

An abstract painting with a textured, swirling background of warm tones like pink, peach, and beige. Scattered throughout are small, delicate red flowers and green leaves, some appearing to float or fall. The overall effect is dreamlike and ethereal.

The Falconer

poetry collective '24

From the Editors

Curating the third poetry collective, we had a tradition to uphold. A tradition we inherited as the third editorial team of The Falconer. It is our hope that we are able to meet the expectations set before us. With that being said, I must admit that I did not know what to write about poetry. One could argue that it is a historical record of human feelings, a demonstrative archive of the development of language. One could also argue that it is a medium for confessions or autobiography, or storytelling, or doing philosophy. There is no definition of poetry that all the critics and the poets would have a consensus on. Being a person who gravitates towards prose as a more natural form of expression, poetry, for me, is mostly a foreign territory. More often than not, I find myself frustrated with my verses for never being able to quite say what I intend them to. But at the same time, sometimes while reading great poetry the poet's metaphor leaves me exclaiming *this is it!* Two years back in a poetry class, T.S. Eliot's The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock did that for me. I have revisited this poem multiple times since, and it keeps turning the wheels in my mind, each time to touch a different spot. The poet is the man of expression, as Emerson said. He is blessed with the ability to express what all beings feel. In the submissions for this collective, too, we found multiple expressions of universal feelings. We got to discuss this further in the interview with Miss Aamna Motala whose perceptive comments on poetry are themselves a delight to read.

The response from the students was heartwarming, and we spent time and care reading each verse, but could only publish a limited number, for we could not afford the space or time, for a "hundred visions and revisions." We hope you, reader, love it as much as we loved the process of compiling and flipping through this poetry collective.

Nimra Saeed, M.A. Final (Evening)

I've built the house of self
In the most pious style
Copying domes and minarets
To heighten my pious profile

Yet I have closed its doors for all
I have closed all the windows
I've made sure no one ever calls
And what's inside no one knows

Away from the world's credulous eyes
In cartons carefully stored
I keep the counterfeit goods disguised
And sell them slyly to the world.

Dr. Faisal Nazir

winter '23

The sky is bluer
Than usual, metaphors fail
In face of violence

Muhammad Yousha

I watch the children

I watch the children engrossed in games
each alone on his play station or phone
and lament the passing of good days
when, us children, played outdoors
with the neighbourhood kids---
simple games like seven tiles, gilli danda
or raced round the block on our bicycles---
drinking water from the hose
cleaning our skinned knees and elbows
with plain tap water and iodine
unconcerned, like our elders,
with bumps and bruises
or germs and infections
Such fun filled, joyous days are no more.
I see the kids today
sitting in front of screens, all alone,
isolated in their own world
even among a host of people
full of ennui, questioning their existence
unaware of the simple pleasures of friendship,
of ties that last a lifetime,
that are a lifeline
in such tumultuous times.

Miss Nishat Wasim

There is no lifting and no away
There is no chance of rain today
Some days the sun just has to
Scorch its green path
Into a dreary place; gold-tipped
Wheat fields have gone astray.
This is a harvest season
Twice delayed; the farmers
Have moved into death's place.
And you must know this:
No other hands can
Reap what one's hands have sown.
You must understand
This land had to face its fate.
Some apocalypses are early,
As some apologies are belatedly
Unnecessary. The fields
May ripen again, for who knows
What tricks Time has yet to play?
As for now we must be doomed
To hear them call
Their masters' names,
One after the other; a swaying lament
Is in the wind.
The end of the world—
Will it last for some seconds,
Or span decades?

Aamna Motala

the plaint: an anthology of despair

i

it is but this -
life in curvature blooms.
it is a slow turn, a sinking sense that skips inwardly.
grief is birthed first, and then the heart to feel.
grief is fullest at its first loosening,
when time is found pacing beside its feet,
and no movement steals from outside its means,
when no rushing is felt in the hasty heel;
and the whole folds itself in its tiny tomb,
then life in curvature blooms
with a steady speed that sways inwardly
instantly

ii

now the ripened fruit comes to explode,
the plant now implodes again
into the ripened seed.
it is a salem without sin,
it is a babel achieved,
and the havens of hope continue to conceal
the curse that lies wracked with need.

this is the age of despair that before us stands.
this is the age of despair that endlessly expands,
and life turns ever more inwardly

Moaz Ahmed Khan

What is this absence
Have we come undone
We stretch from the
same skin, you said
If it stretches too far
It ruptures.
Am I ready for the slit
The cut that isolates?
Separates one into none
A complete orbit
A full stop marking the end
The pen has run its course
An exhausted existence
The death of intrigue
How far will you then,
Explore;
The same shades,
The same scenes?
When no longer
a new sun rises
How will you then wait
for the mornings to come?
How will you then appreciate
the long exhausted day
And not think of turning
the other way?

Zonera Asim, Alumna

half my life,
i have waited for holiness
the other half,
for you

all my life spent awaiting,
delayed arrival that wouldn't do

i want to leave but i don't
i go to places, never arriving

the river has two mouths and two ledges
i can't pick one to jump from

so there i stand,
half ashore, half under

my silhouette cast on the water bank
half holy, half you

Mahnoor Fazal, M.A. Final (Morning)

Time is ceaseless, causeless, and eternal,
and I, having just woken up,
splinter in its disembodied array.

Yesterday, you sang me to sleep,
Tomorrow, I won't meet your gaze, and twenty years ago,
I will blubber I love you and mean it

Moving in circles,
I'll see you as a boy with white hair,
I'll love you and I'll love you.

But the will and the was astound me
Time is causeless, eternal, ceaseless,
How could I have known then?

Was this one final lesson that I had to learn?
Time; unceasing, unrelenting,
And you- dying, decaying father,
harbinger of truth and questions?

When did sightless seconds become visible?
When did moments become flesh?
When did memory learn to bite and maul?

And you- apparition, figure, ghost, martyr,
Sick, and dying, always,
Why do you hover here?

What have you to gain from hovering?
You, who have ceased--
Eternal, ceaseless, free.

What use do you have for clocks?

Anonymous

In the echoes of time, a connection unfolds,
Heart whispers secrets, stories of old.
A melody in your voice, a familiar tune,
Yearning to listen beneath the moon.

Eyes lock in a gaze, a timeless art,
Captivated, wanting never to part.
Moments entwined, a dance of delight,
In your presence, life feels just right.

Every heartbeat, a pledge to be near,
A journey of love, crystal clear.
You're the canvas of my life's sweetest dome,
In your essence, my heart finds its home.

Saliha Hashmi, First year (Morning)

there will be new loves, new lives
new raindrops on the same soil
sprouting new buds, glistening with a newness
no longer found in the drooping
flowers that once were blooming
the new replaces the old, that's the way the world goes
the air reeks of sorrow watching the light die out
a heavy silence bears the weight of things unsaid
the earth gasps and shudders, as it prepares
to one day witness its own funeral.

Nimra Saeed, M.A. Final (Evening)

The emotion of calm, of surrender.
The feeling which doesn't make your heart race,
It doesn't make your mind do backflips.
It just sits down in your heart,
Like an unwanted guest in your home.
Only that you don't know how long it may stay,
Or if it will leave at all.
And you want to tell it,
That you are occupied, that you have more to cater to;
But it's already seen how empty your home is,
It knows you're lying,
About having more to give favors to.
So it takes off its shoes and leaves them at the door,
Because your heart feels like home,
To the sadness that came looking for more.

Maria Shahhid, KUBS

Things I say to God
I want the fortune of the moon
I want my light to arrive from another home.
Moving oceans is not all I want from this life.
Dear God,
Let something beautiful belong to my name now.

Aisha Idris, M.A.Final (Morning)

I lull the night to sleep
and raise myself once again
to start the same old new day,
like one skims through
the stale news of the new newspaper;
I look down upon the familiar scenes
not out of curiosity but out of habit.

I see some gladly rising
some rudely awaken,
some dreading my arrival,
some lying indifferent,
and others being raised and lowered
for they can rise no more.
And for all I shine, I shine with equal indifference.

Yet there is one who lovingly gazes at me.
Turning her head wherever I go.
O' golden eye whose deep pupil
drains my golden rays
fears me not but sees me.

I blind the eyes that dare glance at me
Yet she boldly beholds me.
Not tearing her gaze
keeps drinking my rays
Till I sink
Drunk with her drinking.

Eisha Fahim, M.A. Final (Morning)

Whose politics?

Why do we fight for opinions that aren't ours?
Persisting on views we heard on dinner tables.
Furiously bashing politicians our fathers detest,
not commenting on the rest.
Repeating the stories our uncles told us,
raising our fists, making a fuss.
The anger has penetrated,
through generations.
Our advocacy and rejection,
whether valid or not,
will it ever be ours?
Every vote we give,
is fuelled by residual resentment,
trickled down the family tree.
Should it be counted as one man's vote?
One inked finger or three
that presses on a paper or wags in the face of a friend,
for a point we didn't even make.
Because in the end who is the fight for?

Aasiyah Naim, M.A. Final (Morning)

Our spirits birthed sensations new,
When you came to me and we came to be,
Since then we have had a few,
Of warmth, affection, and love full of glee.
Though bouts of doubts weakened us two,
I assumed this flood would slowly flee.
We caged our hearts and veiled our view,
Fools! How could love linger free?
Scarred and wounded by doubts and feuds you
Martyred; for I dare not call deserter thee.
So go now, start your journey anew,
Our memories shall light my nights, fret not for me,
But I must confess ere you say adieu:
I loved you too.

Noman Ahmed, Third-year, (Evening)

Sunk in deep thought I was.
Under the trees, near the pond.
Dazed like a corpse in the coffin of the past.
Brought to tears by the departure of my beloved.

Descended into eternal oblivion, thousand days and nights.
Passed the remembrance of thy face from the eyes of thy lover.
Like a needle, thy parting pierced me, yet with hope.
Fondly await I there, thou parted where.

Nay, Nay, thou have gone far away, yet.
In hopeless hope doth thy slave breathe.
Oh flower! Maketh a retreat to the garden of nightingales.
For thou are cure to incurable, life to dying faith.

Maqbool Ahmed Mastoi, Second Year (Morning)

In words we fell complacent
And that fall broke my back
The reason for our estrangement
Yet another fire to track

Undefined follies followed us here
In embers assaulted by power
Their rush to lay our past to sear
Leaves a rotten stench devoured

Weaved your laments on red hot loom
And displayed the tattered rags like loot
You resist your own unavoidable gloom
By enshrining me in your claims of soot

With ash, you brought to life the words
You swore would faster swallow you
Now bruised with your losses acquired
You burden only your devoted few

Maham Owais, Third Year (Morning)

Sitting in a shed with trees around,
Wind blowing the leaves soon to turn brown.
My eyes stare at the moon from which white sprouts,
I hear it tell me nothing to worry about.
“Am I alone?” My heart shouts,
“Certainly not” the moon recounts.

Umama Saleem, Second Year (Evening)

Mem. Ory.

A sea of squalid sounds
Seeping in and out
Of crevices
Between rows upon rows of shelves
Intangible, they
Shimmer
Bright here this moment,
And glimmering there the other
Oblivious
To the wisps of whispers
Subtly astride invisible strings
Some red some white
Some fish
Some long forgotten wish
Or wisdom obsolete
I like to think that when I die
I catch a glimpse
Of this trade
That evades me so
And some fish string pulls me in
Some happy moment in the frozen time
There, I'll spend my heaven.

Bushra Irshad, M.A. Final (Morning)

An echo tremored that silent place

The appearance of your face
Like stone, all stone
Sandy shine!
And my rigorous distraction.
It is like today's lecture
Reminiscent-- (elusive nature)
"Discrete sensations."
With muscles, bare and failing.
'Bare', I mean, stripped from bones.
"The skin too?"
My tongue, a blob.
The 'store light' shines on your right cheek.
(arousal)
I can feel the illumination;
I can feel the departure;
I am a patient, and yes...
I am swollen.
I want to... write a good poem,
and harvest the heart's decay.
Oh, and that too... yes!
Being acknowledged. (Whilst, expressingly? A desire for anonymity)
Slitherin-- Perver-- "Disgusting rat!"
Now, You...
Oh, lover... lover...
...lover?
Your bare self, what must I say?
It doesn't let me-- There is an impasse.
I know. I am still breathing.
I can hear you sighing...
The day's decline.
Arise! "I'll fall."
Stone, and I arose.
To see—You.
"Like stone, all stone."
Don't be like this.

Oh, don't, when I can see the tremors!
"I was talking about mine."
Yours too?
Oh--
Stone, all stone.
Your appearance.
You witnessing... such!-- what can I say?!
Aren't I the rat?
"...always about my sorrows."
Always. You are earnest, always.
You tend to... me. Always.

What more than this?
What more than mere?
The appearance of your face.
The Real escapes me.
Again, this poem evades me.

Ameen Shahzad, Philosophy

A Former Paradise

I'm a night passed,
A cry suppressed
A regret of yesterday
Mildly processed,

I'm wilted,
Almost contained,
A budding desire
Quietly refrained,

A stain on your shirt,
A slight imperfection,
A case of was,
No present inflection

Low to your highs,
A tear in your eyes
A tapering disguise
A former paradise

Ayza Malik, Third Year (Evening)

Blessed be Two

Up in the skies when a pretty house I am assigned,
I'd dress its walls in vibrant pink and purple,
Perfectly complementing the verses of poetry
Etched with care upon the marble of my lake-facing balcony.
There shall be meadows all around, and fields vast and green
The gooseberries would ripen on my command
No patch of the cosmos should receive
A brighter ray of sun,
Oh, me and my grand abode — how elegant, how fun!

A walking path, part clay part stone,
Shall await me each morn as I walk on,
With dewy toes and cats at my feet
When I pick up a plump strawberry,
Slice open a mango, put my lips to both
At once and without care.
For who should stop me when none reside near?

I'd spend my mornings mellow,
My afternoons basking in the yellow
Bundle my supper up in a tiny basket,
Spread a checkered mat upon the grass
And when it would strike half-past five at most,
I shall pluck a dying rose and
Carefully emboss it closed upon my read,
As I prepare to clean up after me.

Wild birds would sing their songs aloud
And I would twirl happy and proud,
Waving them goodbye,
Soon as they hurry along in flight
To their nests of little twigs and twine
As then I would stroll to mine.

I would be smiling ear to ear as I reach my brass door,
Be beaming red from a rewarding day one more
But why, then, I fear I would not
Be turning my heart-shaped lock,
But biting my lip, eyes to the floor?

A warm bed awaiting me, the prospect of biscuits by the side
Time yet for reading more before bed —
Or to bring in my paint bucket from the shed!
But why, then, do I feel myself tarry,
My feet lingering so;
Why don't I just unfasten the bolt?

I believe it will be roughly at this hour,
When the dew has long since dried,
And the air turned rather sour,
When the fur though soft,
Have not arms long enough to hold,
And my library, with a ladder all towering,
Has not much left untold,
That I would ponder upon existence before the bliss,
Soft digits not intertwined with mine,
And upon lips in eons I wouldn't have kissed.

Then I would think back on you.
If heaven were this, I should demand a change
A euphoric one though it be,
Neither you, nor my God,
I would achingly deduce,
Could accurately gauge its range for me.

I'd have a palace all solitary,
A slice of delight, a life so free
Yet, what use, when I'd toss about all night,
In my sheets so cold
Shaking with tremors until the fever's run its course?
Then, it shall be, that I would take a look around,
And think of you,
Reach a silent compromise, and decide
If one poses joy, then blessed be two.

Duaa Azim, M.A. Final (Morning)

In conversation with Aamna Motala

1. What is, for you, the purpose of poetry? For Sidney it was "to instruct and delight" — do you believe that to hold true for you?

I don't think, first of all, that there can be a singular purpose of poetry. I feel like it supplies different things to different people. Sure, it can be instructive, but for me, personally, the way I look at poetry, it's for its metaphoric and polysemic quality.

I feel poetry can express something that cannot be expressed in language. Sure, it fails inevitably, but it's the closest one can get to the inexpressible. So, when I'm writing poetry, it's not a conscious effort to sit down and write a poem; but rather more of an itch that I need to scratch. The itch can never be scratched fully or completely, but the metaphor is what allows us to come closer to the cause.

Some people look at poetry as "creative expression" or "self expression", but calling it so would imply the *possibility* of such an expression, whereas, for me, poetry is about alleviating the anxiety that there is something one feels which cannot be expressed.

2. Do you think a poetic voice is inherent, or do you believe it is cultivated? Has your own poetic voice changed over the years?

Everyone inevitably is going to have an inherent poetic voice, but — also inevitably — that poetic voice is going to be cultivated not consciously, but as a result of all that one has read, or feels inspired by. It emerges as one's own unique voice.

For me, I was really inspired by Robert Frost, who was the first poet I read extensively, but I don't remember ever trying to write like Frost. I just liked that poetry could do that to me, and I wanted to be able to do that, as well. I should hope that the voice that comes out is not taken from someone, not an imitation because, I think, if we try to cultivate it too consciously, then what emerges is a very forced, contrived sort of poetry. So, while the poetic voice is important, it's also important to cultivate it by reading more poetry and trying to understand it.

(Do you think your own poetic voice has changed?)

Yeah, significantly! But at the same time, if I were to look at my earlier poems, I would be able to say 'yeah, this is Aamna.' I don't know if it's visible to other people, — hopefully I have refined it a bit more, gotten a better grasp over it — but I do think that the voice is the same. I also don't believe my form or structure has changed significantly.

3. Many poets today (including ourselves) are inspired by the canonical poets, and it is important to have this awareness of the tradition — but we also face the threat of inspiration turning into imitation. How would you define the line between inspiration and imitation?

Again, if you try to cultivate it too consciously then it does emerge as imitation. I don't think inspiration is something we do entirely consciously, right? Think of a moment when you were inspired by something that was happening in your life. If you wanted to write about it in poetry, you wouldn't write about it literally. It's an inspiration that kind of emerges with something like an "aha!" moment where you *understand*.

For me, that's the ideal metaphor — that something is able to come and fit into that metaphor, something that I'm feeling. I'd say inspiration works at a subconscious level, perhaps. You are not thinking "I want to imitate this moment or this person, or this poet" exactly as is, but rather, "I now know what to do with it, how to work with this idea that's come in my mind." Whereas, imitation I think, is a more conscious form of trying to write like someone, in a voice that is not inherently yours.

4. Is there a recurring thought or idea in your poems? If so, what and why do you think that is?

Like I said, for me, poetry is the attempt to try to get to non-language, to express something that cannot be expressed in words; so I think due to that, the element of dreamwork recurs a lot in my works, especially because I place memory and dreams in that same category of "something that is not expressible in language."

I think of dreams as something you can feel, and even if you were to try and describe a dream in literal terms, I don't think you'd ever be able to completely describe/express it. Hence, when I'm writing poetry, it feels like a sudden outburst of "I want to write," which is

why I'm not editing, not thinking, It's almost similar to automatic writing. Which is why, if you were to ask me to write a poem right now, I probably wouldn't be able to. I think memories and dreams recur in my poems. Moaz once mentioned that the element of 'something green' shows up quite a bit, too, so perhaps that could be another thing.

5. The Elizabethan era had sonnets, while the romantic period had odes and lyrics. However, in contemporary culture, we don't really have a predominant form. How would you say the freedom of form has affected poetry?

You could say that we do not have a form, but then you could also argue that we do, in fact, have a predominant form; free verse, blank verse, and even the emerging insta poetry — those could well be our forms.

Even if our age doesn't necessarily have a form with a fixed meter or rhyme, we tend to think that because of a lack of form, poetry today has become debased and popularized, even mainstream — but I don't believe that to be the case. I don't think form is what supplies the inherent potency to poetry. I mean, sure it's part of it, but someone today could write a sonnet, too. Suppose it's an insta poet who composes it and the sonnet isn't really saying anything and also not an effective one either, so I don't think, then, it would be the form that is the problem. We could, however, say we do have a form of formlessness. Sure, poetry is impacted but I believe there to be other factors, as well — it's not only the lack of form.

6. What, in your opinion, is a "good poem"? Do you believe there should be objective criteria for judging poetry?

We tend to agree that all art is subjective, so I don't know about objective criteria. However, if you ask me personally, a "good poem" would involve expressing something for the writer, yet in a way that doesn't make the work come across as stuck in that vacuum of self-expression, but also somehow relatable to something else at large. That, for me, is important in a poem.

Ideally, I should be able to read a person's poem and not get the impression that it was their very personal, very private experience.

Rather, I should be able to be moved by it, as well. It should interpret something for me that it may have interpreted differently for the writer. That would be *my* criterion, but I do know that it's different for everyone.

7. Do you think universality in poetry should be preferred over singularity? Can the personal 'I' be incorporated without compromising on the universality of a poem?

I think they can be very compatible, the 'I' within a universality. *Only* singularity would make a poem too personal, too unrelatable for me; while too much of universality, without there being any element of the private and the personal, would make it too distant, too abstract. So both are important, both are compatible, and I have seen it happen. Even some poems that you read as being very private, can still be saying something very universal, or, at the very least, relatable.

I think that is why I enjoyed and fell in love with Joseph Brodsky because a lot of his poems would fall in both of those categories. Some would be considered more singular, others more universal because of the images he applies. Similarly, some are very colloquial and others full of allusions. I feel that there's a good bit of overlapping in his poems. He has this poem, *You're Coming Home Again*, which is quite private; but, then, it's a private experience that many people may have experienced.

8. What are your views about TikTok poetry emerging as an almost sub-form of slam poetry? How about "internet poetry"? Do you think any contemporary poets, on the internet or otherwise, have the merit to be discussed in literature classes?

I haven't seen TikTok poetry, but the problem with Insta poetry is, as Marshall McLuhan said, "The medium is the message". We immediately tend to dismiss something that emerges on TikTok or Instagram as problematic because it's coming out of those platforms — but there is also merit to that argument because TikTok and Instagram are both categorized by the proliferation of content. So, there's a lot of content, and there's also a lot of imitation going on — many people do it because they see other people succeed at doing it — but I don't think the problem lies in the medium that is emerging,

rather that poetic trends, in general, are changing. If a lot of people are reading and enjoying internet poetry, can we continue to blame poetry in that sense, or say that poetry should be high-minded? The distinction between 'high art' and 'low art' is very evident in something like this happening.

Personally, I have not enjoyed any of the TikTok poetry. Usually, there's not even a written poem, but a person just looking into the camera and saying something that has some rhythm to it — but they're essentially just ranting, mostly about love and breakups, and that does nothing for me because there is very little imagery that's going on, very little metaphor. It's a rant, but a rant with a rhythm — that is its entire quality. So I don't enjoy that, but I do know that a lot of poets have become serious poets after being very bad writers on those apps, and they are also being taught as part of courses across America.

Ocean Vuong, for example, and Warsan Shire, are being considered as "serious poets", even though they are contemporary, so I don't believe the medium is the problem. I just think there is a proliferation of content. People assume that poetry is something that every individual can do, but you wouldn't expect someone to become a programmer seeing other people program, so I don't know why people don't take that seriously enough. So yes, not all Insta poetry is bad, but, to me, it mostly is.

9. In your own poetry, how much of your Self is there? Have you ever tried employing a persona in your works?

There's a lot of myself, but I don't know *which* Self. I never consciously wrote using another persona, but I do think if I were to look at my poetry objectively from a bird's eye view, I would see a persona there. Maybe not entirely resembling who I am, but still someone like me. I think that also has to do with the poetic voice. Maybe a persona is the poetic voice that speaks a bit like you, yet I never consciously employed one. But yes, I do think a lot of my Self is present in my poems.

10. As we see these days, AI generated writing has become a common thing. Do you think AI poems might replace, or, to some extent, become coexistent with poetry as we know it?

So, as I mentioned in the beginning, for me poetry is expressing something outside of language; whereas AI is literally coded to remain within language, so I do not think AI could be successful. You could ask AI to write an elegy, or sonnet, or even an epic and it could do that for you, but I think the feeling won't be there and that would be evident — at least at the level AI is at right now.

We see this with students' assignments as well, right? AI is easily detectable, even without detection tools, because there is no human quality to it. It could be immaculate, perfectly written, but you would still be able to detect that it is AI generated content. Where there is a human quality in poetry as we know it, rooted in its not being pristine or immaculate, — even if it is following a form perfectly — AI poetry would be too pristine. So, no, I don't think AI would ever be successful in doing poetry.

11. As a seasoned poet, as well as a teacher of poetry, if you could give one piece of advice to the poets of today, what would it be?

While I don't really consider myself a seasoned poet, (we do!) one advice I would give is to read more poetry. I think reading poetry — and not just contemporary poetry — is really important. It opens you up to multiple perspectives. You should familiarize yourself with all of its forms. Sure, no one is using them anymore, but you shouldn't just disavow them entirely. I think there is much to benefit from just knowing these forms. For instance, I don't write sonnets, but I do think it's important to know how poetry has been and how it has evolved over the years. The same can be said for all other poetic forms and styles, including contemporary poetry. While there is a lot to be critiqued in contemporary poems, it still deserves our attention.

In fact, I have also added contemporary poetry to my *War Poetry* course here. The course is significantly Eurocentric, but I remember teaching my class Agha Shahid Ali and Fady Joudah — a Palestinian poet who also speaks about war — and they're both contemporary poets. I don't believe they should be put in the same category of contemporary poetry that we consider 'low art'. These poets seem to be doing very well.

دنیا کی موت

دنیا کی موت تو ہو بھی چکی ہے
ہم تو بس ایک لاش کے کنارے
رتجگا کر رہے ہیں

ہم میں سے کوئی اٹھ کر
ہر کچھ دیر کے بعد
اس لاش کی نبض دیکھ آتا ہے
اور اسے سوتا ہوا دیکھ کر
واپس رتجگے میں شامل ہو جاتا ہے

اب بس جلد صبح ہو
تو ہم بھی اس دنیا کے برابر ہیں
آنکھ بند کر کے سو جائیں

منہاج علی تھرڈ ایر - ایوننگ

دل رخصت تو کدھر جا رہا ہے
ویران گلیوں میں اس فطرت کا تجھ سے گلا ہے
میرے گماں کا یہ خیال تھا
یا موقع کی کشمکش
اے دل تو جب تجھ سے جدا ہوا
نہ تو تو رہا نہ میری انسانیت
زندگی کا یہ سفر کچھ عجیب افسردہ تھا
تیرے کام سے واقفیت تھی تو کہیں اور لگا تھا
کسی سے محبت، کسی سے عاشقی، کسی سے ناراضگی کا بہانہ تھا
حقیقت تھی کچھ اور نہیں۔ تو نے تجھی کو بہلانا تھا
~وائے فانی کے مرگِ وقت کہہ گئے میر
خواب تھا جو کچھ دیکھا، جو سنا افسانہ تھا
دل رخصت یہ وقت رخصت ہے
جو فرصت تھی وہ ایک گماں تھا، ایک بہانہ تھا۔

آمنہ فاروق

جبر کوئی نہیں

فیصلہ اپنا آخر آج سنایا تم نے

جبر کوئی نہیں، بس زور چلایا تم نے

قید تو یہ بھی تھی، زندان نیا اب وہ سہی

فرق کیا ہے قفسِ نو ہی دلایا تم نے

اپنے ہاتھوں سے غلامی کی توق پہنائے

مجھ کو بس قید کے جوڑے میں بیہیا تم نے

پہلے بھی کھیلے تھے آتشِ انگاروں سے

کیا برا ہے، گراک مردہ ہی جلایا تم نے

شکوہ کوئی نہیں، نہ کوئی گلا تم سے ہے
تم کو جو حق تھا اُسے خوب جتایا تم نے

-کنول-

دور ہے یا نزدیک عجب گماں رہتا ہے
اگر اس شہر میں ہے وہ تو کہاں رہتا ہے؟

باد صبا کے آنے سے پھولوں کو دیکھو
پورے گلشن میں دلکش سماں رہتا ہے

آرزو کسی اور کی کیوں کر کرے کوئی
ایک ہی نام سے جب دل جواں رہتا ہے

خیالوں میں آنا کسی کا روز بہ روز
سمندر کی طرح کوئی ذہن پہ رواں رہتا ہے

ان کے کوچے سے گزرے تو اجالے سے معلوم ہوا
شمع کی خاطر مجمع پروانہ اب یہاں رہتا ہے

دل میں ہلکی سی ہلکی سی خلش محسوس جو ہوئی اریبہ
کیا ممکن ہے کوئی اب سے وہاں رہتا ہے؟

اریبہ شاہد تھرڈ ایر، مارننگ

اے خدا مجھے جانے دے

دن نکلنے والا ہے

مجھے یہاں سے جانے دے

دور کہیں انسانوں سے

رشتوں کے ان تھانوں سے

الفت کے ویرانوں سے

خوشیوں کی دکانوں سے

خوابوں کے مے خانوں سے

دور کہیں مجھے جانے دے

رات گزرتی جاتی ہے

دن نکلنے والا ہے

رات یہیں رک جانے دے

یادن کو سب پہ آنے دے

بس مجھے یہاں سے جانے دے

خوف آتا ہے دن سے مجھے
ہلچل کی آوازوں سے
دن کی ہر پل سازش سے
امید کے روشن کونوں سے
سچے جھوٹے دونوں سے
بس گھپ اندھیرا چھانے دے
اے خدا مجھے جانے دے
دن نکلنے والا ہے
مجھے یہاں سے جانے دے

مونس آزاد

ہوا کے دوش پہ آئی ہے تیری یاد ابھی
صحنِ صحن میں سمانی ہے تیری یاد ابھی
غریبِ شہر کے کمزور زرد ہاتھوں پر
مثالِ رنگِ حنائی ہے تیری یاد ابھی
تڑپ گیا ہے مرے دل کا تار تار ابھی
غمِ جہاں نے بھلائی ہے تیری یاد ابھی
وہ مٹ گئے مرے دل سے تمام داغ ترے
بس اک نشانِ جدائی ہے تیری یاد ابھی
شہر سے دور کہیں دور جنگلوں میں کہیں
کسی نے آج جلای ہے تیری یاد ابھی

افتخار شفیع