**4:20 PM**

Aayushi Nainan

Coursework 2 Descriptive Writing- Final

***Statement of Intent:*** *This essay is a description of the subtle difficulties of the poor and contrasts their despair with the universal joy of motherhood. A third person account of some of the daily struggles an Indian maid, the essay uses extended metaphors and allegories to reflect her mental state through the environment. It is targeted at adolescent and adult readers who can empathize with the struggles of people from different socioeconomic backgrounds. The language used is formal, and the intended tone is sombre and brooding. These language choices best enhance the seriousness of her problem.*

She waits on the dirty sidewalk staring into the distance. The dark clouds are stubborn; they are unwavering in their resolve to let the sun rays break through. Broken umbrellas, fallen tree branches and overturned fruits carts - the gale means business today.

But she waits. Her pale yellow synthetic sari wraps around her like a suckling infact clinging to his mother. It has a grave responsibility - to hold her secrets. But the gale has other plans today. The constant fluttering of the dull plaid cloth exposes her surprisingly fragile, wrinkled body. Her thin, greying hair is oiled and tied in a tight plait, like a snake wriggling up her body and drooping over her hunched figure. It was not always like this. Four Diwalis ago, this Sari was her partner in crime. A shimmering sequined sunshine yellow and neatly plaited, it functioned as her beautiful armour. It wrapped around her gracefully, hiding her struggles and pains from the rest of the world. This story is just one of the many written on the map of wrinkles on her face. They represent a myriad of experiences; some triumphant and joyous, and some devastatingly sad. Her cheekbones hide under layers of sagging skin, as if they were non-existent. She licks her pursed lips which concealed her neglected, crooked, brown and yellow teeth. The satin money pouch in her hand fluttered in the wind like her Sari – weightless.

She continues to wait. The children are crying, the men are rushing past the hawkers hollering and customers bargaining. This, is Dadar Market - a medley of smells and sights in full-swing. The salty odour of sweat mingled with the nose tingling aroma of sandalwood, henna and spices, fresh fruits, smells of baked goods and cooking hung in the air from early morning to late evening. The flies swarmed over the filth and muck, like bees to nectar. Large decrepit carts with neatly arranged but rotting produce, lined the sides of the streets as their vendors guarded them, yelling prices into a sea of customers.Sometimes she would meander through the maze of stalls proudly displaying with colourful tunics, scarves, and jewellery. The stalls boasted of imported items such as cheap accessories that attracted the young girls. She would reach into her money-pouch, briefly and then quickly withdraw her hand, chastising herself for a moment of weakness. She longed to buy some jewellery for her daughter, Sangita, a petite college going girl and a scooter for her son, Ramanathan, an adolescent with a sprouting mustache. The bustling market, to her, served as a symbol for the city’s tenacity – an inspiration even under the gloomiest of clouds and strongest of gales. The city’s people, like her, all had lives to lead.

She waits outside the old, deserted BMC building on the bustling street, squeezed between the rusting lamp-post and open, flooded drain. Its windows are broken, shattered glass pieces lay on the ground, the dim light bouncing off them drawing tiny rainbows around them. The musky yellow paint is peeling off, and the untouched walls loaded with bird droppings. It looked a lot like her house; except much bigger. Its dark and dingy corridors lay exposed to the busy world outside, its walls covered with dusty portraits of previous politicians and governors. It reminded her of her shattered dreams of a better life by breaking their promises to provide better housing. She glanced up at the sky. Ominous black and threatening clouds filled the sky . The storm brewed on the horizon promising no mercy. Thunder roared and a flash of lightening lit up the dull sky, allowing the people to enjoy a moment of brightness. Her flimsy and delicate Sari failed to protect her from the raging typhoon that engulfed the area. If it rained today, she would have to search for the pretty, floral umbrella that had broken a while ago. More importantly, the old house roof, now destroyed with a million holes and cracks would need to be replaced. With that thought, she sighed.

Amidst the uncertainty that surrounds her, she waits of a life beyond struggles and half-kept promises for her children. She waits eagerly for 4:20 pm. She waits for the shiny yellow school bus, to swerve unevenly around the corner, as though it was struggling to hold in the big dreams and tiny chortles of her children. She waits for the gurgling stream of ‘Aai, Aai, Aai...’ to emanate from the two half-dancing, half-stumbling pieces of her heart.

She knows the downpour will fail to scathe them, and the wind will fumble in their path as they journey once again down the cobbled streets, at 4:20 pm.

Word Count – 779

*BMC –* The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation which is also known as the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai is the civic body that governs the city of Mumbai, India

*Aai –* The word *Aai* refers to a mother. It is commonly used in Marathi, the dominant language spoken in Mumbai, where this story is set.