर दररोज "अपयशी" म्हणून टीका केली जाते, त्यांनीही माध्यम स्वातंत्र्यात आपल्याला मागे टाकले आहे. हे यश योगायोगाने मिळालेले नाही; त्यासाठी रात्रंदिवस कठोर परिश्रम घ्यावे लागले. लोकशाहीची गळचेपी.

एके काळी, माध्यमे पंतप्रधानांना घेरून बसायची. आता, प्रश्न कोण विचारणार आणि त्यांचे पाय कोण धुणार हे ठरवण्यासाठी पंतप्रधानच माध्यमांची निवड करतात.

इंदिरा गांधींना आणीबाणीबद्दल, राजीव गांधींना बोफोर्सबद्दल, नरसिंह राव यांना घोटाळ्यांबद्दल, तर अटलबिहारी वाजपेयींना कारगिल गुप्तचर यंत्रणेच्या अपयशाबद्दल प्रश्न विचारण्यात आले. माध्यमांनी मनमोहन सिंग यांना 'मौन मोहन' असे संबोधून एक जिवंत मीम बनवले होते.

माध्यमे २जी, राष्ट्रकुल क्रीडा स्पर्धा, कोलगेट, महागाई, दहशतवाद आणि अशा सर्वच मुद्द्यांवर दररोज सरकारवर टीका करत असत. पत्रकार पत्रकार-परिषदेत उभे राहून समोरासमोर प्रश्न विचारत असत. सरकार नाराज होत असे, पण ईडी पत्रकारांच्या घरी जात नसे. चॅनलच्या परवान्यांना किंवा जाहिरातबंदीला कधी धोका नव्हता.

आता पत्रकारिता अस्तित्वातच नाही; तो केवळ एक सरकारी सोपस्कार बनला आहे. पंतप्रधान जाहीर पत्रकार परिषदा टाळतात आणि टीव्ही अँकर त्यांना मुलाखतींमध्ये विचारतात, "तुम्ही आंबे कापून खाता की चोखून?" देश बेरोजगारीचे विक्रम प्रस्थापित करत आहे, तरीही एका अभिनेत्याने मंदिरात बूट घातले होते की नाही यावर टीव्हीवर जोरदार चर्चा सुरू आहे.

पेट्रोलचे भाव ११० च्या वर गेले तर अँकर म्हणेल की त्यामुळे राष्ट्र मजबूत होते. गॅस सिलेंडरची किंमत १२०० झाली तर तो म्हणेल की त्याग ही भारतीय संस्कृती आहे. रुपया घसरला तर तो त्याला परकीय कट म्हणेल. महागाई वाढली तर तो म्हणेल की ही एक "जागतिक घटना" आहे. दुष्काळ पडला तर तो म्हणेल की उपवास शरीरासाठी फायदेशीर आहे.

इतकं निर्लज्ज माध्यम कदाचित इतिहासात कधीच पाहिलं नसेल.

२०२४ च्या अहवालानुसार, भारतातील तरुणांमधील बेरोजगारीचा दर १५ ते २० टक्क्यांच्या दरम्यान होता, पण टीव्हीवरील तासन्तास चाललेल्या चर्चेचा विषय काय होता? हिंदू आणि मुस्लिम.

देशात एलपीजी सिलेंडरची किंमत ४०० वरून १०००-१२०० झाली, पण लोकांचा संताप व्यक्त करण्याऐवजी, चॅनल्सनी "उज्ज्वला क्रांती"बद्दलचे कार्यक्रम दाखवले.

२०१४ नंतर, माध्यमांवरील कॉर्पोरेट नियंत्रण झपाट्याने वाढले. मोठ्या उद्योगपतींनी चॅनल्स विकत घेतले, जाहिराती सरकारकडे गेल्या आणि ज्यांच्याकडे जाहिरातींची मालकी आहे, तेच संपादकीयावरही नियंत्रण ठेवतात.

सरकारला माहित आहे की जर कॅमेरा नियंत्रणात असेल, तर लोकांचे मन नियंत्रणात असते. म्हणून, ते खरे मुद्दे गायब करतात.

बेरोजगारी गेली. शिक्षण गेले. रुग्णालये गेली. शेतकरी गेले. फक्त दररोज एक नवीन धार्मिक तमाशा उभा करा आणि लोकांना भांडत ठेवा.

तुम्हाला माहित आहे का सर्वात धोकादायक गोष्ट कोणती आहे?

जनतेला हे कळू दिले जात नव्हते की त्यांचे शोषण होत आहे.

लोकांना महागडे पेट्रोल भरायला लावा आणि म्हणा राष्ट्रीय हित. त्यांना महागडा गॅस विकत घ्यायला लावा आणि म्हणा आत्मनिर्भरता.

बेरोजगारी निर्माण करा आणि म्हणा स्टार्टअप.

प्रश्न विचारल्यास तुम्हाला देशद्रोही म्हटले जाते.

दुसऱ्या शब्दांत सांगायचे तर, एखाद्याचा खिसा कापा आणि त्याला टाळ्या वाजवायला लावा. इतिहासात कदाचित यापेक्षा मोठी राजकीय जादू झाली नसेल.

लोकशाहीत, न्यायालये आणि प्रसारमाध्यमे ही सामान्य माणसाची शेवटची आशा असतात. न्यायालये उशिरा का होईना न्याय देऊ शकतात, पण जर प्रसारमाध्यमांशी तडजोड केली गेली, तर जनता अंधारात राहते. आणि भारतात नेमके हेच घडले. चौथा स्तंभ आता सत्तेच्या मांडीवर बसून जनतेला फटकारतो.

पत्रकार सरकारला नाही, तर जनतेला विचारतात, "तुम्ही इतके प्रश्न का विचारत आहात?"

१५७ वे स्थान ही केवळ एक क्रमवारी नाही. ही संपूर्ण व्यवस्थेची शवविच्छेदन तपासणी आहे. यातून हे उघड होते की भारतातील प्रसारमाध्यमे आता बातम्या विकत नाहीत, तर विशिष्ट कथानके विकतात.

ते पत्रकारिता करत नाही, ते प्रचार करते.

ते प्रश्न विचारत नाही, ते आदेश वाचते.

टीव्हीवर ओरडणाऱ्या अँकर्सना पाहून जनता स्वतःला राष्ट्रवादी समजत राहते, पण दुसरीकडे त्यांचे खिसे, नोकऱ्या, भविष्य आणि विचार चहूबाजूंनी पिळले जात आहेत.

ज्या दिवशी एखाद्या देशाची माध्यमे मरतात, त्या दिवशी लोकशाहीला आयसीयूमध्ये दाखल केले जाते. आणि भारताची लोकशाही सध्या व्हेंटिलेटरवर आहे, आणि टीव्ही अँकर्स तिच्यासमोर ढोल वाजवत, "सगळं ठीक आहे," अशी घोषणा करत आहेत.

नेहा भांडारकर ह्या त्रैमासिक लेखिका आहेत. हिंदी, मराठी आणि इंग्रजीत अशी त्यांची एकूण 18 पुस्तके प्रकाशित झालेली आहेत. पंधराहून अधिक भाषांमध्ये त्यांचे साहित्य अनुवादित होऊन देश-विदेशातील मासिकांमध्ये प्रकाशित देखिल झालेले आहेत. देश-विदेशातील अनेक प्रतिष्ठित पुरस्कारांच्या त्या मानकरी आहेत.

महाराष्ट्रराज्य हिंदी साहित्य अकादमी तर्फे त्या दोनदा पुरस्कृत झालेल्या आहेत.

भारतात मराठवाडा आणि अमरावती युनिव्हर्सिटी मध्ये त्यांचे साहित्य एम.ए. बी. कॉम. पंधरा वर्ष आणि बी. कॉम. तृतीय वर्ष इत्यादी साठी अभ्यासक्रमात समाविष्ट आहे.

महात्मा गांधी आंतरराष्ट्रीय हिंदी यूनिवर्सिटी मध्ये त्यांच्या पुस्तकावर विद्याथ्यांनी शोध कार्य केलेले आहे.



अंजली कुलकर्णी यांच्या 5 कविता

(" बदलत गेलेली सही " या कविता संग्रहातून)

चित्र खेड्याचे

शाळेत चाललाय चित्रकलेचा तास
विषय दिलाय ' चित्र खेड्याचे '
विषय तसा जुनाच
आता तर सारं जगच वैश्विक खेडं म्हणे
"चला मुलांनी, काढा चित्र वैश्विक खेड्याचे "

" गुरुजी , इराक- इराण
भारत -पाक
की इस्त्रायल - पॅलेस्टाईनच्या रक्ताची
झुळझुळ नदी काढू इथे?"
"काठावरची ही उध्वस्त घरं तर
विश्वातल्या कुठल्याही खेड्यातील
चालतील ना ? "
"आणि ही पाहा गुरुजी ,
आरडीएक्सनं व्यवस्थित होरपळवलीये
किनाऱ्यावरची हिरवळ
हवैत जाणवतीय ना
रासायनिक प्रदूषणाचा दरवळ ?"
"आणि ही ओंधळी पांगळी
अणुस्फोटप्रस्त मुलं
अविश्वासाने पहातायत एकमेकांकडे
जमलीयेत ना नीट ? "

" पाहा पाहा ,
चॅनेलवर सांडलंय स्विट्झर्लंडचं बर्फ
बुवाबाजीचं प्रस्थ वॉलमार्टचं रहस्य
बोसनियातल्या घडामोडी
एकटेच राहतायत शेजारी आजीबा
दाराशी पडतीये तीन दिवस
दुधाची पिशवी पेपराची घडी.."

"ट्विटर असताना किलबिलणारे पक्षी
काढण्याची काय गरज गुरुजी ?
करू या का योना हद्दपार
या धुराने काळवंडलेल्या आकाशात
दिशापार ?"

"या सगळ्यांच्या पाठीमागे काढलेत
पाहा डॉलर्सचे डोंगर
पाठीराखे भरभक्कम
त्यातून डोकावतोय ना तो सूर्यही
त्यांचाच"
" आणि ही बघा गुरुजी , आयटी
पार्कमधली गुबगुबीत सॅलरी
पॅकेजची कबुतरं
सुपरमॉलच्या हिरवळीवर दाणे टिपणारी
गुरुजी , उडवू का यांना पश्चिमेकडे?
म्हणजे पूर्ण होईल चित्र रम्य खेड्याचे "



नाकारत नाकारत

कुठून कुठून शहराच्या वळचणीला
येतात ही माणसं
आवळा देऊन कोहळा काढावा तशी
कवडीमोल मजुरीच्या मोबदल्यात
यांच्या कष्टावरच
उभी राहतात बडी बडी शहरं..

तिरस्काराचा दृष्टिक्षेप मिळावा महारोग्याला
तशी उपेक्षा नि घृणेची थुंकी झेलीत
मिरवतात अनधिकृतपणाचा शिक्का मस्तकावर..

काटकुळ्या देहात लढत राहण्याची विस्तव धग घेऊन
बुलडोझरला पुन्हा पुन्हा सामोरे जातात..

जगण्याची अनिवार इच्छा
सळसळत वाहते
वस्तीत वाहणाऱ्या नाल्यातून
स्थानिक संघटनांचे मीडकळलेले तंतू
लोबकळत राहतात
शहरांना धरून..

'खेडी सोडा बलुतेदारी सोडा'
असा भीममंत्र जपत दाखल होतात
नि नव्या गावकुसाबाहेरचं जगणं
किडा मुंगी सारखं जगू लागतात..

पुनः पुन्हा 'माझे माझे' म्हणत
अपरिहार्यतेची करुण मिठी
वेटाळत राहते शहराला
माजणार नाही आणि मरणारही नाही
याची काळजी घेत शहर
नाकारत नाकारत स्वीकारते
या वेशीबाहेरच्या जगण्याला...

लपवाछपवी

किती बरे झाले
लागला कपडे घालण्याचा शोध
अन लाभले माणसांना
संस्कृतीचे संरक्षक आवरण
अन्यथा जनावरांपेक्षा वेगळे कसे
दिसली असती आपण ?

बरे झाले
निर्माण झाली भाषा संकरातून
म्हणूनच शब्द आले माणसाच्या तैनातीसाठी
अन्यथा कसे दडवले असते आपण सत्य ओठी ?

किती बरे आहे देहाभोवती असते
त्वचेचे तरुण कोमल आवरण
नाहीतर आतली रक्त मांसाची
विद्रुप भेंडोळी पाहताना
कसले आकर्षण वाटले असते
परस्परांविषयी
अन कशी सुरु राहिली असती ही जगरहाटी ?
(मग कदाचित एकमेकांच्या जठर , यकृत नि आतड्यांची स्तुती करावी लागली असती माणसांना)

किती बरे आहे
समजत नाहीत बाहेर
मनाच्या आतली वादळे
हमसून धुमसून उसासताना
किंवा
वेदना ओघळल्याच नाहीत आसवे होऊन
तर मोतीच वाटतात हास्यशिंपल्यातले
आणि
उच्चार उमटलाच नाही मूक ओठांतून
तर साध्वीच असते प्रत्येक स्त्री ...

‘तो’ ‘ती’ आणि ‘ते’

‘तो’ आणि ‘ती’ च्या गुंत्यात
अडखळलेला पाय सोडवून
आताशी पोहोचलेय तुझ्यापर्यंत
सख्ये
आजवर आमचंच आम्हाला सुटत
नव्हतं स्त्री पुरुष अस्मितेच कोडं
म्हणून अंमळ उशिरानच धाडलंय
तुझ्याकडे हे मैत्रीचं घोडं

कशी जगलीस आजपर्यंत
जन्मदात्यांनीही नाकारलेलं जिणे जगत
साहित्य सिनेमा संस्कृतीने केलेली
टवाळ निर्भत्सना साहत
जगण्यासाठी टाळी वाजवत
कधी आक्रमक बनत

सिग्नलला पाहायची मी लांबून तुझ्याकडे
तू पाहिलंस की नजर वळवायची
आपल्यापर्यंत येऊ नये हिनं/ह्यानं
म्हणून काळजातली कळ
खोलवर धडधडायची..

कधीतरी गाडीत पुस्तकात रमताना
अचानक वाजली कानाशी टाळी
दचकून खिडकीची काच
घाईघाईने लावून घेतली
तेव्हा काच तडकेल असं आरपार
भेदक हसू हसून गेलीस
अपराधीपणाची एक काच
उरात खोल खोचून गेलीस

सर्वत्र नाकारलं जाण्यातली कटूता
पचवूनही जगत होतीस
अस्तित्वाच्या लढाईत
आतबाहेर किती आघात झेलत होतीस

आताशा घेतलं आहे आम्ही तुला
माणूसपणाच्या पटलावर सख्ये,
आता आताशा संवेदनेचा रस्ता
तुझ्याकडे वळलाय.

देर से सही पण दुरुस्त बनून राहू
‘तो’ ‘ती’ ‘ते’ यांना राहू दे
शरीराच्या गुंत्यात
आपण माणूस म्हणून
एकमेकींशी जोडल्या जाऊ...



बदाम राणी चौकट राणी

या घराची चौकट ओलांडून
मी रोजच जाते बाहेर
तथाकथित स्त्रीपणाची
सारी बंधने झुगारीत
मी फक्त स्वतःचे बंधन मानते

मी होऊ देत नाही चुकूनही
स्वतःला 'बाई'
माणूस म्हणून जगण्याचा
सहज पवित्रा असतो माझा
इतरांच्या नजरेतील बाई म्हणून
जोखण्याला
समंजसपणे दृष्टीआड करते मी

ते बनवू पाहतात मला
चौकट राणी
संस्कृतीच्या विहिरीवरचे
ओढायला लावतात रहाटगाडगे
नि स्त्रीत्वाच्या चौकटीबाहेर झेपावताना
अडवू पाहतात माझे स्वत्वाचे पाणी

किंवा हवी असते त्यांना
त्यांच्यासाठी एक बदाम राणी
त्यांच्या हृदयांना बाणांनी विंधत
दिलखेचक अदांनी, गाणारी
विभ्रमांची लाडिक फेकदार गाणी

पण मला बनायचे नसते
चौकट राणी किंवा बदाम राणी सुध्दा
मला हवे असते समंजस सहजीवन, पण
मला कुठल्या राजाची राणी बनून
राहायचे नसते
मला माझ्याच स्वतःच्या साम्राज्याची
सम्राज्ञी बनायचे असते मला
माणूस म्हणून जगायचे असते

संक्षिप्त परिचय :

अंजली कुलकर्णी

एम ए (मराठी साहित्य) एल एल बी

■ मराठी स्त्रीवादी कवयित्री /लेखिका

■ प्रकाशित पुस्तके- एकुण 23

■ प्राप्त पुरस्कार

१) पहिल्या दोन्ही कवितासंग्रहांना महाराष्ट्र राज्य सरकारचे उत्कृष्ट साहित्य निर्मितीचे केशवसुत पुरस्कार, महाराष्ट्र साहित्य परिषद, मराठवाडा साहित्य परिषद, उर्दू साहित्य परिषद, कामगार साहित्य परिषद, नारायण सुर्वे पुरस्कार, ना सी फडके प्रतिष्ठानचा पुरस्कार, राजर्षी शाहू पुरस्कार आणि अन्य एकूण 30 पेक्षा अधिक पुरस्कार .

■ हिंदी इंग्लिश नेपाली, गुजराथी, उर्दू इ भाषांमधून माझ्या कवितांचे अनुवाद प्रकाशित झाले आहेत.

■ "बदलत गेलेली सही " हा कविता संग्रह पुणे विद्यापीठात एम ए. मराठी

(स्वायत्त)अभ्यासक्रमात समाविष्ट .२०१३-२०१६

'बदलत गेलेली सही ' हा कवितासंग्रह स प महाविद्यालय पुणे यांच्या अभ्यासक्रमात समाविष्ट 2024 पासून.

■ एस एस सी बोर्डाच्या इ 10 च्या इंग्रजी माध्यमाच्या पाठ्यपुस्तकात ' रंग मजेचे रंग उद्याचे ' ही कविता गेली दहा वर्षे समाविष्ट .

■ दोन विद्यार्थी त्यांच्या पुस्तकांवर पीएचडी करित आहेत. एका विद्यार्थिनीची पी एचडी झाली आहे.

■ विविध संमेलनांचे अध्यक्षपद भूषविले आहे .

*आंतरभारती आणि साहित्यप्रेमी भगिनी मंडळ या दोन संस्थांची विद्यमान अध्यक्ष.

*महाराष्ट्र साहित्य परिषद, पुणे येथे कार्यवाह म्हणून कार्यरत.

(भ्र. क्र....9922072158)



सुनीता डागा ह्यांच्या पाच कविता

(महाराष्ट्र शासनाचा अतिशय प्रतिष्ठेचा कवी केशवसुत काठ्य पुरस्कार मिळालेल्या ह्या कविता)

मौनाचा सागर

भरभरून बोलण्याचे दिवस
इतिहासजमा होत जाण्याच्या या काळात
चहुबाजूंनी पसरलेला हा
मौनाचा अथांग सागर
याला ओलांडून आता परत
तो किनारा गाठणं कितपत शक्यंय
माहीत नाही मला

भरतीच्या वेळी अंगावर येईल
उसळतं मौन
अनेक अनोळखी
चिथावणीखोर लाटा
बोलू पाहतील आपल्याशी
तेव्हा हा अनाहूत संवाद
निभावून नेण्याचा संयम
आणावा लागेल आपल्याला

ओहोटीच्या समयी मौन होईल
अधिकच शांत गूढ
त्याचे छुपे वार
रक्तबंबाळ करतील आपल्याला
मात्र जेव्हा ही शांतता सोलून काढेल
तेव्हा
मौनाचं उत्तर मौनानंच द्यायचं आहे
हे लक्षात ठेवू आपण
संवादाचे सगळेच किनारे
धूसर होत जाण्याच्या या काळात
मौनाचा हा समुद्रच
पैलतीरावर नेईल आपल्याला...

थोडं थोडं दुःख

आपण वाट करून दिलेली सगळीच दुःखं
पेलवत नाहीत रात्रीला
तिचा म्हणून असतो एक अंधार
आपली दुःखं अजून गडद करतात तो अंधार
रात्रीत विलीन होतात दुःखं
अंधारात सरकत जाते पुढे रात्र
संकोचून थोडी दुःखं स्वतःजवळ ठेवत
बरीचशी परतवून लावते रात्र
मिसळून जाते दिवसात
दिवस गतिमान
धावतो एकसारखा
दुःखं बसतात शांतपणे ऊन शेकत
दाखवत नाहीत आपली ओळख
दिवसाची पाठ फिरताच
आळसावलेली ती उठतात शांतपणे
अंग झाडत बेमालूमपणे
विलीन होऊन जातात
रात्रीत

थोडं थोडं दुःख
पचवत जाते रात्र
थोडं थोडं दुःख नव्यानं
उगवून आणते रात्र

दंश

पुनः पुनः काही घडणारच नव्हतं आपल्यात
जे घडायला हवं होतं
ते एकदाच घडून गेलं होतं
हसत हसत
फारसं न स्पर्शत
कधीच दृष्टीआड झालं होतं

न घडण्याने
निवडलं होतं आपल्याला
घडण्यात नव्हतंच साध्य आपलं
न घडण्यातच श्रेय होतं
त्यातच होतं आपलं असणं

मात्र पुनः पुनः परतत राहिलो आपण
जे एकदाच घडलं
तो विचारी दंश आठवत
तोच कामी आला बहुतेक आपल्या
ओलांडून जाण्यासाठी
मोहा
च्या जागा दाहक...

साक्षीदार

दोष वाळवंटाचा नसतो
तृष्णेचा असतो
जागा चुकलेली असते
वेळही चुकलेली असते
मग पायांना ओढत
वाळवंट तुडवत
कशीबशी पुढे सरकत जाते
अनाथ तृष्णा

निमूटपणे सोबत चालत असतो तिच्या
काळाचा एक पोरका तुकडाही
रया गेलेला तर
अचानक
रंग दाखवू लागतं वाळवंट
धुळीनं भरलेल्या वावटळी उठतात
जिकडे तिकडे उंच उंच
वाळूच वाळूच पसरते सभोवताली

वाळूच्या समुद्रात
चुरुचुरु लागतात तृष्णेचे डोळे
पाहता पाहता
विलीन होऊन जाते ती शून्यात
अदृश्य होऊन जातात क्षणात
आशा अपेक्षांचे वाळूमय टेकाड
धूळ बसते गच्च काळाच्या तुकड्यावर

शांतावतं सगळं तेव्हा
काहीच न घडल्यासारखं
चमकत राहतं पुन्हा वाळवंट
उभी असते तृष्णा तशीच
संकोचलेली निष्प्रभ
अंग झाडत
आपले एक एक अवशेष गोळा करत

उध्वस्त तृष्णेचा
साक्षीदार मग
पुन्हा एक वाळवंटच !

उपकथा

ऐकवलीस तू
तुझी विरागी उदास कहाणी
किती ते तिचं भाग्य !

तयार होते रसिक श्रोते
माझ्या अंगणात
झाड पानं फुलं पक्षी
माझं छोटंसं अंगण भारून गेलं
तुझ्या कहाणीनं

किती चातुर्याने तू उलगाडलेस
आपल्या कहाणीचे पट
तिच्या अपूर्णतेचे कंगोरे

मग म्हणालास कशी बरं
पूर्ण करता येईल ही कथा
करता येईल जिवंत रसरशीत

ऐकली आम्ही
मन लावून तुझी कहाणी
जिथे जिथे टाकलेस तू उसासे
तिथे पेरल्या आम्ही
उपकथा

अर्थवाही होत
दिवसागणिक फुलत राहिली
तुझ्या रिक्ततेची विराणी

आलास मग तू अचानक भानावर
म्हणालास आता निघायला हवं
कुठे आहे माझं सामान
ओझं
माझी कहाणी
शिताफीनं वजा करून टाकल्या तू
साऱ्या उपकथा

आता काय करायचं ठरवलं आहेस तू
तुला जाणवत नाहीय बहुतेक
यापुढे
इथे तिथे
कुणाच्याही अंगणात
नसेल आता तुझ्या कहाणीला जागा
एकतर तुला सोडून जावी लागेल
आपली कहाणी
किंवा घेऊन जाव्या लागतील सोबत
आमच्या साऱ्या उपकथा...

©सुनीता डागा

(‘तुझं शहर हजारो मैलांवर’ या कवितासंग्रहातून)

परिचय :

सुनीता डागा ह्या हिंदी आणि मराठी भाषेतील प्रसिद्ध अनुवादक आणि कवयित्री आहेत. हिंदी साहित्यात त्यांनी एम ए केलेले आहे. त्यांनी दोन्ही भाषेत अनेक महत्त्वाची पुस्तके अनुवादित केलेली आहेत.

पुरस्कार :

‘तुझं शहर हजारो मैलांवर’ या कवितासंग्रहास महाराष्ट्र शासन कवी केशवसुत पुरस्कार/विशाखा पुरस्कार यांसहित अनेक प्रतिष्ठित पुरस्कार प्राप्त.



విషాదం - నిశ్శబ్ద అగ్నియానం

నిశీధి నీడల్లో
నిద్ర చెప్పే నక్షత్రాలు దాగిన రాత్రి,
ఆ రాత్రిలో పగలులా మండుతూ
గుండెలో అగ్గిరవ్వల వాన కురుస్తోంది.

పాదాల నుంచి శిరస్సువరకు
వేడెక్కిన నిశ్శబ్దం వ్యాపిస్తోంది;
ప్రతి ఊపిరి
ఒక నిప్పుకణికగా మారి
లోపల లోపలే కాలిపోతోంది.

మనసు పొరలు ఒక్కొక్కటిగా కరిగిపోతున్నాయి,
విషాదం బాణంలా గుండెను ఛేదిస్తోంది.

కళ్లలో నీళ్లు లేవు;
అవి గాజుగోళీలై పగిలిపోతున్నాయి.
పగళ్ళూ రాత్రులూ
ఒకే రూపమై
రాళ్ల వర్షంలా కురుస్తున్నాయి.

భవిష్యత్తు
నీలినీడల్లో కమ్ముకుంటోంది;
అయినా
వేపచెట్టుని అల్లుకున్న జాజితీగలా
ఒక చిన్న ఆశ
మదిలో ఇంకా ప్రాణం పోసుకుంటూనే ఉంది.

శిరస్సులో మండుతున్న కొలిమిలో
ఆలోచనలు అగ్నిజ్వాలలై
ఆత్మను దహిస్తున్నాయి.

ఇది దుఃఖం కాదు మిత్రమా,
జీవితాన్ని నిశ్శబ్దంగా
విరక్తి అంచులవైపు నడిపిస్తున్న
అగ్నిస్నానం.

ఈ శరీరాన్ని
సూరీడు మేల్కొలపలేకపోతున్నాడు;
ఈ కళ్లకు
జాబిలి నిద్ర పంచలేకపోతోంది.

ఇది
గాజుపాత్రలా పగిలిపోతున్న బ్రతుకు;
మౌనంగా రక్తస్రావమవుతున్న
ఒక అంతరంగ గాయం.

ఈ కాలం
ఒక చెరసాలగా మారుతోంది;
ఇక్కడ ధర్మం బందీ అవుతోంది,
అసహనం రాజ్యాధికారిగా ఎదుగుతోంది.

అయినా,
ఈ విధ్వంసం మధ్యలోనే
ఒక ఆపన్న హస్తం,
ఒక చిన్న వన్నె,
ఒక మాట,
ఒక చినుకంత కరుణ.
మళ్ళీ జీవించాలనే తపనగా
మొలకెత్తుతోంది.

ఓ హిమపాతమా,
ఈ అగ్నిగుండాన్ని
కప్పిపుచ్చగలవా?

ఓ జీవితమా,
ఒక్క క్షణమైనా
తలవాల్చే తల్పమై
కనికరించగలవా?

కష్టాలు మనిషికే వస్తున్నాయి;
ఎందుకొస్తున్నాయో ఆలోచించు.
కనీసం
రాబోయే జన్మ అయి
నా
వెలుగుబాటలో నడిచేలా
జాగ్రత్తపడు.

డా.మునగా రామ మోహన రావు
Dr M Rama Mohana Rai



ఎద్దుల బండి

పొలిమేరల పొద్దు పొంగే వేళమ్
పొగమంచు దారుల్లో నెమ్మదిగా
ఎద్దుల బండి సాగిపోతుంటే
గ్రామం గుండె చప్పుడు వినిపిస్తుంది...

గంటల మ్రోగింపులో
మట్టి వాసనల సంగీతం ఉంటుంది
చక్రాల చప్పుడు ప్రతి మలుపులో
కాలం రాసిన జానపద గీతం వినిపిస్తుంది...

ఎద్దుల కళ్ళలో ఓర్పు మెరుస్తుంది
రైతు చెమటలో భూమి నవ్వుతుంది
బండి మీద గడ్డి మోపుల మధ్య
బాల్యం ఇంకా ఊయలూగుతూనే ఉంటుంది...

నగరాల వేగం దాటలేని
ఒక ప్రశాంతత ఆ బండిదే
నిదానంగా సాగినా
జీవితాన్ని దగ్గర చేస్తుంది...

ఎద్దుల బండి అంటే
కేవలం ప్రయాణం కాదు
మన సంస్కృతిని మోసుకెళ్తున్న
మట్టి మనసుల జ్ఞాపకం...



పెరుగు సుజనారామం
Perugu Sujanaramam



మనిషి దారి

లేత వీపు మీద చరుపు
వీడుపు రాగం అందించినా..
కరుకుతనాన్ని పుట్టిస్తుంది.

పాకుతున్న ఏరుపై
విసిరిన రాయి
నీటితపస్సును భంగం చేస్తుంది.

చెట్టు నిరాకరించిన ఆకు
గాలికి గల్లంతవుతుంది.

అహం నిండిన తుఫాను
ఊరి అంతుతేల్చటానికి
సిద్ధమవుతుంది.

క్రోధం వదిలిన మాటల బాణం
మనసుపువ్వు రెక్కలు
విరుస్తుంది.

తరువు హృదయాన్ని
కావలించుకున్న వ్యక్తి మాత్రం
మనుషుల్లో రేగుతున్న మంటలకు
ప్రేమనీరు చల్లుతున్నాడు.

పచ్చటి పైరే
ప్రాణం మొక్కకు అంటు కడుతుంది.

రచన:- అవ్వారు శ్రీధర్ బాబు
సెల్:- 8500130770.

Avvaru Sridhar Babu



हरकत

कठिनाइयों के कलेवर लादकर
जिम्मेदारियों के विक्रम आगे बढ़ रहे होते तो
दूर्वा के होठों से सर जमीं
उनके तलुवे सहलाती है।

हरकत करना ही जीवन है
वह सागर का श्रीगणेश है

साहिल पर फेन के हस्ताक्षर अंकित किए बिना
सागर कभी सोता नहीं

क्यों लाग लपेटें

कलम की लकीरों के लिए कोरे कागज़ हरकतें करते रहते हैं पूरब के कैदखाने का जापा शिशु
हजारों पैरों से हरकत रहता है

हुकूमत की बंदिशें साँसों को बंदी बना नहीं सकतीं

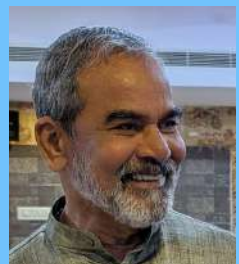
वह बवंडरों पर सवार होकर आता ही है

माटी जैसे इस देह में
मन ही हरकत है
साँस फूल जानेवाले देश में
हल्ला बोलना है हरकत है।

(नारायण रेड्डी जी के चरणों में समर्पित)

- हिंदीकरण डॉक्टर गणेश राम अनुवेदी

डॉक्टर गणेश राम अनुवेदी
केनरा बैंक में राजभाषा अधिकारी की हैसियत से सेवानिवृत्त
हिंदी और तेलुगु अनुवाद कार्य में जुटे हुए हैं। अब तक तेलुगु से हिंदी में अनूदित
एक उपन्यास, दो कहानी संग्रह और एक कविता संकलन प्रकाशित।
विभिन्न वेब पत्रिकाओं में भी इनका अनूदित साहित्य लगातार प्रकाशित होता
रहता है।



सं पा द की य हिं दी

"जो बीत गई सो बात गई "---- यह कथन एक बार नहीं, बार बार सुना है, फिर भी, इस लोकोक्ति पर न तो विश्वास आता है और न इसे भूल पाते हैं। हम अतीत को बार बार याद करते हैं, दोहराते हैं, याद कर के कभी आँखों में आँसू भर लाते हैं तो कभी अधरों पर मुस्कान।

बीत तो गई वो बात, पर गई नहीं। हमारे पास, हमारे दिल में रहती है। समय समय पर हम उस बात को याद करते हैं, कोई बात मुख खिला देती है तो कोई उदास और दुःखी कर देती है। बीती बात जाती नहीं। हमारे जज़्बातों में रहती है, बार बार याद आती है, इस प्रकार किसी खुशी को बार बार प्राप्त करते हैं, मुस्कुराते हैं और कभी किसी बात पर आँखों में आँसू भर लाते हैं। इस प्रकार हम किसी खुशी को बार बार और कभी खोई हुई दुखद घटना या बात को बार बार खोते हैं और बार बात रोते हैं। कुछ भी कहीं नहीं जाता न सुख और न दुख।

यह स्थिति कष्टप्रद है। जो बीत गया सो बीत गया,,उसे बीत ही जाने देना चाहिए। क्योंकि बार बार उसी भाव को जीने से अंत में दुख ही प्राप्त होता है। भुलाना सरल नहीं किन्तु असंभव भी नहीं। जो भूल जाते हैं आगामी जीवन सुख से बिताते हैं और जो नहीं भूल पाते, वही दुःख पाते रहते हैं बार बार। इस का आगामी जीवन पर भी प्रभाव पड़ता है। कोई भी शक्ति अतीत को वापिस नहीं ला सकती और भविष्य को बदल नहीं सकती। इसीलिए अच्छा है कि समय के साथ पवन के झोंको की तरह बहते चलो, जीवन में क्या अंतर आता है, स्वयं ही अनुभव किया जा सकता है। बस समय सरिता के साथ बहते चलो, यही बेहतर है, यही सुखद है।



मंजुला अस्थाना महंती
संपादक
(हिंदी एवं ओडिया विभाग)

दुखांत

न जाने किस तरफ जा रहा है जहाँ,
देखो जिस तरफ भी, बिखराव यहाँ वहाँ।

हर घर में बसा हुआ है, वीराना, सूनापन,
न जाने किस कोने में जा छिपा है अपनापन।

गूँजते थे घरों में ठहाके, किलकारियाँ, तराने,
कैसे लगते हैं औ वे घर अब, बिल्कुल बेग़ाने ।

कैसे कोई चुरा ले गया अधरों से मुस्कान
हँसने खिलखिलाने से वर्ना, वे न थे अनजान ।

सुचालित मशीनी युग में, मशीन ही बना इंसान,
आधुनिकता के बोझ तले, भूला अपनी पहचान।

पहले कितने मीठे रिश्ते होते थे, दादा,,चाचा,मामा के
जीवन चाशनी सा मीठा लगता, रिश्तों के प्रेम में पग के

दोस्तों के जमघट,खेलकूद, दौड़ भाग ,,कहाँ खो गये,
चने चबेने,जँगल जलेबी,धे रुचिकर,अब बेग़ाने हो गये।

पास पड़ोसी, रिश्तेदारी,मित्रता बंधुत्व,होते थे कभी,
मतलबी दोस्त,औ' एकल परिवार ही होते हैं अभी ।

रिश्तों को बचाए रखो, वर्ना सूनेपन में अकेले रह जाओगे,
अपनों से न जुड़े तो, प्रकृति,देश,स्वयं से कैसे निभाओगे ।

पिछले दशकों की पीढ़ी ने जिया है,देसी प्यार दुलार ,प्रगाढ़ रिश्तों की मिठास,
वैज्ञानिक अनुसंधान,प्रगति,सुविधाजनक,आविष्कार,
देखा विज्ञान का उजास ।

वर्तमान वयस्क बुजुर्गों के जाते ही यह दौर यह पीढ़ी लुप्त हो जायेगी,
किसी सदी में, ऐसा होता था कभी,बात बस इतिहास बन रह जायेगी ।

मंजुला अस्थाना महंती



ग़ज़ल

बन्द लब ने भी कहा कुछ न कुछ
बोलती है बस अदा कुछ न कुछ

मशविरा चलता किसी का नहीं
इश्क में दिल ने सहा कुछ न कुछ

आस उल्फ़त में वफ़ा की रही
पर निकलते बे-वफ़ा कुछ न कुछ

सर झुकाते जब तलक हम रहे
सर उठा इल्ज़ाम था कुछ न कुछ

सोच उन की हम हो अहसानमँद
इस लिए करते जफ़ा कुछ न कुछ

वादियाँ बदली बदलती रही
इश्क की चलती सबा कुछ न कुछ

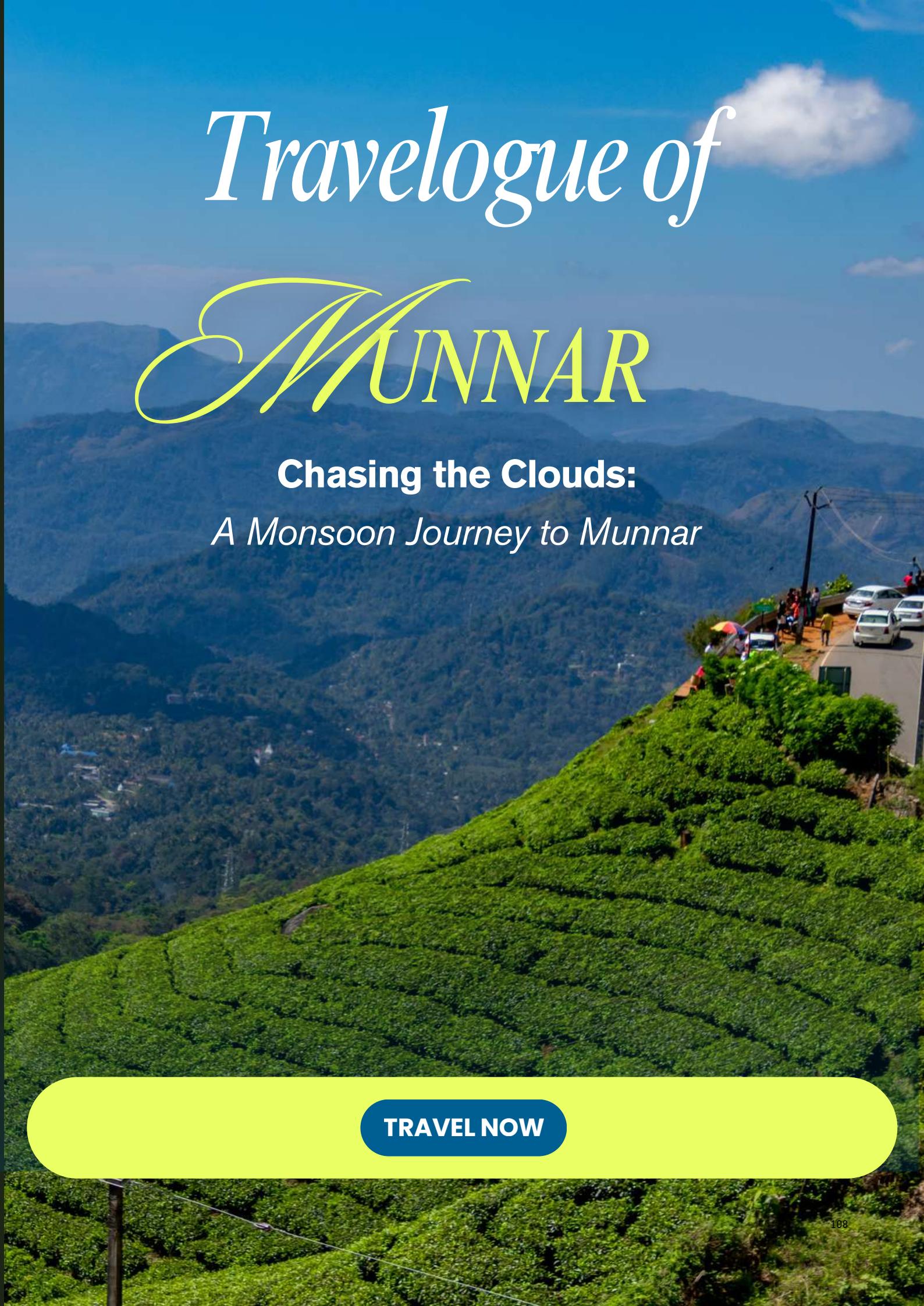
आँख से जो मय बिखरती रही
'लखन' हमने भी पिया कुछ न कुछ
लक्ष्मण सिंह 'लखन'

नाम लक्ष्मण सिंह

तखल्लुस 'लखन'

दैनिक अखबार राजस्थान पत्रिका से रिटायर्ड हैं। अभिरूचि लेखन है।
अभी एक आईटी कम्पनी में कार्यरत हैं।





Travelogue of **MUNNAR**

Chasing the Clouds:
A Monsoon Journey to Munnar

TRAVEL NOW

There are places that reveal their true beauty only when the rains arrive. Nestled in the Western Ghats of Kerala, Munnar is one such destination. As the first monsoon showers sweep across the hills, this charming hill station transforms into a breathtaking canvas of emerald tea gardens, silver waterfalls, and drifting clouds.

My journey to Munnar began on a misty morning. The winding roads leading to the town seemed to disappear into curtains of rain, while endless stretches of tea plantations rolled over the hills like a green velvet carpet. Every bend offered a postcard-perfect view, and the cool breeze carried the earthy fragrance of wet soil and fresh leaves.



The monsoon paints Munnar in a thousand shades of green. Waterfalls that remain modest during summer become roaring spectacles. The famed Attukad Falls thundered down rocky cliffs, surrounded by dense forests glistening with raindrops. Standing there, drenched by the fine spray, I felt nature's raw power and beauty.



One of the most memorable experiences was an early morning visit to the tea estates. Clouds floated lazily over the plantations while tea pickers, dressed in colourful rain gear, moved gracefully through the rows of bushes. The sight was both peaceful and poetic. A visit to the tea museum offered fascinating insights into the history of Munnar's tea industry and the generations who have nurtured these hills..



The rains also bring life to the region's wildlife. At Eravikulam National Park, home to the endangered Nilgiri Tahr, the landscape appeared almost magical. The grasslands shimmered under the drizzle, and the rolling hills vanished and reappeared behind curtains of mist. It felt like walking through a dream.

Monsoon evenings in Munnar are meant for slowing down. A steaming cup of freshly brewed tea, accompanied by local banana fritters, becomes a simple luxury. The rhythmic sound of rain on rooftops creates a soothing soundtrack, while the cool mountain air invites quiet reflection.

What makes Munnar special during the monsoon is not just its scenery but its ability to make one pause. In a world that constantly rushes forward, the rain teaches patience. The mist asks us to look closely. The hills remind us that beauty often lies in moments that cannot be hurried.

For travellers seeking a refreshing escape from crowded cities and scorching summer heat, Munnar offers an unforgettable monsoon retreat. Here, the clouds descend to meet the earth, waterfalls sing their timeless songs, and every raindrop seems to carry a story. As I left Munnar, watching the rain-kissed hills fade into the distance, I carried home more than photographs. I carried a sense of calm, a deeper appreciation for nature, and the certainty that some journeys stay with us long after they end.



As I left Munnar, watching the rain-kissed hills fade into the distance, I carried home more than photographs. I carried a sense of calm, a deeper appreciation for nature, and the certainty that some journeys stay with us long after they end.

TRAVEL TIPS

- **Best Time to Visit:** June to September
- **Must-See Attractions:** Attukad Falls, Eravikulam National Park, Tea Museum, Mattupetty Dam
- **Local Delicacies:** Banana fritters, Kerala-style appam and stew, freshly brewed tea
- **Carry:** Light rainwear, waterproof footwear, and a camera for the misty landscapes



Monsoon in Munnar is not merely a season; it is an experience that lingers in the heart like the fragrance of rain on earth.

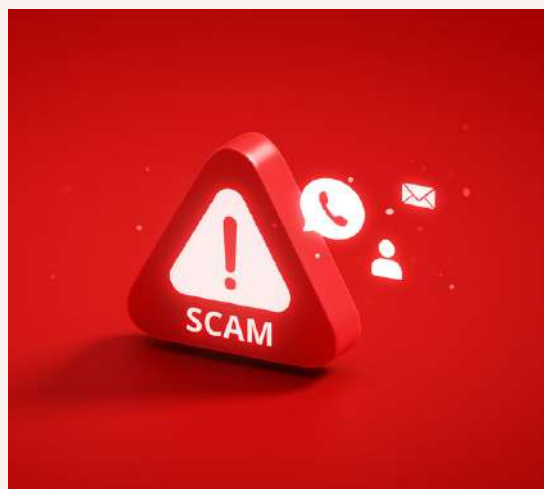


Ankit Paul, Engineer by profession and traveller by passion.

CHAINS ON TRUST - WINGS TO CRIME

Once upon a time, trust was the foundation of human life. Neighbours were like family members. People often left their doors unlocked without fear. Women wore gold jewellery with confidence while visiting temples, family functions, and relatives. Children played outside until late at night without causing anxiety to their parents. Those traveling away from home would leave their house keys with their neighbours. Trust was the invisible bond that connected people and kept society safe.

Today, however, that reality has changed completely. We proudly say that times have changed, technology has advanced, and the world has come into the palm of our hands. Yet, at the same time, we have reached a stage where people are afraid of one another. Today, when a family member leaves home in the morning, there is constant anxiety about whether they will return safely by evening. A ringing phone creates fear. An unknown number creates fear. A message from the bank creates fear. A knock on the door at night creates fear. Even a new acquaintance on social media creates fear. It seems as though fear itself has become a permanent resident in our lives.





Frauds, scams, thefts, robberies, chain snatchings, cybercrimes, financial frauds, fake job offers, investment scams, romance scams, and counterfeit businesses have cast an invisible shadow of fear over society. In the past, thieves were believed to strike only at night. Today, there is no distinction between day and night. Modern criminals no longer need to enter homes; with technology, they can empty bank accounts within minutes. A lifetime of savings can disappear in the blink of an eye.

The situation is especially alarming for women. Wearing gold necklaces, bangles, and ornaments once brought them joy and confidence. Today, the very same jewellery has become a threat to their lives. Incidents of chain snatching have become increasingly common, with criminals stealing gold chains from women riding scooters or walking on the streets. Whether they visit temples, markets, bus stations, or railway stations, women constantly worry about becoming victims. Losing jewellery is painful enough, but the injuries—and in some cases, even loss of life—that result from such attacks make these crimes even more tragic. As a result, many women who own gold hesitate to wear it. A society where people fear wearing their own possessions cannot truly be called free.

What is even more disturbing is that today's frauds are not committed only by strangers. Increasingly, the people we trust are the ones who betray us. Friends borrow money and never repay it. Relatives persuade family members to invest in schemes and then disappear with the funds. Fraudsters promise jobs, overseas opportunities, government benefits, or cheap land and cheat people out of lakhs of rupees. In the past, people were cautious of enemies. Today, they must be cautious even of friends. This is perhaps the strongest indication of how deeply trust has eroded in society.



Cybercrime has become one of the greatest threats of our time. Fraudsters send messages claiming, "You have won a lottery," "Complete your KYC," "Your ATM card has been blocked," "Money is being debited from your account," "Scan this QR code," or "Share your OTP." Even educated individuals fall victim to these traps. The money they earn through years of hard work can vanish within minutes. Often, victims do not even know where the criminal is located, and by the time they report the crime, the offender may already have disappeared across borders. As technology advances, so do the skills and sophistication of criminals.



Social media has become another major source of danger. Criminals create fake profiles, build online relationships, exploit young people emotionally, steal money in the name of love, collect private photographs for blackmail, deceive people through video calls, and lure victims into fake investment applications before disappearing. Smartphones have brought immense convenience, but they have also opened new avenues for exploitation.



The elderly have become especially vulnerable. Criminals often target senior citizens living alone while their children work abroad or in distant cities. Pretending to be bank officials, electricity department employees, gas agency workers, or police officers, they gain entry into homes and commit theft or robbery. In some cases, they intimidate elderly people into handing over cash and jewellery. It is heart-breaking that individuals who have spent their entire lives living honestly are forced to face such suffering in their later years.





Even leaving one's home in someone else's care has become a matter of concern. Hiring domestic workers, drivers, or caretakers now requires careful verification and repeated scrutiny. In many instances, homeowners themselves have become victims of those they employed. The very meaning of trust is gradually changing.



The reasons behind this disturbing situation are many. The desire to earn money quickly, unemployment, the decline of moral values, the weakening of family structures, the influence of drugs, reduced fear of legal consequences, delays in the judicial process, and the misuse of technology have all contributed to the rise in crime. Equally significant is the decline of the belief that the means of earning are more important than the amount earned.



At the same time, citizens must remain vigilant. They should avoid opening suspicious links, never share OTPs, be cautious about trusting strangers, refrain from displaying valuable possessions unnecessarily, educate children and the elderly about cybercrime, and avoid sharing excessive personal information on social media. In today's world, awareness and vigilance are among the strongest forms of protection.



However, responsibility cannot rest solely on the shoulders of the public. Governments, law enforcement agencies, and the judiciary must also perform more effectively. Swift punishment for offenders is essential to deter crime. Cybercrime investigations must become faster and more efficient. Public awareness campaigns should reach every town and village. Preventing crime before it occurs is always more effective than responding after damage has been done.





All of this raises an important question: Are we truly progressing? We have built taller buildings, wider roads, and more advanced technologies. Yet, somewhere along the way, we have lost the ability to trust one another. True development cannot be measured by economic growth alone. Safety, trust, and peace of mind are equally important indicators of progress. Without them, even great wealth cannot guarantee a happy life.

Fear can make people cautious, but when fear begins to govern everyday life, it becomes a threat to society itself. Women should not have to fear wearing their jewelry. Elderly people should not fear opening their doors. Young people should not fear answering a phone call. Families should not hesitate to trust one another. Such conditions are not the hallmarks of a civilized society.

Trust must be rebuilt. Moral values must be restored. Honesty should once again be respected. Laws must be enforced firmly and fairly. Families should nurture compassion and integrity in children. Schools must give greater importance to moral education. The media should continue creating awareness. Citizens must remain alert, and governments must ensure public safety.

A society is not built upon concrete buildings but upon trust. A nation becomes strong not merely because of its weapons but because its citizens feel safe. A family's happiness depends not only on wealth but also on peace of mind.

The days when fear governs our lives must come to an end. Trust, security, and humanity must once again become the defining values of our society. That is true development. That is the real meaning of civilization.



SAILAJA MITHRA

PASSIONS OF A YOUNG HEART

Story

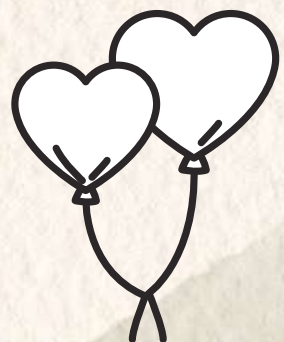
Sunlight penetrating through the windows of St. Joseph's orphanage, roused Priya from a dreamless sleep. A young orphan, eight years of age, was admitted to the orphanage while still an infant. She glanced out of the window, observing the hectic activities around the school premises. The school which housed the orphanage, also admitted day scholars from the locality. The orphanage stood as a front to attract overseas funding, in the name of charitable organizations. Otherwise, the school was the main source of income for the nuns who managed both the school and the orphanage. In fact, the school was run to cater to the wards and children of the wealthy upper class.

It was parent's day at the school and the function was to be held that evening. A sad feeling pervaded her heart. She had always wondered about her parents. She had been admitted to the orphanage while still an infant, and knew not who her parents were. The nuns who ran the institution were tight-lipped about it, despite her constant pleadings.

That evening, before the function could commence, she found herself seated with a few others who belonged to the orphanage, in a row earmarked for them. The other seats in the front row were occupied by schoolmates from the wealthy neighborhood, along with their parents. They comprised of a great majority from the nouveau riche, making their presence felt, of late. And the school, for reasons best known to them alone, gave undue importance to them.

A feeling of dismay crept into Priya's heart to witness the day scholars happily accompanied by their proud parents. She noticed a few of her classmates with their parents, make their way to the food stalls, their faces full of glee, buying an assortment of snacks, as if to show her that they were a privileged lot. She had, on earlier occasions, found herself being sidelined by these classmates of her's, but was too naive to have noticed the intentions behind it.

The cultural began with loud applause and cheering from parents. There was great merriment on the stage. Soon the dais was occupied by dignitaries, together with the management and other important guests. The chief guest presided over the function and started distributing prizes and certificates. The children happily ran back to their proud parents, clutching their accolades and were received with warm hugs and kisses.



Story

Priya felt a pang of pain, a sense of hurt deep within her. She also heard her name being called out. She was to receive a certificate in general proficiency. She trod up the steps to receive her certificate. She could feel a silence settle over the entire auditorium. She received her award, and to her dismay, heard just a weak round of applause rising from the rear of the auditorium, obviously from her row of seats. It emanated from children who were also orphans like her, residing at the orphanage. She made her way back to her place and couldn't help noticing the disdainful looks from the occupants of the front row of seats, upon her. She felt humiliated and suppressed a sob.

Soon the function was over and the children ventured outside to greet their parents, certificates and trophies in hand, beaming with pride, to waiting cars, which would see them back to a warm home and a sumptuous meal. A home with proud parents pampering their children with all the good things that their newfound money could buy.

It wasn't so much for the luxuries that failed to come her way, nor the lack of applause or recognition upon receiving her accolades, that hurt her so much. But it was a deep sense of grief for not belonging to someone whom she could call her own. Someone who could embrace her and show love, that hurt her the most.

That night, laying down in bed at the dormitory, Priya recalled the day's happenings. A deep sense of grief pervaded her heart. A sob escaped from her parched throat and ended in uncontrollable sobbing. Here she was, all alone, with none to share her joys or sorrows, nor anyone to comfort her. The other inmates like her were deep in slumber. Perhaps resigned to their fates. She knew not why. She lay awake for a longtime, until finally, fatigue claimed her sleep.



Julian Sujendran chooses to write upon societal issues in an attempt to highlight the rampant evils that prevail in Indian society, despite social reforms. His writings, both literature and poetry amply reflect what he aims to achieve. He hails from Chennai, Tamilnadu.



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