



Along my Route

Poems

Srutimala Duara

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The Wanderers

The night sky a deep grey
In that grey the deer wanders
away from the moon
The tulsi tree grows
branching out
attracting the light-footed one
Somewhere down in a village
she waits
for the footsteps of her son that
wandered into the dark jungles

Together they will return
guided by the glow of
a mother's earthen lamp
and
the branching tulsi's
fluttering call

The Snake

The town was in a hurry to grow
and the snake came in a guise to assist its overflow.
It crawled through forests devouring lakes,
and hills panicked giving way to darting fangs.
It lured Adams and Eves out of familiar homes;
Islands rose through blues, vertical on unfamiliar hues.
Zinnia, petunia, bigonia filled up pots;
and togor, juti, madhoi malati, uprooted, were lost.
Devouring silence the snake rattled –
“Let there be words”,
and thoughts drowned in incessant utterances.
The holier than thou seized the snake,
shredded into pieces and distributed.
The snake now lives in each of the townsmen –
smiles and fangs mingling as omen.

My Tale

Let me climb up Jack's beanstalk
And from the clouds tell the tale of love

The stairless tower couldn't confine Rapunzel
She threw her golden locks for her prince to climb
The prince broke the spell of the witch
Woke the princess with his magical kiss
Cinderella putting on glass slippers
Danced till twelve with Charming Prince

I shall let down my shackles for you
I shall wake up from the slumber of
custom-bound spell
I shall wear the glass slipper I've left
somewhere behind
And
Fairy tale will be my tale
The tale of human love

Not my Haven

Talk not of heavens and
how wonderful it'd be
to be there –
Up in some sphere a kingdom where
sorrow could not touch me;
where we would live
in everlasting joy, peace surrounding;
embalmed in youth, never aging.

I wonder
how I would know bliss
in the absence of sorrow;
what peace would be like
where strife and chaos do not exist;
a place where lines of tomorrow
do not touch me.

I dread to remain a forever being
caught in time, never moving.

The Lost Earth

Green leaves turn brown
crackling in the hot wind.
Eagles drop lifeless
large wings broken.
The elephant leader leads
with no herd behind.
Bones of the tiger stand out
like a self-starving model.
Fireflies lie in the dry grass
fires extinguished.
Rivers rumble hungrily
down some sunken depth.
Cracked parched soil suck out plants
greenery disappearing.
Human hunt down human
brotherhood long forgotten thing.

Somewhere down the black hole
intelligent beings label Earth
once-upon-a-time a living planet.

As the whiff of togor wafts through space
I strive to recreate grandmother's Krishna.
But the blue figure dissolves
in the fumes of exhausting life;
The flute's music lost somewhere
in the metropolis trumpeting its progress.

Measuring Life

Life is short they say

Measuring minutes by blank stare,

Twenty-four hours snail away –

Life goes on.

Chasing dreams fade, desires unfulfilled die

Pain in love a forever, joy a moment –

Life goes on.

Diseases creep in body crevices

Carrying the burden of decaying body –

Life goes on.

Lustrous hair greys, smooth skin creases

Bright eyes dim, near voices heard far away –

Life goes on.

Moments hibernate, days linger

And they say life is short

A Lost Neighbourhood

Sewali flowers bloomed and dropped on the soft green
Young hands gathered the flowers in cane baskets
Familiar faces beamed
Home-cooked food exchanged
Wooden gates opened to warm red-tinned homes

Time marked its lines on young hands
that no longer gathered the white flowers
Red tins fell off horizontal homes and
vertical terraced houses grew
Structures competed to reach the blue
moving away from the green

The neighbourhood lost its familiar faces
Mahi Pehi Borma Jethai gave way to a
prescribed aunty
Known faces of thieves gave way to
rifle-holding ruffians
Security guards stood behind
spiked grill gates

Unable to cross the traffic heavy unfamiliar lane
I stand on the pavement of memories
Around me dry sewali flowers lie
on the hard concrete

Familiar Fragrance

As the sun came to our land
the night jasmine bathing in the
soft white moonbeams all night
fell.

Today parted from yesterday
leaving only the fragrance
on the green.

We gazed at the path by the tree
wondered if the scent would
linger and guide
to bring us back from
unseen tomorrows
to our familiar yesterdays.

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