

Kathmandu

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## Acknowledgement

Years of resentment, conceptualization, and growth have allowed me to pen down some of my most intimate experiences from my upbringing and encapsulate them as references in an epic based in the history of my hometown. This was an attempt to capture my childhood and my fleeting teens, where I was the most unhappy with myself. I want to thank my family for seeing a light in me that I could not in myself. I want to thank my dear, dear friends who have held my hand throughout this long journey of shaping my baby – that is this book — and told me that I was worth the battles I would have to fight. I started writing this book at 17 by saying, “If I do not live, a piece of me should.” Though this book is still a part of me through which my memories will live long, I have found the companionship of the people around me to be a better testament for my existence in this world. Thank you to my hometown that raised me. Thank you to everyone who has seen me or has felt seen through me. Thank you to Subani for doing the cover art.



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The ineptness of  
Kathmandu is overruled  
just by its culture,  
the only aspect making  
it all bearable.



## **111 Temples**

I drag my weight along these streets  
of this once holy town that holds me down without a beam of light.  
Ritual for it to leave me deserted.  
For an instance... this ground echoes my sorrow and howls my silence.

A sound shatters this sloth,  
of an old man singing a song, a hymn.  
It buzzed repose – the melody.  
Walk a little, still hear him,  
but hundreds of steps have my sight dazed.

Across stood a man glancing over our burning kingdom with no remorse.  
“Pity,” I mutter,  
“This aura, this feel, this grace you’ve betrayed.  
Letting it slip into the hands of Gorkhalis.”

When at the edge, rain drips on my cheeks  
as I unfurl my arms and squeal,  
‘Behold you fools!  
You’re killing the city!  
So down I go with the city!’

The stones of the Bagmati shore that are painted with luscious milk  
are now painted with my blood.  
What print did my life make?

## 112 A Funeral Proper

As my body sinks into clothes fluttering against the wind,  
I am a shadow lingering from the life I never fully lived.  
Slam! A shadow in a dark room. No fortune can follow.  
Come across my static self, numbed to the depths of his crux.  
Once capable of making memories, upholding traditions  
now lies powerless, colourless on the piercing cold tiles.  
The same molecules that formed a being of potency,  
communicated in complex binary, found harmony  
is now a burden to be burned. No wood. No cortege.  
No one to burn it. No funeral proper. No full-stops  
As I shroud him in my arms, wings take rise upon me  
to help sail him down to the foot of the grand temple,  
where the body lays uncultured, untouched, and unloved,  
blending into the grey hues of the ground it bled onto.  
A burning desire to find solace for its life ignites a fire.  
As it burns ablaze in flames, my remorse so conveyed,  
with which the river rises, takes with it the ashes left.

## 113 The Nativity

For the weight of the fallen walls of Bhadgaon are rested on its locals, and the weight of their unpatriotic hearts falls on men like me. Ones that never inspired, felt unloved, and hence, could not love. In another life, I could be your hero, I could be your God, and stop this madness before it transpired at all.

But I sense life  
as I bleed back to poetry.  
Am I starting to flow into my wishes?

What was waning  
bleeds with radiance  
as colours gyrate my being.

Each flex against  
the framing of my torso  
cracks open poppies through bricks.

For every spin of joy,  
every emotion engraved in me  
ribs are felt composing my inflating heart.

Cheeks wrinkle  
as I smile profoundly  
each time breezes tickle me.

To bless me, to breathe life again  
my green feet kissed  
the firm earth.

A door opened in the depths of doom  
for a fallen man—now godsend—  
to be a hero, a God or just be?

## **121 A Mourning**

As infant beams emerge, and dawn breaks,  
the Moon blankets under cotton clouds.  
She will now adorn some other land.

A choir of desperate dire wails  
come racing against the harmony,  
sucking every glory in its path.

Cries so fatal, moved me by my core.  
speaks of love, and the grief at its loss.  
Climbs higher with every other howl.

The heart of the choir was a mother,  
counting every fight, every contact  
they made. Gasps in vain. Never to end.

## 122 A Solace

The dark clouds in the sky brew thunders  
to keep warm from the cold rain below.  
Perhaps the greedy Lord Indra had a good day today,  
but you care not. Safe behind your locked doors.  
Knock! Knock!  
A stranger at your door, so make sure to be his shore,  
make room in your heart for him to fill it with his fables.  
Like branches being inflicted with flints striking.  
A gift so pure, it has no weight, and only lights the way.  
You have found within your heart to accept a new way of life.  
Your souls bleed into each other; he is now a part of your history.  
Though you're aware he burns out, you're unaware when he will.  
Every bite you take now concerns you if he ate at all.  
A new purpose for your life. Someday he could find his own.  
But the morning brings a burning sun that evaporates the clouds.  
The light of the dawn opens your eyes to an empty home.  
The sun has burned your fire out.  
Your eyes don't find your guest that you love so dear.  
He was yet to have found himself.  
So young. So much to have lived.  
There are questions you have yet to ask him.  
But if the answer cannot appear, the questions must vanish.  
Acceptance is your only solace.  
Just be sure to smile that it happened at all,  
and you were a part of it.

## 123 An Annotation

"There is no logos for love or loss. It's just a bare river that flows.  
The more I direct its path, the more I get swept with it.  
And oh, my dear love. My heart feels empty without you.  
Perhaps because Yalambar reached into my chest, right between the ribs,  
and pulled you right out,  
still pumping, still bleeding.  
The memory of you is enough to keep my veins flowing for eternity,  
but the loss of you is the reason it seeks to stop.  
There's only blood and gore. How can I make peace in this?  
There was once blood after your birth.  
Your dainty fingers ran across my palm, rearranging my lines of fate.  
Now, your small hands have run out of space to hold any future.  
All that could fit there has been lived, and my fate remains barren.  
Ridden of any personality. No fingerprints, no prints at all.  
Yours ceased, and mine lost its purpose.  
Ah, I could have loved you so much more.  
In your absence, I keep living. My story keeps getting longer  
but you are not a part of it any longer.  
I cannot bare for it to be this way.  
Perhaps there is no ideal method of separation.  
Perhaps it would always be this painful.  
But still, my love, come back to me as a breeze or a fly.  
I'd feel your breath one more time.  
I stared at your face as it turned from a baby to a boy.  
There are quarrels we have yet to have.  
There are confessions we have not yet made.  
So come back, so next time we can leave together.  
You are all still here, intact. Just your essence has left.  
I would breathe me into yours, if you'd take it.  
Perhaps I didn't kiss you enough as a child because  
the fear of the taste of the texture of your skin being forgotten still remains.  
That one day, I will forget the way you joke about things.  
The humor I'd learn to laugh to will fly through my ears.  
I don't want to forget how your steps sound, and  
I don't want to forget the coordinates of your birthmark.  
I'm fighting to not lose what I have left of you.  
And there is no solace in this. Only misery. Endless misery."

## 131 Glazing Halo

He, who stands low with his ashy feet sunk into the river  
as the water parts ways to make room for his stay,  
looks up at the Moon as she adorns him  
with her touch – the only tenderness he'd known.

He, who was doomed before his cry of birth,  
after which he was welcomed by none,  
seeks no pride as he never meets an eye  
that's not already looking down at him.

He, who is in awe of a pale distant star,  
is blinded to the rays of his own halo –  
the only plea to the mystery of his life  
or rather the mystery of his bliss despite it.

He pushes against the flow letting it carry his weight  
as the moonlight outlines his silhouette in the water  
as if he is Her protected son or perhaps, he is the Sun,  
the source of Her brightness, and all of Her love.

He, with a drained face – apart from a few drop –  
dripping along the carvings of his gentle tissues,  
forsaking the brutality – smiles so purely,  
the water bearing my faulty ashes purges.

## 132 In Gratitude of Unsung Heroes

Here, the boy kneels before you,  
the guru of a self-professed shista,  
seeking, with his eyes of ambition  
through which a stone is a statue,  
nothing but a sign of admiration  
as you are all he ever dreamt of,  
and you, with the mastery you hold,  
with a minute yet vile gesture  
could turn kingdoms to crumbs,  
have nothing to lose for a smile,  
and yet a mortal sacrifice you ask for  
that wipes away his life, his passion,  
his love he poured for years onto you,  
which he will gladly let go for you,  
and walk into his own demise;  
still to you, he's no more than a pimp.

At the crossroad of cultures of Kantipur peaks Swayambhunath,  
the home of all believers, and their deities who descend often,  
but amongst them drona will never be one as he was no god,  
no righteous man for the way he inhumanely treated you,  
and that assures me that You are one I believe in and follow;  
as the power of the gods is only the result of our faith in them,  
and any reign they have ends with the end of our faith in them;  
so someday You shall have a temple worthy of taking every breath,  
not because You're a god but because of the faith you left in people.

## 141 Lunacy

As I walk, I absorb such teachings of life, and its suffering.  
There goes one lady. Hear what she has to say.

"Once was a time when I have love.  
The earth shatters; I fall into its cracks;  
my lover wraps his hands around me, and pulls me high up;  
I emerge striking some devilish pose as though the wind were under my  
command,  
Followed by a mid-air kiss in silence,  
as no words are need to convey any thought of love.  
But then those hands worked long hours in a job lapsing 8 days a week,  
for our jaw to be crippled, as we can't recall the last time they're put to used.  
As you join your hands to hope for more, we join ours to plead for the least.  
Grains of rice or crumbs of bread.  
Once I had children to love.  
Even now, each time they call out my name,  
I burn myself down to ashes  
just to hug them in the afterlife.  
Pray schools exists there.  
As here, there's not one we'd be let in to.  
Once was a time where I have home.  
'Tis the tide that took it.  
All is gone.  
Yet you pump me in hopes of more.  
We are to serve and you are to prey.  
The world could collide, your pockets you check first.  
if all is in place,  
you'd run, stepping over us.  
As we sink into the ground with the ruins of your palace.  
Once I had love.  
Now I have debt.  
For what I'd never know  
'Cause money a thing I'd never held.  
The walls you erected, look beyond them  
it's only the people that built you the wall here."

## 142 The Struggle Between Gods

And now we've garnered too many gods, too many to count,  
of which the big three and a few adjacent others take all the glory  
digging their hands on all the deeds of all the godkind  
leaving no space, no statues for others to be worshipped in  
because perhaps the people that worshipped them were invaded,  
their culture encroached for their gods to exist but in silence  
so now there is a subplot in the epic about the holiest of gods  
where Shiva, being as unleashed, as godly, as sexual as he ever is,  
ends up fornicating with a devil in disguise to defeat her,  
but now his semen, as divine as amrit, so ejaculated cannot go wasted  
so comes the god that is not as celebrated, Surya, the charioted Sungod,  
the only god to swiftly catch the liquid before it's dirtied by the Earth,  
who now has no option but to swallow it himself,  
and birth a son who will perhaps be a hero and have a bigger spin-off  
thanks to the glory trickling from one of his fathers.

Rest upon the sand under the salty water,  
which soothes your coarse skin  
holding grudges of buried deeds  
that were pardoned long before enacted,  
that made you who you know now as you,  
and feel the virtue of the easy breeze  
that brushes through your frizzy hair,  
and plays on your bridged nose with joy,  
and let the very breeze pass through us all.

There's space in his heart  
that seeks to be stuffed with love  
either from others,  
whose blood drains out, or his own  
that bleeds until his last breath.



## 211 Soliloquy

My eyes lunge into my reflection's;  
am I proud of who I see here?

Some peasant like you  
with nothing to your name  
but a smile that tries to cache  
memories of a failed life.

Then my mind explodes,  
caging my eyes with insight,  
revealing my disappointing past;  
with pixels bursting as portraits.

Many a heroes must have come  
to try and stop a war,  
a denouncement of a culture.

So why a peasant like you  
would hold a candle against history?  
Despite purest of ambitions,  
with a look so grotesque  
and a stance so deserted,  
your worth abates  
with every other word.

Listen close and stamp it to your pith:  
Your words may jolt the Moon,  
your name won't turn an ear.  
Even if your mind a wisdom galore,  
even if your blood of a dean,  
your memory fades with you,  
you're one none will enshrine.

## 212 The Space Feud

Bear me a friend, Mother!  
Bear me another child!

There's no sign of life for hundreds of miles,  
just space galloping my cries that it doesn't let travel,  
and yet I spin about you, day and night,  
and yet you look down at me  
because just the thought of Amar's sons,  
Demi and Phoebe, lacing about him,  
confiding each other with secrets  
riled you up to the point you're unsettled  
by the quietude, the harmony, the rapture  
I'd found within myself.

Was my glare not symbolic, Mother?  
Or was I not a pure virgin for being stepped in?  
You bore me to be alone,  
with which I was forced to make peace.  
Now your deep blue oceans won't cast my image  
as you mind me no more than wit.  
Once, I wouldn't have cared if you did;  
now, I couldn't persist without it.  
So dare to face your own wrath:  
Now, bear me another child!

For disowning my rite and not letting me be,  
bear me one before my beam gleams in burgundy.

## 213 Third Along the Lines

Letting Bagmati immerse me, capture my breaths in bubbles,  
I think of the boy that found peace in the water, and then there's me;  
failed to ever see the sea on the same level.  
Was I ever the first name on Your mind... ever?

Pick a better hero. Your first thought.  
Who brings me back in my land but with Gorkhalis? What's my purpose?  
Laws of life broken for what? My dying wish?  
That is who You pick to save Kathmandu?  
Throw me out, and pick someone with a stance, friends, and fans.  
Had you not seen who I was? Alone, unloved, unwanted.

I'd give you my thumb, my hair,  
slit the Earth in two and fall into despair,  
given the slightest hint that my name is worthy of repair,  
of even the slightest chance of being something somehow:  
if so either give me an army or make me a pair, but I am unworthy as I am now.

Thus, I can't bear the burden of being me anymore.  
Reprieve me to be nothing.

"

Rise  
with patience.  
Regain your breath.  
Be revised through all senses.  
My child,  
the past is as is  
there is no mending it,  
you're here to mend your future.

You are lost  
about the new ways:  
the khukuris that they bear,  
and how it has left you in the past.

But you are the answer  
even if no question is being posed.  
You are allowed to just be and nothing more.  
But changes you choose to bring are still yours to bring.

Yet no noel  
will chant of you.  
You can wish for better  
and I will grant you your wish.  
Be mindful,  
find a stable stance  
before you hold onto temples  
that are crumbling from termites within.

"

## 221 Warmth of Winter

I close my eyes to the grace of snow  
tip on my nose, long lost before I opened them.  
Flowers conceal their hue, shying from a fog  
stretched as far as my vision can reach.

Shivering fingers take hold of piercing railings,  
whose frost I polish away as I jog along.  
Mountains take rise upon my skin.  
Friction of my hands alone can't keep me warm.

The whole town suits up in a dashing white coat.  
Their doors locked. The streets haunted.  
But a distant cottage lets out some smoke.  
With it, the light, in all its glory, spreads.

There is the mist I am leaving behind.  
The crunching sound as I march ahead.  
The names written on window panes.  
The joy of holding oneself tight.

If warmth flickers even in such frost,  
could it not for me in my heart?  
Blessed be the signs I find.  
Oh, the glory of winter!

## 222 To Love and All Its Disguises

A lady wrapped in balmy wear lights up;  
being clutched deep in her lover's arms.  
As she rests her head on his chest,  
an overstretched smile of serenity  
finds its way on the looks of both.

The pigmented air swirls to me  
such that their smile spreads.  
I, too, float in emotions.  
Perhaps, a noel will chant of me.  
But on a much-grounded thought:

Swans spiralling their necks around each other;  
the untouchable, outshining glory of doves;  
the embarked yet soft redness of a rose;  
the ever-glowing beauty of pearls.  
'Tis all that love's been diluted to?

Let it gleam in more than just red.  
If the feeling the entire existence spins about  
is no more than a white lie, let all tell it.  
Repelling all truths that clog me,  
I must learn to lie to myself.

## **223 Radiance of Love**

A man annihilated by winter's wrath  
shines an eye upon his son,  
propelling them closer.  
Eventually, a cuddle on a bench.  
Heaven may not be as radiant as this.

To have such a pure child of Rati,  
must equate to the knowledge  
that if I were to shed a tear,  
it'd be only on someone's shoulder  
with my hands shrouded in admiration.

The hopes and dreams since youth  
all buried for the look of another.  
As a feeling so true is found  
that all stories told are of it.  
Love is attention. Beauty is detail.

I longed to best my concerns  
by seeking a fire within myself.  
But the elegance of fire, yet warm,  
could never compare to a true embrace.  
So, I... caressed myself.

## 224 Revised Through All Senses

A tingling sensation begins  
once I embraced myself:  
like the break of dawn,  
whose flare marks a pure birth  
heedless of its crimes,  
like the froth of a stream  
clashing on a shale,  
washing all it strokes on,  
like grime under the rain,  
the more it's sworn upon,  
the more pleasant it smells,  
like a breeze from a foreign land,  
brushed to be cold but  
felt to be dense of sentiment,  
like a wise old tree  
with its taste long lost  
but its wisdom still weighing,  
I am revised.  
I mark the end of my sentences,  
I end where it comforts me.

## 231 Zealous Thumps

Wise one, I come with propositions.

"Ask from me, and you shall receive them."

Could you throw me far back in time,  
before the fall transpired at all.

"Is that the fall of your lone self  
or the city that stood so tall?"

We are one. I'm bred to breathe its air,  
I am he, with whom the city rhymes.

"For what plan am I forming a hole  
into the clean linear sheet of time?"

For my wisdom could be the key  
to save my people from these chains.

"Know your purest of ambitions  
could also set dreadful flames."

A fire I start, is a fire I quench.

"What do you then propose to do hence?"

I will teach my people to fight  
the Gorkhalis with unity.

"But what when there are blockades,  
there is no amenity?"

United we stand; united we fall.

We stand on our land-

"Or they stand on you?  
These thoughts in your mind?"

We stand with our land or they stand on us.

"What didn't they know that you shall teach them thus?"

To preserve what has brought this place alive,  
stick to its roots, not turn on its nobles.

I'll be back with my chest under my fist.

"No new way to hold swords that you can teach,  
and still your heart burns with rage and glee.  
So though you speak funny, I grant you this."

The Earth that bore me stands in dire need,  
'tis not rage but outpouring love you see.

"March ahead into light and find yourself  
in an olden land with your forefathers.  
I am the kiss on your forehead you shall always feel."

## 232 A Lovely Night

As the paved road turns to dirt, and houses turn red with mud,  
the city of temple gleams in colors of gold and brown.  
The rivers before they changed their course by carrying the drain,  
lead the snow of the mountains right to the doors of heaven.  
From this, the offsprings of my forefathers drink luscious milk.  
They burn their mud stoves to paint the old town bright from space.  
This is a picture of you I always hold in my mind;  
with this my thoughtless shut eyes will have something to think of.  
This plain land holds farmers, traders, and monks. But invaders,  
you see, will step into their bounds for which we must be armed  
with stones and steel, and not just holy will that gives them a claim.  
A picture paints itself out of thin air of just me alone  
under streetlamps, holding the city in a purple haze.  
Though in my mind, I think of when I was here with a friend.  
Should I hum a tune, she'd resume. Like-mindsets colliding,  
running through the streets singing to the melodies of ludicrous.  
I am their star that will help attain this vision to all  
of pure joy and safety, for which they shall all be prepared.  
I will impart my wisdom to save my people, my blood  
from falling into disgrace. Then all nights be lovely nights.

And what is wisdom  
if not our lived memories.  
That... shall save my home.



### **311 Perfect Places**

Four closed walls. Three beige. One peach.  
The sound of drizzling rain after  
a blast of cold chiselling air;  
I am clutched deep in blankets.  
Though its dim, I start to glow,  
lighting up the dark corners  
of this cozy sodden room.  
A rusty gramophone traces  
the laces of a vinyl,  
so I burst into a dance  
syncing with the melodies,  
breathing through the calm music  
that paralyzes my brain.  
My fingers twitch, my feet tap  
not to miss a single beat.  
As smooth as honey dripping,  
Ecstasy never surpassed.

Grassland ending with the horizon  
with wildflowers scattered all around them.  
Light pink cotton clouds towering above  
discharge for a celestial debut  
of Andromeda twining forces  
with our own radiant Northern Lights  
in the milky sky that was once dark.  
Under it all, I lay on the grass  
unduly sniffing its enchantment,  
backed by a fire crackling spright sounds.  
Must not think loud or even at all.  
Cannot risk breaking this fated chime.  
All I know is it is a slow burn.  
Don't know if I should smile for this bliss  
or frown my heart for its fated end?  
So, I smile till I can't any further,  
until tears are rollin' down my face.

Fueled by the power of solitude,  
I long to rejoice in these places.

**312 Soloist**

May the sun wring the calm blue sea,  
the autumn rob it of its green,  
the rain — in accord with thunder —  
quake the waves to a hundred feet.  
Still deep under the shallow reef,  
blinded to these foreign haggles  
an oyster lazes in harmony.  
Crafting art is all that it seeks.  
It is how its found pride within,  
at the risk of being unrecalled.  
But when it comes out to mother  
the eye of the whole universe,  
its bound to be recalled upon.  
Its art is its child: polished, bright,  
serene, pure as can be: a pearl.

**Cordial**

On a      meranti tree  
is      a branch.

One of many,  
as good  
as any.

It greets  
the others

every morning;  
even the snug                  breeze  
                  that brushes     its leaves.

Out in the open  
facing the sun,  
the fall and                          the storm,  
waiting                                  for  
its truest companion                  to come        along:  
the red monkeys                        that hang by its edges,  
and rest under                        its canopy.

In the wild, they are one.  
Alone, sparks a glint  
                  though together,  
                  they'll light the night.

But the bright young men have come here  
to put the trees in pots, leave the people  
to cry by themselves. So they must all  
cry together a river and drown them.

## 314 A Dance

Whether  
in a locked corner of a hallway  
crafting my own solo  
guided by my reflection,  
the only soul around me,  
or  
on a street on a Wednesday,  
mastering our moves,  
guided by our rituals,  
which we still abide by,  
the applause must be the same.

My rigid feet, balanced on their tip.  
Hands-one feeling the tip of another-  
held over my head.  
Striking a pose.

A fresh leap breaking the air,  
while a hand goes by with a clap,  
landing on our prime position.  
Whilst circling the drummer  
we also spin by ourselves.

If we have neighbours  
on the edges of their balcony  
dancing along in joy,

I have the solitude  
to rejoice by myself in.  
Here,

I know not of my next step.  
Where my feet will land  
or how my hands flutter behind me,  
is a choice of my own.

There,  
I must look around  
and think before I move.  
Either ways, I am fierce and bold  
like a peacock showing off.

### 321 Green Greed

From Calcutta, from the gates of Dwarika,  
you've scoured for flowers for our people  
in cheating prices in this dense mela  
to light up their homes with things too feeble,  
so Tihar feels like a soap opera,  
But for me, just for me, like a ritual  
for my joy, for me, you got patakas.

Though you've got me a bunch,  
how dare my brother want some.  
Some of what is mine,  
what was bought for me.  
For he would have no desire in, if I didn't.

I look in his eyes, to his face I say,  
"This is mine, mine, mine. Not yours. Only me."  
He cries, I flick his head and still say nay.  
"I am older, I get all that I need.  
For my brittle heart centers all that lays,  
and yours is a shadow I seldom see.  
So understand my place above—"

A slap. A smacking. A beating from you...?  
Why when I am right? When you love me?  
Would you not want me to have more than him?  
I cry not because my body hurts but because my heart does.  
Why can't I wrap my hands around you, knowing you're only mine?

### 322 A Blue Dawn

When the waning moon dissolves into the rays of the dawn,  
the city is lost deep in its sleep. Unlike you.

'Cause you do not seek sleep on such soaking pillows  
but an escape to a world where you can be as you will.

To you, there seemed a single way to it.

A step closer, you take to look down  
on the shiny, silver blade placed on the table.

"Hello, little fellow. 'Tis not just paper today you cut."

You stare at it for a long while. Then a little more.

Now, it rests on your palm with your reflection.

Gasp in despair to let it fall off your hands.

Sweaty palm can't pick it up at once.

The clock ticking pierces through the wall.

So will any noise you make. Must hush.

On your knees with a blade in your palm.

A sweat drops right on its surface.

As you go in to pull it through your left wrist,

in a paralyzed state of mind, your body shivers.

"Oh, you weak, pathetic man. Shame is all you leave."

But then a sound was heard of footsteps.

Louder they grow with every other tick on the clock.

Dropping it on the ground you rush to be covered in sheets.

You open your eyes to the sun shining on them,

leaving you to fight through another blue day.

### 323 Yellow

Blessed be the fruit  
that'd amplify the beauty  
of the ones that devour it.  
Blessed be your looks,  
who after devouring them,  
would still remain foul.  
But despite your cast,  
the memories of the past,  
you rise each day  
as if anything'd get better.  
Story untold under a yellow smile.  
A battle hardly made through.  
I'm as proud of you as can be.  
But none'll ever tell you so.  
I'd hug you so tight if I could.  
But here I am, telling our story.

### 324 A Painting

I was given a spotless white, vast canvas.  
So, I splashed it with some bulging green.  
The aggression it portrayed was excessive,  
with its neonic outlines that came with it  
to step over the sincerity of my white mind.  
Only to be humbled by the calm blue.  
Coming in textures beyond measure,  
it deplores over all in its path.  
Numbing the crevices of the sheets,  
making suggestions to tear itself apart.  
Finishing the rule of three,  
for the final touch comes yellow  
to mock the faces of each.  
Colours erupting to take over it all,  
all failing to do so.  
A starry night in a country-side  
may not be as pretty as these emotions.

### 331 A Bitter First

I liked winter days.  
Piles of work set aside  
to get lost in the play,  
and enjoy the cold holidays.  
When I closed my eyes against the sun,  
my brown eyelids struggled to maintain their melanin,  
and glowed to be orange, clousing my memory.

There was an older boy with whom I spent my warm days.  
Two men, a year apart, are just two men.  
Two boys, a year apart, are a power gap.  
So, on a cold day as we sunbathed,  
I felt a hand slither down my belly.  
As a snappy response: I push him away.  
My hands reach for his to end his clasp right about my waist,  
and as I approach it, his palm engulfs mine.  
My hands turn to hooks under his grasp  
as he pulls me to lead the way, yanking my shoulder.  
As he lured me to a locked corner,  
I was surprised to feel caged in a familiar place.  
Apparently, "This is how life continues,  
and everyone must do this."  
And so, as life continued,  
at the ripe age of 11, I felt as if  
I was ripped open from my mouth to my heart.  
The words out my mouth were silenced  
by the pumps of my heart that echoed through my pipes.  
So loud, so guilty, I could vomit my organs out and my life with it.  
Perhaps, this is where I stopped saying anything  
because our metallic bodies hold its earholes linearly  
so that we can easily throw out the words we take in  
without having to absorb them. Easy come, easy go.  
And I knew at that moment I was there because I was easy.  
Not a threat, not a throne; faltering and forsaken.  
'Cause for a moment, I asked myself, "Are you like me?"  
Was it desperation or desire?  
But in all of this I wasn't touched with affection,  
I was not kissed with the naivety of two blossoming flowers.

So how can it be anything but an easy meeting of desperate demands?  
My pupils grew wider as I stared into the blank ceiling in pain  
from fear either in my heart or in my stomach.  
But a part of me just pitied myself for it. It told me,  
"You sweet little child. Your homely body  
with your bones poking out,  
you have no skin to offer.  
Youth is all you'll ever have.  
So whatever force bestowed this situation on you,  
be glad. It is the only time you will ever be wanted.  
Embrace the displeasure for the time you are embraced.  
As you age, your skin gets darker, and your nose bigger.  
So be grateful for what you have as you never again will."  
Or maybe I did like it, which would be worse because I'd be a sin.  
And so, my heart starts sobbing  
as I tell myself that this is all on me,  
and I am to make the best of it while it lasts.  
But when it was my turn, I ran through the door instead,  
vowing to make my every other "first" count,  
but soft touches had already become a foreign feeling to my skin.

And so still I think of it often, so, so often. Every day since then,  
though I do not remember it well. Knowing what I remember  
is a memory of a memory, all blurry.  
I cannot breathe without thinking who I would be without it.  
Am I ignorant if I deny any faults, of mine or his?  
For it is an age too young to scar a lifetime.  
So, I join my palms into a bowl as if to cup water,  
and I ask for forgiveness of what has been,  
and with the same hands I offer forgiveness  
in hopes that this has changed us both for the better.  
All I know is that we were too young to let it define us.  
A man that loses his way is wiser with the knowledge of where not to go.  
It is us who gets to choose what rides in our brains,  
and this shall never take that space again.  
I forgive everything as I am worthy of peace, and so are you.

### 332 A Better First

The liquor takes its turn spiraling down our bodies.  
The local alcohol can't make me lose my mind,  
though we'd all want it to be lost for this instance.  
All our friends linger behind dragging their weight.  
But then there's us left far ahead: you and me.  
You let out a familiar smile, and so do I  
though I know not where it will lead me.  
It led me back to you venting your heart out  
about a recent heartbreak you're coping with.  
Some girl, whom I knew, was your love.  
You'd never looked at me with any admiration ever,  
but perhaps the drinks erased my hideousness.  
And for whatever reason you asked to kiss me.  
And for it was my first time being asked.  
And so we kissed in the middle of the street.  
Two bodies rubbing their tongues over each other  
driven by some angsty fluid but no love, just lust.  
There's no heart between you and I  
as you and I, we are nothing,  
and we will go back to being nothing  
as we sober up, and you walk straight again.  
Then you'll see me for who I really am.  
Then you'll see that you wanted more,  
that you wanted better and prettier,  
that you want to go back to girls.  
But until that liquor lasts, I am desired.

### 333 The Harlot's Tales

"

One.

A quick exchange in some hallway in the trembling cold  
where he insists on more from me but I withhold.

Two.

Perhaps I led him too far with my intentions  
but here I am at his door. Ungreeted. Just a mail that's received.  
Cornered into an unfamiliar space, I follow the words I hear.  
No small conversation to fill us with a spark or to make us human.  
He turns down the lights, closes his eyes, and watches me turn into a fiend.  
Trembling I lay, disgusted with myself, spying for an escape.  
As I lick the sweat off his pecs, blowing pecks on his soft saggy skin,  
I plead him to be gentle with me.  
Think of me as more than a name you'll call me to your friends  
because, here, my false name is a sound of your moan  
that lingers until I keep intact with your skin.  
I am the paper bag you scream into  
from every instance of anger throughout your week.  
Don't you think I look so pretty taking it all with a smile?  
You say this is lovely but am I worthy of love?  
I am your first crush. I am your spouse of 30 years.  
I am your star-crossed lover you wished you'd meet again.  
I am truly anything you want me to be.  
But with your final grunt, I am just a stranger in your home.  
A whore to be hushed out on tiptoes.  
A late-night desire, immoral in daylight.  
Like a business ordeal, we end but without salutes or shakes.  
Twice my age but half my wit,  
didn't end how I wanted, but neither did it start like it.

Three, four, five.

Some bluffs I barely recall, a few years older but looked twice that.  
One moaned with the ugliest tones, I excused myself to laugh.

Six.

By then it was normal to be greeted like a secret.  
But he held me like a man and treated me with interest.

Though I knew he'd only hold me like so in the dark  
so now I find myself in dark corners even when I'm alone.  
A creep to be hidden away from families.

Seven, fourteen, and so on.  
Many a men slid me in through their windows,  
and I followed as I was too short to fit through their doors.  
Some lied and betrayed, leaving me with no riches.  
For days I starved and for weeks I lingered.  
Some greeted me and asked me about my rendezvous'  
as I was the only glitter in their mundane life.  
But one came at seventeen,  
held me not how I wanted but how he could.  
For every time I moved, he marked my steps  
and he kissed every inch of me until I begged him to stop.  
His smell soon also became mine.  
I was no longer just a shadow.  
I was a person holding hands in parks.  
The feeling was so warming, but the weather was harsh.  
The winter winds of winter days blew us far back.  
When I kissed him on his thighs, I felt musty sweat  
of an unclean body that is not pure at all.  
That was more faults than I can bear in a man.  
But he could forgive me for everything I was,  
And I could not for a single sight of flaw in him,  
so perhaps I am no less evil than the people who wronged me.  
Perhaps I am not worthy of a life with a gentle kiss,  
but just raining words of abuse and assault.  
Perhaps he has given up on life and is settling for me,  
he has no desire to do better than me which he could easily.  
And so lucky number seventeen marked an end.

Nineteen.  
I was back on a chair of an old man,  
inquiring me why I chose this life.  
I continue to be anecdotes.

### 334 A Story

As a child, I desired to grow older, which I did but then it never stopped,  
and here I am losing the only thing I have to offer every minute: my youth.  
For when I age, for when I will have lived a life with my brown skin  
that carries every slap, every kiss, every hug I ever faced in wrinkles  
that carries the map of the journey of my life in its pockets, I will be undesired.  
I will only be good for telling stories of my glory days,  
of imparting wisdom that can very easily be found in others.  
Where do my feet end, and where does the ground begin?  
If the same particles that formed me are capable of forming you,  
what makes us strangers and not siblings?  
If a small lustrous thought I once had but forgot  
is that same thought you can have and claim it as your own,  
what sets us apart but our environment that allowed you to express?  
If we are all just numbers positioned differently  
then what makes me more worthy of a life than anyone else?  
Whether or not I live, my absence will be covered  
and I know how you felt when you put a blade to your wrist.  
But if you, as a someone I love, can touch me,  
and tell me I am yours. That this is the permutation you want,  
and this is the permutation you will always have faith in,  
why can I not accept you without undermining my might,  
without having questioned your sanity for choosing me?  
Why can I not accept but only offer?  
I sense myself now as an old-skinned burden  
that lived a life that will be lived a thousand times again.  
No feeling I feel or thought I have is absolute,  
it will be repeated, and it will be found again.  
This abysmal feeling of infinity leaves me empty,  
pulls me from ever enjoying my present,  
keeps me from ever becoming a normal girl.

“

### 341 Parvana

Can you feel the wind on your face?  
The faces it's touched before yours.  
One brushing against my ear tells the tale of a girl.  
Far across from the desert she lives in.  
11, married to a man and his household.  
A life defined within a few walls.  
A life of ceaseless chores,  
but when the man falls,  
she must fall with him.  
She must burn to purge her crime  
of being born as her kind.  
Though men walking freely shows promise,  
marking the presence of indulgence.  
So, when the hour is of midnight,  
her urges push her to action.  
With her steps now as light as a feather:  
out the window and into the open.  
The hot, arid wind passes through her hair –  
now too short to flow with the wind.  
This wind also tells her a story  
of distant fair-skinned men,  
and the riches they will find in her home.  
But that land may have never been her home.  
For if it was, it would have cared for its child.  
Her hunger pushes her through the gates,  
unknown of her destiny,  
unaware of the dangers to approach,  
unafraid of letting go of her clothes without pockets,  
she smiles and unfurls her strong arms.  
There's a new life waiting to be fought for.

Weighed down by the loss of his child,  
a man still holds his head high  
denying any form of emotion on it.  
His arid eyes, wide open.  
No more than a tall dark shadow,  
a hoarse voice, and a short temper.  
A fist always ready to be thrown,  
a heart that's never beaten, for once.  
His mind rapt in his work,  
drinking, chatting with his buds.  
His lips when they crust, heal without balms.  
He bows down not even to tie his laces,  
Never is he sick, never is he late,  
never in need, never in debt.  
His chest always puffed with pride.  
Not a shade of pink on his body.  
All dressed up in black and white.  
But under the skin, all is a lie  
because from within he mourns deeply.  
When he abandons his veneer,  
his honour will abandon him.  
So, as he bids farewell to the love of his life,  
his own blood that's come to bid goodbye,  
a fetus he grew into a being  
that is capable of love and memories.  
In some corner he hides with a crushing cry;  
he is shrouded in his child's arms in tears.

### 343 Ganga

Two households, never drink the same water,  
have a son and a daughter intertwined  
in a school affair with one another,  
as they giggle and laugh and pay no mind,  
leaving their traces as star-crossed lovers,  
born on 26th, married at 14  
by their teachers forcibly as robbers  
committing a crime that needed hiding,  
for which they couldn't ever be more glad  
to be able to laugh for their whole life  
as one, forever sharing the same jokes,  
and finding acceptance in times of trife,  
and comforting death with hugs and hair strokes.

Though their future is bleak, they are lovers.  
One in love, one is gay. Still, they're lovers.

## 344 Vemadea

Oh, Vemadea.

Walking down the aisle as a child,  
while in yellow, and covered under a veil.

The mehendi brown hands, and eyes  
stealing the glance of every attendee.

It is a commemoration of love,  
and you stand winning the game of life.

When the hour strikes, the ceremony begins.

You married young but you married right: yourself.

Your toys, they rejoice, dancing and bouncing.

The doll, you fought your parents to have,  
is now your bridesmaid

hiding the shoes of the groom.

But you are also the groom.

So it is a complicated play of house.

But oh, Vemadea.

One brave heart.

Let us be you too.

Your heart as mighty as the wind,  
dancing effortlessly through the clouds.

Tackling all in that is in the way of you being free.

Neither a dress nor an axe could define you.

What covers your body is a choice of your own.

Not defined by the colour of your skin,  
but by the many shades of your visions  
that you constantly thrive towards.

Your wings open so wide,  
but would never hit another flying soul.

Freedom is freedom until it poses harm to others.

Yours harms none.

Oh, Vemadea.

Let us be you.

### 345 Kamala

There's as much joy in the household as there will be tears  
as it was the responsibility of her parents to give her away  
to a man of stature with demands and hopes of dowry.  
And it is a woman's duty to keep finding new homes  
in new people, in different stages of her life  
as nothing belongs to her forever, but she belongs to all.  
But I was young, and the most I could do was cry.  
But, then again, I did much less than I could.  
I simply enjoyed the season of farewell.  
The wedding bells usher in the wedding smells  
that start with invitation cards for the whole nation  
carved on red, and carved with gold.  
Chatters and giggles from the neighbours  
about the to-be-in-law being a righteous man.  
I struggled for a glimpse of that man,  
and she had seen him as much as I had.  
Smiling, she blushes, and accepts her fate.  
She will bathe in milk, use turmeric for silky, shiny skin.  
And when the day comes, the ground shakes.  
Friends of friends of friends shall all be there  
dancing to the bag pipes in the joyous ceremony.  
As much as I covet to know the groom,  
and how he shall treat my aunt,  
I covet more for his shoes, and so do my sisters.  
For those shoes, can be bargained back for money.  
I am not one of the sisters so I am not invited,  
but I had locked my eyes on the prize money.  
It was mine as much as it was hers,  
and then I wanted to be a girl  
to justify my selfishness over some coins.  
So when the bargain was made, I screamed.  
"If such are the sisters I have, then I'd rather not have them,"  
and such other vulgar words I uttered to agitate them for my share.  
Listening to all this my sisters broke,  
though they did not break the money further.  
More than I felt I deserved a portion,  
I deserved a redness on my cheeks and silence between my ears.  
However, I got none as the elders stood still,

in awe of the monster that they had coddled.  
For such are the torturous childish desires  
that force the adults to bend knees to children,  
for such is the sacrifice of the parent  
for the hope a wise man of future.  
Cries uproar in a wedding for all the wrong reasons.  
The future of the bride rests in the generosity of the groom.  
Farewell, love. You're a part of some other family.

## 346 A Song

In reminiscence of marriages and gathering, comes forward a bold one.  
One that dares to dance and make a fool of herself.  
But if she dare meet expectations, she might become history.  
And hence such a song plays for her to dance to:

(The attendance clap and sing the chorus in unison.)  
With her ghagra. Ghagra. Ghagra. Ghagra. (Clap. Clap.)  
With her ghagra.  
Ghagra. Ghagra. (Clap. Clap.)  
Ghagra. Ghagra. (Clap. Clap.)

(Mohini sings.)  
Rahu, you'll be Ketu, just follow where I go.  
My hips, bumblebee hips, you're drooling oh so soon.  
Bali. Mahabali. Just follow where I go.  
My hips, scented love drugs. My legs could spread for you.

My brown hair, my brown eyes. Where else would you ever even look.  
My soft lips, my soft lies. What else would you even hear.  
Sing for me. Won't you sing for me please and give me all you have.

(The attendance sings.)  
Oh, her ghagra. Ghagra. Oh, her Ghagra. Ghagra.  
Oh, her ghagra. Ghagra. Oh, her Ghagra. (Clap. Clap.)  
Ghagra. Ghagra. (Clap. Clap.)  
Ghagra. Ghagra. (Clap. Clap.)

(Mohini sings.)  
Bali. I'm not Kali. No men I dare to kill.  
Koshi, Mahakali. I'm known 'round every creek.  
Bali. Oh rey, Bali. Bless me with your juice.  
Be mean. You could be mean if you'd come to me real soon.

That brown pot, you pass me is a treasure of mine now.  
I tease you. I trick you. It's a gift for all my men.  
Try me. Oh, won't you try me please. You're deep down in my spell.  
No, Rahu. No, Rahu. Don't dare to take a sip.

But you did. Yes, you did.  
So now you spend eternity around my ghagra.  
One follows me and the other is in Agra.

(Mohini dances as to ease the pain of every man alive,  
and to plead every woman to join her side.)

(The attendance sings.)  
Not her ghagra. Ghagra. No more ghagra. Ghagra.  
No, not ghagra. Ghagra. No, her Ghagra.  
Ghagra. Ghagra.  
Ghagra. Ghagra.

### **351 A City of Thousand Temples**

My dear old Kastamandap, I know how you started.  
I spat in you until you were a lake that was cut open for civilization.  
I was there when population spread to map out the city.  
I know every temple along every corner  
with its carvings of the gods that I have prayed to everyday.  
I know these narrow streets, and the narrow-minded people filling them.  
I know those thousand festivals, and the people that celebrate it.  
I know these misty-watered rivers, and how they came to be;  
these dusty, rusty roads, the ones I walked along daily.  
I know the cycle of your weather, and how you rained on my dreams.  
I know the secret scent of each bazaar, and the things they sell in it.  
So you must believe that I know, I know how your story ends.  
Even for a life in a locked corner, I am not untouched by your culture.  
The western wind that blows to you, blows away your traditions with it.  
So before the hour strikes you clean of what makes you you,  
a saviour is here to let out an alarm as your beauty isn't lost to me.  
But I shall also rid you of your underlying taboos.  
For you may not have loved me, but I love you with all my heart.

## 352 Welcome To Nepal

Our heartland will fail if we tell the new Earth King,  
"Welcome to Nepal.

You're my guest so you're my god.

Once a neighbour, though you'll rule us all.

As our Kings are like girls

writing poems about the trees

that build the palace they live in

but they fail to count us in,

who built it with our hands.

So I bring you into my home."

Welcome to my home,  
little one. You're the sweetest dog.

To sneak you in through the gaps between fences,  
to caress your hair to ease your growing pains,  
to look into your woeful eyes and to speak of love,  
to feed you what I was to eat was my honour.

And I crawl up inside small spaces, hugging my knees  
with my cheeks pressed against my thighs,  
in memory of you. I fear I may lose your touch,  
the memory of it. Like a rug my family once owned,  
just softer and much hairier and with so much life.

I fear my fingertips may forget how your skin felt.

The smell of abandonment and homelessness.

I fear you took your last breath thinking you had no one.

I wish to have held you through and through,  
until you stepped into the other world,  
whatever it may be or even if there is none.

Rest in peace, my old King.

You were born to this land and you will die in another.

Now for ten generations comes in a leader,  
for better or for worse, I trust him with this land.

But as you were once our god, we will pray,  
we will pray that you be safely escorted out.

And you, with your heart still set in Kathmandu,  
may look back and chant poetry that wins no war.  
All that you were able to say was goodbye.

Farewell, my dear love.  
As I will know no love that compared to yours.  
I shall always sleep on my right side,  
so that my heart may misalign with my torso  
and move towards the right also  
leaving all but a little space where it was  
so that you may come even after you're gone  
and find something in me that the world couldn't give:  
a home. A home where you and me live by each other.  
You kiss me up to morning light and I hug you tight.  
Now, I just hug myself hoping that will be enough for us both.  
Without you the land I live in isn't the land I was born into.

So, welcome to my heartbreak.  
Welcome to my motherland.  
Welcome to Nepal.  
Don't you dare do wrong by it.

### 353 Linear Tides

In this gusty noon, barely stands a blossom  
arching to find another emulating her  
on a shallow, shimmering puddle,  
on the surface of which lays her late petal,  
which once glorified her pate,  
but now is hastily withering away,  
that caused an agony so abysmal in her  
that she was blinded to the fall of another  
flapping farther away from its her,  
and soon enough out of sight  
as this one was much, much lighter;  
neither can she hold angst against herself  
for not forever being young,  
for no longer mutating art like she once did,  
nor can she sway the laws of nature  
and win against the greatest enemy, Time.

As of almighty linear tides:  
Even the mightiest of all robust swords  
that avenged dynasties for centuries,  
by shattering dainty bones to pieces,  
stained by new blood now and again,  
adhered to heirs of dozen thrones,  
must delicately slump on the mud,  
leaving only traces of what it was  
and never will it be the same.

## 354 A Poem

Written since the dawn of time  
in limitless ways are poems.  
You could start with an image  
or an idea, perhaps.  
Or a trick you'd like to try.  
Like making your verses spoken word  
or making them barely rhyme.  
Be permitted to vent your vehemence in words beyond your purview and in lines  
that conform not.  
Or you can tell  
your story  
in broken lines.  
Just to fill in  
your kink.  
Never to force a rhyme  
as there is no time.  
All that could be in a single stanza.

One could change another  
as it is more spacious.

You could look back at your old poems,  
see how dull you once were  
and realize how much you've grown.  
If time cares not about a flower,  
why would the omens about a city?  
So write your poems,  
shape your own future,  
and the city shall shape itself around you  
for as long as it lives or you live.

### **361 Back To My Darlings**

Before I leave, my last chant shall be about my darlings.  
One last time let me tell you their stories  
so with it, they may be immortal,  
and you may find yourself in them,  
allowing you to make wiser choices.  
Join me for one last supper,  
together, as a loving family.  
Let me count the people to set the table.

One for Papa. Wise yet naive,  
who always held me with his coarse hands,  
who talks politics of late royals no one understands.

One for Mum. Shrouded in love, never to admit,  
looks at me and sees another day to live for.  
She carries the pain for us all. She is a love galore.

One for Buwa. One man army,  
whose daring thoughts aspire me still,  
who feels the world deeper than others ever will.

One for Aama. No wrong in her eyes,  
no wrong she'll ever do, no day she'll never not fight,  
no man she'll never not love, no room she'll never not light.

One each for me and my cousins. To us, the misfits.  
Ones with the strangest of ambitions and views  
yet still equal we are, in the minds of me and you.

Even one for a stranger.  
Our heart always awaits to welcome a stranger.  
A stranger is just familiarity away from a friend.

## 362 The Death of a Bachelor

They paved your paradise and put up a pitch-black road.  
It took them 30 minutes to make you 30 years younger,  
as brick-by-brick they have taken every second  
you have put in your life to building yourself as a man.  
A small little store that bore the weight of a family.  
The government deemed it fair, deemed it important  
that the chariots of the kings have more space while rolling,  
and so, they bulged out the roads, and cleared out your dreams.  
When they cleared out a market, they cleared out a community.  
There, their kids became friends and played deusi bhalo as siblings.  
Now, they are bound to be strangers that once laughed together.  
And somehow you have been unaged into a 20 something,  
with nothing to show for what he has done in his life.  
So, rub your palms and scratch your head before your body dies out.  
Learn to be young again, and build something new,  
and swiftly kill the young self to be a man again.  
But boy, it must kill you to think that you were also once just a boy.  
And you still are just a man fighting for what should be yours,  
but the ecosystem around you feels so vast  
that you are left like a pawn stuck in the middle square,  
unable to move, just letting things happen to you.  
You'll just be one of the many forgotten moves made  
in hopes of an eventual checkmate that may never happen.  
So do you wish to go back to your youth and stay there forever?  
Carefree. Jogging along the creeks of Gosainkunda.  
Not a father or a man. Just a traveller along the Tibetan border.  
Grasp the thin air before you in hopes that you'll catch fate by its neck,  
and shake it until it agrees to change. But I know you will not.  
As a just man, you will find it in yourself to hug it tight  
for everything it has given you regardless.  
Still, make your final plea and ask your god to justify this.  
In the case he does not, learn that if you let religion prophesize you,  
it will lead you to the grave of old rich men,  
who will instruct you to offer them your riches.  
What is used to justify shortcomings will not save you.

### 363 Troublesome Past

She stares at herself a little too long.  
Now even her own face seems strange.  
She spreads her cheeks out wide  
to allow wrinkles on her cheeks to appear clearly.  
Even more so as they're polished by her tears  
tracing the quickest carved line down her face.  
Wishing for an hour to turn pages.  
Hoping for some time to broaden her mind.  
If for her civil upbringing,  
this world would've turned over.  
Send me back. Send me back to then.  
For when she needed a hug,  
I'd hold her so tight and not let go.  
I'd brush her hair behind her ears,  
rub my thumbs on her cheeks.  
I'd tell her not to lose strength  
'cause years ahead lies a lady,  
that rose from the ashes, far stronger,  
raising me with everything she never had.

### 364 A Heartfelt Condolence

In your final years, you barely ever smiled.  
But when you did, I did so with you.  
A man posing a question to every command.  
I'm never to know how hurt you must've been:  
the ones you smiled at as you brought them into this world,  
watching you helplessly wither away.  
The hands that you held to help walk hold you now to help you walk.  
The woman you promised to care of  
cleaning up after you as you can barely lift yourself.  
What is it like to know that the people you love so very dearly,  
the scenes you see from your window everyday  
will no more be smiling upon you when you wake up?  
I can picture your eyes stoned as you realize that it's your last breath.  
If you are the man I know, you smiled about it first  
but the vision of what you wanted to see:  
your grandchildren growing up in your arms;  
Muktinath under the thick snow.  
That pinched you so. Not only would you never see them,  
you cannot not even hope to see them because you know.  
Your dried, drooping skin that you often burned.  
It makes me smile that you couldn't be in a place any worse.  
To please my ownself, I presume you called upon your death  
as a relief from all the pain that you felt, in your body and in your heart –  
where your family lies, where I lie.  
A man with a mind as sharp as a knife,  
a tongue as fast as a bullet.  
The time I shared with you could only make me smile.  
I, now and then, wonder:  
What was the last image that flashed in your mind  
as you laid down for your final breath?  
I see, I mustn't have been it  
but you've been my every other thought since then.  
No man your age should get along with me so well.  
Yet you did with no hesitation.  
The spite, the aggression I have in my blood is yours.  
Each time I question the flow, I feel you in me.  
You're deep within my heart and you're what keeps it beating.  
I shall always remember you.

### 365 Aama

Though the village still sleeps under the tender moonlight,  
she wakes up unable to read the time of the night,  
thinking dawn is about to break and start the day.

Could she ever read anything?

She bothers not of any miscue as her mind is set.

Chiselling droplets dripping down her wrinkled skin,  
as she washes herself with just a bucket of water,  
from a river far away that she visited to greet the Sun.

Shivering, she rushes off to the woods.

Not even the snakes bother her from her duty.

She cuts off branches to feed her goats.

But even they aren't awake.

"These lazies don't sense the dawn?"

So off to a dusty room,

She cleans it everyday

for a chance to hold His belongings.

In holding them, she holds Him.

Their past. Their youth. Their marriage. Their life together.

Though he looked not at her during his younger days

and she only could look at him,

she still loves him so dearly,

like she does to all.

Like she does to me.

I walk in to break the silence.

'The sun isn't up for hours.'

With a leech still stuck on her leg, off to bed.

I follow along to help her get it out.

She then sleeps again.

I lay by her and kiss her forehead.

A woman that forgot none,

I will not let her be forgotten.

May these words outlive me

and with it her generosity.

### 366 The Unholy Trinity

The unholy trinity of misfits  
waits for the sky to turn its light low.  
Then, they run down the city in a go.  
Fishes and blankets, they steal.  
Jewels and banks, they clear.  
They pause for a mighty long second.  
They close their eyes; open their ears.  
They feel the ground move.  
They hear the Sheriff approaching.  
Gasoline on the ground;  
a match in each of their hands;  
drop it down; off they go.  
Up the hills to watch the city blow.  
Letting smoke out, down it crumbles.  
Life turns into dust, as homes turn into dirt.  
One after another.  
Civilians out in the streets  
saving their children.  
Cries howl around the sky for the night  
but for the three, it's a sight of joy.  
They giggle and cheer for their victory.

### 367 Another one of the Unholy Trinity's Scandals which was quite funny as a children

"No, no. Dare you follow me. I am off to see an old friend,"  
chanted one of our mothers as she was off to see an old friend.  
Growing up sharing plates we ate from, making the same jokes,  
we know the lines along which each of the other thinks  
and they're all the same, every "no" is a "yes".

It is merely a matter of arrogance and convincing.

So, we follow the edges of her footsteps,  
to find ourselves near the house her friend lived.  
An idea occurs simultaneously to circle the block,  
to enter from another direction as to be unnoticed.

We went about the lake they owned.

How dare we follow her still?

And how dare we just stand there still  
by the lake to peep into the porch.

So, I grabbed a stick to pretend to be fishing.  
A rod without a thread to catch a prey,  
much like our plan without a goal  
just to find a way to disobey.

So, we were soon greeted by her friend.

With a stick of her own, she walked towards us  
barefoot, screaming, "Thieves! Fish thieves!"  
And off we ran. Faster and faster back to our home.

The home of our maternal grandparents, actually,  
where we all were one as siblings,  
where we were children lost in mischief,  
where it mattered that each of us existed  
and there was no other way we'd rather be.

### 368 Hey, Stranger!

A single flower on your doorstep  
from a friend you do not know of.  
Too scared to approach you.  
Too intrigued to ignore you.  
I can't help but question myself:  
What leads you to be an old man  
living with a dog as your only friend  
in a house no wider than a few meters?  
Perhaps, an abandoned family?  
The bungalow before your eyes,  
was it once your home?  
Or are you the last of your blood?  
Are you from a land faraway  
in a hideout to escape your crimes?  
These questions are buried within myself  
as I could never approach you with them.  
Your ghastly looks. Your walking stick.  
I'm sure you possess no harm  
but I couldn't convince my soul so.  
Something tells me you're kind  
though none are to you.  
Thus, for you to be not forgotten with yourself,  
These words, I inscribe.

### 369 This Is No Farewell

This is no farewell  
as it isn't the last time we meet.  
So, there is no room for tears.  
In a realm beyond space and time,  
in the near, near future,  
you'll come to find me.  
I'll be patiently looking at the clouds,  
longing for the day we shall meet.  
I'll look at you as though I never left.  
You'll tell me that it was worth it,  
that Kathmandu never even fell.  
But under my skin, my heart races.  
As I know, so does yours.  
Life's better with you in my bare sight.  
But I leave knowing I'm just a visitor.  
For however long I held on to my life,  
this land and its people were the reason I did.

Take me forth in time  
where I can see Kathmandu  
under my teachings.



#### **411 Forward In Time**

For the life of you and me,  
I am but a root of a plant stretching myself in your soil  
seeking a firm earth to grip on and feel safe,  
safe enough to set foundations that will colour your air.

So how glad I am to hold you in my eyes again.  
And if you were the dust in my eyes, I'd never blink.  
I'd let my tears flow until my body accepts you as a part of it,  
and evolves with you until we become one.

My dear, dear Kathmandu. Your temples still stand.  
But oh, has the day come? Have the Mallas fallen?  
Have I still a place in your soil after I let you down?  
After I've warped the universe to change history and failed?

Many stars died since I last saw this sky,  
seems like there's light years between you and I.  
So what dead-beat star do I pray upon  
for you to come back to life?

## 412 My Apologies

I bear the weight of a fallen Kingdom.  
I fear the children will not know of this loss  
and term it to their offsprings as a union  
or even a victory. As it has always been,  
the winners are the authors of history.

I do not want the streets of Mahabouddha to change  
as somewhere along it is a leaf by a water fountain  
carved into the very heart of the land to pump its blood.  
I fear the new Shah King will stop digging,  
stop walking into hell to attain this natural gift,  
and just demand it be brought up to earth.

For it was perhaps my stories left to be read  
that were misread and passed on as fiction.  
Either I failed to change the course of history  
or I caused this debacle from the very start  
or I didn't poison an infant before he became lethal,  
but here I am, once again, bawling on your shoulders  
as I am incapable of achieving a single thing.

## 413 Queer Guilt

Hold my chin up and tell me I'm a man.  
That I, too, can grow up to be tall and dark,  
and corner a girl in her pivotal years  
to give up on her dreams to pursue mine.

Build me up again piece-by-piece  
just as I am now but alter only the cells  
that make me seek soulmates through men  
who only seek pleasure through me.

Perhaps then I would be a man. A proper one.  
And I will present you with a blood heir,  
without the same mutation as me  
who will carry your genes into space and eternity.

But if life fails me, as it so often does,  
and I am exactly who I was even after the efforts,  
even after you birth new identical atoms to reincarnate me,  
will you beat my fingers to make them coarse?

Will you still talk to your neighbours about me?  
Will you still cook an extra meal just for me  
as the one being cooked is of the taste I despise  
and even as a child, I swallowed it before I even chewed?

Would you swallow me whole just as I did  
unable to accept my taste or will you bite me deep  
until my veins pop out though my soul may remain  
to radiate my warmth as a mark of my queerness?

## 414 Home

Home is the space I picture in my mind when my body wants to feel safe.  
For when I was a child, I was dragged from one apartment to another,  
and like a house pet struggling to adapt to the emotions of the new space,  
everything was merely just a temporary vessel that held my family.  
I still struggle bonding with houses and making it feel like my own.  
However, I was never homeless for as long as I was in the valley.

If I were fighting the mighty war alongside Yalambar,  
I would close my eyes and let my blade slide into my foes  
as that would be the only road that could lead me back to my land.  
The rooms I lived in might have changed its shape now and then,  
but the Sun still rose the same against the valley hills,  
the vegetables sold along the streets were still the same.  
And what is home if not a sense of familiarity.  
So I've found my home in this land I failed to save,  
and its people who deserved a better saviour than I.

For when I was seventeen, liquor drained me out for the first time in my life  
and I struggled to land my feet on the ground with miles hiked behind me,  
with an empty stomach, with no sleep, with no grandfather to go back to,  
there was at least a day on foot between myself and my bed,  
and my friends, who were people I'd just met, became my family for the night  
as we slept under the same roof, the last one asleep turned the lights off.  
So as a foreigner aggressively puts his foot on you to claim you from us,  
we stand still, unable to send him back to his bed, forced to be his family.

So when I cross past the world and the world will cross me out,  
lead my human mind back to the room with a window,  
where I can stare at the inclination of the sunlight that it lets in  
and tell about the time and the date from the angles of the rays.  
Do not let the western wind burden my sense of direction,  
placing me in a foreign land where I can't tell dusk from dawn.

#### 415 The Cessation

Your purpose  
for my life given back to me  
is unfulfilled so I invite you to take it back.

Let the wind rise,  
filling the space between  
the firm earth and my wrinkly feet.

Let my bones get hollow.  
Let my muscles decompose into itself.  
Let me not be floating in air but become the air itself.

Tear me into pieces.  
My once radiant torso will wither away  
like Blue Jacarandas upon the striking of winter.

Let my soul remain,  
if you can allow that much,  
to gaze upon the future of my land.

## 416 Me Against The Forces

"Dear little one,  
why do you ask this upon yourself again and again?"

For you allowed me to breathe again  
so I could mend the future but I have failed.

"You have failed in your eyes only.  
To my eyes you're still just a child.  
Children do not fail. They just learn."

So what was the purpose of giving me life,  
one that I questioned over and over again?

"Who I choose to love and favour is my right.  
For I chose you not to achieve but exist."

For what was it you asked me to mend my future?

"And I still say so. Your future is yours to mend.  
You don't carry the burden of every fallen wall."

But I went back in time. I told them stories.

The same stories from which they've learnt,  
learnt to let the cities fall away from us.

"And so what? If it was falling regardless?  
Perhaps you tried and that is enough."

I live with the guilt of breaking a Kingdom!

"Times like this, remember you are human.  
The space between your fingers are to grasp on the mistakes you'll make;  
the marking on your palm is a sign that you'll learn from them and persist."

Here I am once again bawling on your shoulders.

Perhaps I never learnt, and I never can.

I am just a black hole that consumes  
and never radiates any light ever.

"Then the fall was your point of singularity.  
A point where all possibilities led to.

For you were always meant to be born.  
And even if you felt loved and held

you'd come crying to me to save what loved you,  
and it would fall regardless.

And if you were never born,  
some other child or your wombmate  
would come and beg for the same things,  
but the city would still fall despite it.  
Somethings you can only feel.

And here you refuse to feel and so you act.  
But at the end, feel you must."

But nothing is fixed. I am still broken.

"For that is the future you hold that you can mend."

So what? I just get to step out of the ruin I've made.

"But it was never a ruin you made. It was just a ruin."

So you gave me back life just because?

"I give and take lives just because. For you tried and that was enough."

But didn't so many others?

Where is justice to the braver heroes?

"If you find Justice, let her know about those heroes.

She will surely be found in the might of Babylon."

But you could've picked a better hero to fight.

They could've led us closer to justice.

"Many Kingdoms will rise and fall.

Some just, some unjust.

It is not my duty to right the wrong.

It is not my duty to linger on probabilities,

You only have one reality you can accept.

But you can choose to honour them,

fighting for their place in history,

saving them from being erased."

## 417 Life in Glimpses

So, I live again, and I am glad to have lived.  
As I have learnt there is never enough time.  
There's birth, death and a few days in between.  
We mourn, we love, and we laugh within those days,  
hoping every emotion is not absolute.

Except fear. Fear is everlasting, as it our desire to survive that evokes it.  
I lose that desire with every other loss I mourn,  
even though mourning is just an emblem of love.  
And maybe there is no karma.

Opposing occurrences just happen to cross paths, one after another.  
And I was lucky enough to have crossed paths with many.  
My dear mother. She wishes to hold me again as her own.  
Her child in her arms. Marked soulmates through birthmarks.  
She will look into my eyes and see the end of the universe.  
And my dear father, my wings that keep me afloat.  
You'll love nobody as much as you do me,  
and in humility I accept that I can never love you back as much as you do me.  
He took me out to the streets of Kathmandu,  
to see Swallows, nest around the lights.  
Just as it traced the city to feed its childlings,  
you traced it to feed my hungry eyes with lights.  
Only then, in his arms do I eat.  
I watched as time passed me by  
and I was left watching helplessly,  
knowing I could do nothing about it.  
I am sure to have good times again,  
but I will miss having them with you.  
This time around, I will inhale a puff of air,  
and grasp it tight in hopes that time will be kinder on me.  
Though I know the cruelty of time is its compassion.  
It shreds me to pieces that I cannot feel the under-seasoned dinner  
that my Mother so dearly cooked  
the innocence with which me and my cousins fooled around  
exactly as it felt the first time around.  
I can never relive it, but I can live with it.  
I unfurl my arms to hug every memory,  
every chance encounter that comes my way.  
I don't have to live forever, just long enough to feel like I lived.

## 418 Epilogue

A sweet sparrow chirps to mark the sound of a long new day.  
Venders brace the awakening of their neighbours and friends,  
who offer their first sip of water to the rising Sun  
As He drinks, he rises again on the olden city.

Only after the town is out on its grandiose chase,  
the children will rise to the noise of the fresh boiling tea,  
drink their milk, and run off to play on the streets lined with chalk.  
They hop with joy, singing folk songs that lie about their past.

The invaders become the heroes, rewriting history.  
They, too, will wage wars and defend their borders from the west.  
They, too, have carved their own statues in their own palaces  
that shall burn over and over, just as its people do.

But these people are wiser than any ruler that'll come,  
and the land is just as forgiving as its own people.  
It invites, accepts and promises all of a future,  
cries not for its wounded past but for its wounded people.

So as they splurge it into debts and shake hands with the west,  
a poor couple set out for this land, as it gives them hope,  
unites people of disrupted Kingdoms with just a flag,  
and comforts them saying, "Whatever you are going through,  
we've been through it before, and we'll face it a hundred times over."