

FIVE POEMS AND THE ESSAY “FRAMING MY WINDOW”

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1

Raining Somewhere

Daily happenings keep arriving, defying
The summer heat, the sessions
Of past thoughts in the waiting room of poems

In the mind, defying old relations
Summer evenings to look back
In our journey toward

A mood's timely renewal
Through a bohemian touch, demanding
For poems after misadventures with bodies.

Before this afternoon, there are routine messages
Of her arrival, in words and images
There is someone always smiles

Without a four-letter word in her mouth
Stories of butterflies in the head
She is enclosed stitching homes in a distant land

2

Matters of the Mind

There is peace after a spell of rain here,
Regardless of grief elsewhere, in other hearts.
There are promises to stitching rain cloudlets
The song of thunder echoes minds wet in courting
The sky holds winter's fugitive touch
On the skin, in the air, the mind has taken a separate route--
The way the wind comes from
How can I forget what has grown
Through my careful journey through time
Invisible signals remind me of matters related to the heart—
Of all the small wishes, frail faiths.
Day's light rides on affection and desires
I long for time's wandering eye. I keep longing...

3

Life's Journey

The ship sets off on her maiden voyage somewhere.
The voyagers carry their memory luggage.
Everything that takes place in the dark theatre
foreshadows the mysteries of time
Night's normal acts are suspended
by stars' silent march to the darling rivulet Dulung.

Slow time unfolds its range of stories.
I played my parts empty handed
Watching my watch grow old
I prayed for a good monsoon season

All joys have pain as a component
Summer is a regular stint
After rain, there is a clear sky
All houses have a ceiling, hope
Climbs on this with a ladder.

My hopes have wings
Like seeds they whisper in the wind
Front doors are wide open
For mutual living together.

My mistress is Sita's sister
One of those carries a huge mountain
All rivers stem from a glacier
Patriarchy has installed.

Breaking *lakshman rekha*¹ my mistress shouts
Living together is flowing together
Through the rough gates
Sweet passages, far and wide.

4

My Mother

Rain disappears
dancing joyously on long wires like a rope - dancer.
whichever weather rolls on
gives all cloudy juices

¹ *lakshman rekha* is a boundary given to Sita by Lakhman in the *Ramayana*

creating a land of poetic romance
where coy fairies descend to dance.

All for you, Mother!
The ship sets off on her maiden voyage.
The voyagers carry their memory luggage.
Everything that takes place in the dark theatre
foreshadows the mysteries of nature,
night's normal acts

My ill-timed sleep
breaks, secret doors
howl through
the night, looking
for their mother, we all do.

5.

Counting Your Absences

In memory of Prof. T. V. Reddy

Dark deep night is closer, after your
Callings, callings from the half-seen trees.
Night birds are crying. A smile is
Ominous, dancing in the branches.

Of slow time, night unfolds
Its ranges of stories, night's regular acts.
All dead voices are lying ice cold.
My prolix is a wakeup call.

Night's mysteries are awake with my poem

After a long cold sleep at Tirupati.
Foul smells hard, ghostly.
Time is decaying mundane trash.

One uncouth face conjures up,
Other unshaped faces, wild dark.
Only the hooded eyes, a simpleton
Strange sounds of howling. What a loss!

The art is moonshine.
My reason is homeless.
A few seeds have life.
I will sit tonight
Under my tree empty-handed,
empty-hearted, ask
it to describe this
painful void, this hunger.

Nobody is awake at this odd hour
only a child's unmasked hooting.
Spirits of the dead have a night out
for an appointment with the unknown.

The emperor of words, "Take care."
No matter, how high you fly in the sky
You rain somewhere beyond a known order. Farmers
are waiting. Your water carries bread of hope.

You paint houses with dark colours. With my skin.

6.

Playing Near the Banks of Dwaipayana

Tell me if I'm in your circle of prayers,
A crossing and re-crossing by the Dwaipayana lake.

Ages ago Goddess Ganga descended
When Lord Shiva released
The mighty river from the locks of his hair.

Alakananda is my headstream
My watery image, I am her shadow.

No Duryadhona can hide in time
Only he grows deep as stories
In epic thoughts. After this sunset.
All crimes are crimes. Wheels turn.
No Sun can erase a sin, a crime.
Today, after every loss,
After this solitary walk near the lake
There is something to gain.
With Marang Buru on my left,
On my right, a lion Durga is riding.
Forever riding. Riding with a lance in her hand.

7.

Homebound

There is peace after a homely noise
my mother sleeps safe after the evening chants.

The earth watches
I take the pigeons out every day.

Every pain has a remedy
with men and women rising.
Fair green Mistress
I bear a rooted grief.
I speak with your words.
I peel out the juice of happiness.
When you stand near the loam of my thoughts
You remember my ageing mother holding a lamp.
you see long deep sighs on the naked letters of my poems
for hunger, food and reflections
my eyes are wet for midnight consoling

By deep veins and sub veins
frayed faces of life are showcased.
All these faces are with me
in the heart this morning, courting time.
Life was not great for all
injured butterflies smiling in distress
breathing hard in fishing nets
losing all hues, the taste of yesterdays
with the rhythm of passing hours.
From the caves of memory

We come out, all blind
We see all around, ptyalin from saliva
patches of blood below the feet
of a falling in tight rope walks.
Your divine flame sparks in the heart.
Erratic April is breaking everything,
all laws, only wishes, unspoken.
Healing, healing all of you!

FRAMING MY WINDOW

We stitch our lives with the colours of the world. Our baggage of experience is full of food for thoughts, some of which offer us an outlet for fresh air. ‘Vent’ has been one of my favourite expressions since my primary school days. It manifests itself as an expression of release of pent-up thoughts and feelings. When I vent, I let something out. All of us have a small window somewhere in our souls that allows us to speak out in “full-throated ease”:

“Oh Mind, open the window
Let your soul swing in breeze
Let calm whispers of the world
Sooth your ears.”

My father was a Mathematics teacher. After the sudden death of my only brother very early in life’s innings, my window became inwardly routed. I used to count my countless imaginary objects some of which I came in contact with later in my life. As I grew older, the window became a place for waiting, waiting for seasonal rain and the earthy after-rain smell of land, trees and hopes.

From the physical window of my childhood, I would listen, every day, to the whistles of passing trains. They never bothered stopping at the small junction that my hometown, that forest-enclosed Jhargram was. It always pained my heart. How could the trains be so cruel? Our station was a queen decked with the splendour of tall, green trees. Its evenings buzzed with the twittering of countless different birds. How could the trains be so indifferent to the charms and magic of Jhargram station?

I waited and waited with my logic to hold things tight. I waited for my father to come from the office, bringing stories to share with me. He had an intuition, perhaps, of my little window and

would indulge my likings and calls from within. I travelled with his thoughts and he, in turn, would enter and encourage mine. In and through him, I found my dreams flowering in the passions of cricket. Cricket was not a game but a landscape of my heart connecting the different parts of my world in one shape, that of a field, a stadium, a few brave-hearts leading the way. It has remained a faithful friend. My untitled images associated with friends, relatives, parents and neighbours came to my window. I asked them to wait. A flower is what we lose. I lost a few leaving me wordless.

Things paused. All clouds didn't rain. Some poured heavily. To describe the window would be something like describing my first kiss. How does one begin? Where does it end and how?

I hear a small voice speaking through the window. It became my mate. I reached adolescence speaking to it, stitching different stories on different planes. Some planted imaginations rose and fell with this window, like waves I waited.

I leaned in waiting towards the railings, thinking they were auspicious. Each time I did so, a wicket of a foreign cricket team was lost. I do not know how many times I uttered Kapil Dev in boyish delight, my expectations intact. There was not a single day off for the imagination. Our radio was beloved, connecting our half-lighted room to sparkling, distant worlds.

I still go to that window like a hunter in the forest of time, holding a copy of *Isla Negra*. I wait in the window's black drip, realizing that its frame is wooden, wood gathered and processed. Where did that wood grow? I imagine it born in Valparaiso where Neruda bought an old sea captain's house. The wind of thoughts took charge of it forever and it is here now, wafting the sea breeze of love and loss.

I remain awake in remembrance. Dark are the railings that make the stars blaze with fruition. I know their shapes, numbers and sizes. I visit my window for poems to pour in, for many transactions of relationships, for the flavoured tea of togetherness, in times good and bad. The window has my deep sighs and longings.

People come and go talking about my small wooden window.

My daughter has a laptop for the world now. Her screensaver is pretty, switching on faraway lands and inscrutable seas. I still carry my window, a private one in me, that never retreated from my star.

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