

## UNPRETENTIOUS THINGS

what about surrendering yourself to unpretentious  
things like the chair in the corner that invites you to  
sit down and lean on its back when you are tired.  
look at that gape-mouthed spoon and the pot-bellied glass  
thirsting for your touch. even the palms of your hands  
tend to cup into the well of blessing for you. and, wow,  
what's more promising than the sun behind the curtain in your  
window. it's peeping in and almost touching your toe. there is wood  
too on the hearth to warm you. the generosity of broken things is  
almost always unconditional. they give to you beyond themselves. and  
this is why i am given to believing that the world is not half bad  
in moments of someone saying to someone 'you can do it',  
'i am happy for you', 'it will get better'

## **NOTHING TO FEAR**

*(for Amogh)*

There is nothing to fear, my little one  
everything comes around: from water to dust,  
betrayal to trust  
you have to recognize the alphabet a and distinguish it  
from the A observing the pressure on the fingers that write  
trace you must contours on the bark you lean on to  
and it will all come to you  
Do not look for us when we are not around  
for we are but the moon quivering  
upon the night's lake  
the puppet shadows appearing disappearing  
beyond us  
We are the trees that long for the roots  
as much yearn the high sky  
Sleep you must, my child under the warm blanket  
of your skin, kissing the air deep  
and wake up with your arms open  
like sunrays taking the world in your  
warm embrace

## THE INDELIBLE INK OF DECEMBER 16

*(For Jyoti Pandey who was gang raped and assaulted in a moving bus in Delhi)*

On December 16

the day sleepwalks like dreams in languid night streets  
and the night sleeps without the pleasure of oblivion,  
the world feels like a catacomb rotting to its core  
with its zombie residents, those whose hands move with ease  
from praying to preying and tearing apart threads of skin  
from a breathing bleating woven mass:  
performing the living's sky burial  
these vultures from a mistaken human culture!

On December 16

the sun refuses to greet the city with its downcast eyes  
and roads run into sand rivers, where float fishes without fins  
we all with our paper wings fly skywards but dash  
against a pretend horizon, soaking the evening's menstrual blood  
we come down falling, bone by bone, intestine-roped  
ligaments splitting like hair fall:  
a body feasted upon by creatures of the wildest wind!

On December 16

not too far above in a familiar sky  
a moon was devoured slice by slice  
and a lonesome star still mourns  
wishing upon stars from another sky  
to hide in the womb of a day yet unborn!



## MEANING MAKING

it was about then when we didn't understand what it is  
and set out into meaning-making exercises

i gently stole a strand of hair from my class-mate's  
blazer and pulled one mine to juxtapose the two in  
the sunshine. a few more strands got pulled and stolen.  
then i scratched my head, for i didn't understand how  
some hair could be 'thin' and some not!

my talkative twin chased words that danced on elders'  
lips and struggled to speak every split second their lips  
sealed that she should be speaking now because she has  
understood a 'conversation' (at the end of which she was  
allowed to speak) means a word.

the father's face became red while the mother tapped her forehead!

we traced the patterns of O and C in the moon, Y the trees  
we climbed, V W and M in valleys and mountains we saw,  
hanging from the trees, upside down. the mountains, a few  
walks away on our last birthday, appeared distant now. the  
grandfather explained the phenomenon to our growing tall.

we settled down to writing when my twin rhymed flower  
with shower. I wrote 'a smiling flower in the rain shower.'  
we tried to bring in even 'power.' Then we discovered the  
dictionary and began replacing 'condition' with 'predicament.'

the rhyming became inexpedient as meanings socialized

those un-publishable poems and experiential meanings had a joy lost to us like

those years in the years we have grown up to understand what it is

and that my twin never was nor will be

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e

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s

w  
a  
y

w  
h  
y

we define

the crow for black for example  
and black as blank

w  
e

W  
R  
I  
T  
E

for them to write WHITE words

h

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g

smaerd deredrosid ni

- d - l - s - s - e - c - t - e - d

with a penis

by Freud

stamp  
of a  
gender

atop

the race of friday's Master

on a footnote  
are two frogs  
buried in debris  
off their hands  
left with little sky

to see from their land

\* 'with a penis/by freud' is reference to Freud's theory of pen-penis envy

\* 'friday's Master' is the native named Friday and his master in Defoe's Robinson Crusoe

## **A TIBETAN DAUGHTER**

*(To Tsering Wangmo Dhompa)*

she builds      a stupa of words    for her mother  
a tibetan daughter

she walks all day in distant lands imaging the places of conception  
and birth  
she greets her mother in elements of physical existence on earth  
shape of a tree. feel of the rain. whispers in the wind. glow of butter lamps.  
even her wedding ring.

she feels her mother's hands on the beads of the rosary now she tells,  
in common faith she dwells

a tibetan daughter resurrects an exile wish-tree  
she flips through pages of an alternate history:  
the stateliness of a chieftain grandfather, enmeshed life of a princess  
exile of a nation, the snowland, to which she returns her mother in ashes

a tibetan shravana kumar carries in her heart her mother  
each day she lights a lamp of thought soaked in butter  
from her memory chest of a score and four  
and offers it to    the stupa of words    she builds    for her mother

## **I DREAM OF A POEM**

I dream of a poem  
about words  
without words  
like a primitive thought  
unborn  
in the awareness  
of language  
then grammar  
but a deciduous patois  
at every step  
on every tongue  
dangling out  
of aporia  
once you step on  
your God  
your primitive thought  
of the Universe—  
a mega-poem  
by the Creator  
that fathoms deeper  
than depth of a poet's dreams  
spread across the lengthy skies  
beyond the bedlam breath  
of our recurrent lives



I dream of a poem  
about words  
without words