**Letter from Foreign Grave**

*-D B Gurung*

Dear mother, this is a gesture of memory from your son,

Who lives seven hundred seas away.

I know how sad you must be without me.

But I am fine here in this valley of shadows, free

From all mundane avarice, misery, and tears,

and Resting now at peace forever.

The flesh that once was sleek and sound

Has given way to dust, and now only we, the bones,

Remain to discuss upon my ruined destiny.

I do clearly remember that dawn when the unsung song

Of sadness hung in the air, and I had to bid farewell

To you all; the shadow crowded over the dales

And ravines like impatient ghosts; my dog *Pangrey*

Whimpered on and on wagging its tail nervously

As though it had known fully well that departure

Would never bring its master back again,

And with your eyes welling up with tears pressing your lips against

*My abir*-daubed brow, you had blessed me in your breath

“To be always brave”. I have tasted fire and swallowed it raw

At many fronts from Burma, Ladakh, NEFA, Malaya, and Kargil

To Germany, Italy, Tunisia, Falkland, and Kosovo. Yes, mother,

I had been a hero all the while until a piece of glowing lead

Pierced my heart like a bolt from the blue,

Packing me off into a realm of dream and eternity-for ever more.

My fate has fastened my eye to my kingdom where

History broods amidst the debris of life and hypocrisy.

That’s why I lie buried here among my friends and enemies,

Those who liked us and those killed. We have everything

In common here. We live in total harmony in a community

Of true brotherhood for **we are the lost citizens of the world*.***

Weep not for me oh my mother,

For my war is over, now I need no more

To risk the gunshots and shells or risk my *khukuri*,

Or advance through the hell of the fronts,

Yelling the dreaded word “*Ayo Gorkhali*”,

By which, indeed, we scared our enemies to death,

But, in return, the very mantra snatched away our own lives.

Wars and always wars; and death takes no prisoners,

And ***soldier a mere little thing for sacrifice, mother***.

All my dreams, my youth, and my life-have been

Plundered by those slow fat generals,

Who make their medals on young blood.

Oh my mother dear,

The only thing I always regret is that

***I was unable to make up for your milk during this lifetime.***

***For I died for the cause of others in a war of no glory.***

Forgive me, mother. And weep not for me anymore,

But ruminate for those living whose wars are now to be feared about.

**Imp. Questions:**

1. What is the central message of the poem? Discuss with example.
2. “Oh my mother dear,

The only thing I always regret is that

I was unable to make up for your milk during this lifetime.

For I died for the cause of others in a war of no glory.” Explain/ Paraphrase this excerpt.

1. Why does the persona call himself “*the lost citizen of the world*”? Discuss.

**Homework**

**Prepare a short presentation on the poem and give it suitable title. After the virtual presentation, submit the written text on the LMS.**