



Section II

Self and freedom

खंड II

स्वयं और आजादी

व्याकरण

राघवेन्द्र त्रिपाठी

मैं उत्तम पुरुष हूँ

तुम मध्यम हो

यही व्याकरण है

यही नियम है

और वह ?

वह !

वह अंतिम पुरुष है

व्याकरण सिर्फ दो-तिहाई सच है।



राघवेन्द्र त्रिपाठी संकुल नवप्रवर्तन केंद्र (सीआइसी) में बीटेक चतुर्थ वर्ष के छात्र हैं।

Crusade

Mishie Singhal

Each time I think I cannot fly,
I shift my gaze and find myself in sky.

Each time my fancies take a flight,
My feet race to make it faster to the rope tight.

The pleasure that bringeth the extra mile,
Makes each grueling step worth its while.

I dream my dreams and put them in the crystal ball,
Have learned that this is to make me see better, each time the tears fall.

Serendipity's child, I will not pass by in a trance,
Hold your breath hey life, partner me in the cosmic dance!!



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Indraprastha College for Women.*

An Encounter with Myself

Vernika Tanwani

Brimming on the edges of insecurities,
Overflowing with vulnerability.
With self doubt echoing in my heart,
I finally decided to part,
With the fabricated image of my own self,
And find my real self.
I took to shadows and mirrors,
Photographs and rivers,
But nothing seemed to appease me.
Where can my real self be?
In the traces of all those unspoken words,
In the tangles of the subdued laughter,
All those untold tales
Shouted out who I really was.
Silence screamed out aloud in my soul
Ripping out a diamond from the coal
And that was when I first met my real self!



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शोक है नदी अब भी आजाद नहीं

मोहिनी सिंह

शोक है

कि नदी चट्टानों पर सिर मारकर भी लाल नहीं हो पाती
कि नदी का पानी शीशे सा साफ़ हो पर उसका तल नहीं दिखता
कि नदी नमक चाट कर प्यास बुझा रही है सदियों से
कि नदी प्रेम कविताओं में जगह पा रही है सदियों से
कि नदी पुराने किनारे तोड़ देती है
कि नदी तब भी नए किनारों में कैद ही रहती है
कि नदी अपनी धारा को पकड़ने के लिए दौड़ती चली जाती है
कि नदी माँ है- नदी की कोख में जीवन है
कि नदी स्त्री है- नदी चीखती है
कि नदी बताना चाहती है- नदी इतनी ही नहीं है
कि नदी खुद को खोल दे तो बाढ़ कहलाती है
शोक है, नदी की सतह को नदी माना जाना
शोक है, नदी का शोक न मना पाना



मोहिनी सिंह गार्गी कॉलेज में बीएससी (ऑनर्स) वनस्पति विज्ञान की छात्रा हैं।

I'll Go On

———— Lubhawani Yadav ————

I do not want the sweet pastures
And lose my vast skies
I wish not to be lulled into a sleep so sweet
That I lose a sense of the sleepless restlessness that keeps me awake
I do not want to lose my sleepless sense of wonder
Neither can I afford to lose my sense of shock and surprise
Its too high a price to pay
Its too high a barter

I want not the lullabies that drown these haunting silences of insomnia
For these sleepless eyes are my windows
My windows to the world I inhabit
To the lands where I belong
I cannot at any cost give up these discomforting, uncomfortable questions
No matter how convincing the answers seem to be
I cannot at any cost lose this vulnerable me
And trade it for a confident, complacent version of me
For 'I' will be lost in the process
What will remain?
The soul will be robbed of its spark
How will the flame keep burning?
These winds of tempting solace
I cannot let them put out my flames of restless yearning
Yes the light is blinding
But I do not wish to pull down the blinds
At least not yet
The eyes don't hurt much yet
The cornea is still intact
The crevice in my soul is yet to fill
Of the light that reaches the darkest corner

I am collecting my sensations of life
As I walk down this uncertain road

I wish not to find a map
Or worse still, a shady refuge
For a wise man once said
'Miles to go before I sleep'
Let my path also be crooked, tilted
Let the meadows be deep

And if ever I happen to find
A sight or sound so lovely to behold

I may stop for a while, soak in the beauty
And absorb the essence in my soul

Yet move on I must
As I cannot stay
Forli'm the element of air
Of winds, wild and of hunger
The reins cannot be leashed
And like the sun's passing shadow
I must go on
For I cannot stay
For wilderness is my destiny
And moonlight my companion
I carry a lot to say on my lips
As I carry the loads of silences in my pockets
How can I then stop..
In the middle of this b'ful story?
How can I then not tread further
On this path of anonymity?
I am the cult of a flowing river
Of a songbird
Of a restless wind
I flow, I blow, I sing
From eternity to eternity....



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गुरुदेव से

आँचल बावा

ठाकुर एक बात पूछूँ
मुझे सच बताओगे ?
क्या फिर मेरी वेदना को
कविता बना गाओगे ?
कैसे जाना तुमने
मेरा वह रूप, जो-
स्वयं मैंने न जाना था
मैं माँ थी, बीवी थी और
थी कुलटा भी, फिर भी
मुझे इतना माना
कितनी बार सोचा
कह दूँ तुमसे
यथार्थ न लिखो
रुक जाओ
विश्राम चिह्न के साथ
मगर तुम कहते रहे
दबोचे गए होंठों की कहानी
नहीं रुके, कभी नहीं
यदि परिवर्तन है नियम
तो क्या बदला सौ वर्षों में
आज भी मेरे भाव वही हैं
संवेदनाएँ, विडंबनाएँ, कुंठाएँ
और वेदनाएँ सभी वहीं हैं।



आँचल बावा श्री वेंकटेश्वर कॉलेज में स्नातक (हिंदी विशेष) की छात्रा हैं।

The Indian

— *Grusha Ghai* —

“You’re a lucky chap!” said my father,
Why he said so, my five-year-old brain couldn’t gather.
Further, he added, “I am glad that you were born after 1947;”
“The India you’re born in, unlike mine, is a tree of heaven.”
Dropping me to school used to be his moment of pride,
Travelling in the front seat of his bicycle, used to be my favorite ride.
When stuck with a mathematical problem, my father would apologize,
“I am an uneducated man, with petty fields of wheat and rice.”

“You’re a lucky chap!” said my granddad,
“People now won’t mind shaking your hand.”
Now this fact was unbearable,
How could people label my family as untouchable!
That my family witnessed discrimination felt very wrong,
But their survival stories made me mentally strong.

“You’re a lucky chap!” said my mother,
“You get to help my son in earning bread and butter.”
Unlike my wife, my mother always kept her head covered,
My elders let my wife follow her dreams, unfettered.
But my wife has got other worries,
Let me bring back my sister before those greedy animals kill her, she hurries.

“You’re a lucky chap!” said my best mate,
With my city life he wants to relate.
He is naturally envious,

The difference between his lifestyle and mine is outrageous!
Leaders, oh leaders! Listen to my plea,
Don't let people like me disrespect their hometowns and flee!

"You're a lucky chap!" I say to my son,
"That I am!" he says with a tinge of pun.
Ohh these generation gaps!
Only they explain how times elapse!



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Freedom

Gaurav Juyal

It's a twig to the drowning
A patient reservoir behind an obstinate dam
 Scar to a skin
 Cigarette in an autumn forest
 Mob with torches and gasoline
 Bullets and medals on chest
 What makes terror and peace
 Keeps steam from boiling
 Winner takes the ribbon
 The adrenaline
 Touch to the breasts
 Like lightning across the sky
 And skies
 Needles that hurt
 Wars lost
 Truth to an orphan
 A conclusion to the observer
 What pebble does to a pond
 Silent and growing
 Snuffed candle proud wax
 When it is pulled
 All things will push
 Collide and collapse
 Waves, flames, rise, fall
 Orbits disfigured
 And failing planets
 Poetry shall walk as it happens
 Words into the world come alive

Watch
When it is pulled
The sleeping will shake
A chaos born, against the order
Cities of people and plants
Battle atom bombs
The stagnant
All it needs
A stir to the sediment
A push to the wagon
A trigger
A trigger



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तोड़ कर पाबंदियाँ सारी

राघवेन्द्र त्रिपाठी

तोड़ कर पाबंदियाँ सारी,
क्यों न उन्मुक्त गगन के पक्षी हम बन जाएं।
खेलें नदियों की लहरों से,
और हवा संग बतियाएं।
छोड़ें मतलब की दुनिया को,
गढ़ डालें अपनी कुछ परिभाषाएं।
चलो नाप ले धराकाश को,
अब न मानें कोई सीमाएं।
होंठों पे अपनी पाबंदी क्यों हो ?
भावों की घराबंदी क्यों हो ?
मेरे मानस के निज विचार,
परिस्थितियों का बंदी क्यों हो ?
क्यों अब गीत बनाने में संकोच करें ?
क्यों ऊँचे-नीचे स्वर में गाने में संकोच करें ?
छंदों के बोझिल नियमों को,
क्यों कोई कविता ढोए अब ?
क्यों कटे-पिटे जर्जर तट का,
नदिया कोई रोना रोये अब ?
जब बातों में अपनी सच्चाई है,
भावों में अपनी अच्छाई है,
तो अम्बर की सीमा भी क्यों हो ?
क्यों न गाएं खुले कंठ से,
मधुरिम, मद्धिम नवल राग
नए नियम हो इन तानों का,
नव सुर हो, हो नवल विहाग।



राघवेन्द्र त्रिपाठी संकुल नवप्रवर्तन केंद्र (सीआइसी) में बीटेक चतुर्थ वर्ष के छात्र हैं।

Apology to the Soil of India

Vinati Vashishth

O Soil of India,
Daily we tread upon you
While going to college or the mall
Little do we know on whom our feet fall

Mixed in thou is the blood of Queen Lakshmibai
Who fought for the freedom of her beloved land
And that of Bhagat Singh
A loving son of this sand

Further down we go Mother we find
Cities and civilizations of most ancient kind
With whispers of artists and saints great
Who gave the 'Om shanti' mantra which nullified hate

Deeper we delve Mother there are animals dead
Who say we lived and what a life
People loved and worshipped us, sculpted us
They did not make us extinct by gun and knife

Further down O Mother we hear an exhalation vast
Which makes trees and oceans sway in symphony
God's own presence who chose this land
United every atom with peace and love's band

Yet instead of daily lifting you to our foreheads
O Mother! O Soil of India!
And mumbling an apology deep for standing on your bosom
You from whom we are made, Holkar or Scindia

We stand on you divine Mother
And shout in favour of your enemies and that of mankind
We are so intelligent, four letters we have read
We don't care anymore for you, in whom we were reared and fed

When we were toddlers we fell on you, Mother
And in what gentle arms you embraced us all
Yet today grown up we hurt you and make you smart
We think other countries are great and you are small!

You taught us humanity and love for mankind O Mother!
And also to distinguish right from wrong, the humane dharma
Yet we jibber jabber in heat of ideas using tongues neither mind nor hearts
In whose lap in freedom we play; to save our self respect who always leans
To hurt her in the name of freedom, is this what freedom means?



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Half and Half

— — — Kamakshi Khosla — — —

"Hello Mister!"

My eyes, groggy with sleep, flew open the same instant I heard the words, only to realise that I wasn't being talked to. I looked outside the small window of my coach with half an eye. It was a cold winter morning with little sun, typical of Delhi winters, I suppose. At the opposite platform, I could see passengers waiting eagerly for the arrival of the train; some were sitting on the benches, smoking or reading newspapers; while some were pacing up and down the platform. The vendors were having a busy start to their day already, and the coolies, dressed in their patent red uniforms could be seen working their fingers to the bone. All in all, the railway station seemed to be a hive of activity.

I could feel my eyelids become heavy, making it impossible for me to open them any longer. I waited just long enough to watch the guard wave the green flag as soon as the engine whistled, indicating that my nine-hour-long journey was about to commence. As I sunk deeper into unconsciousness, I had a feeling that I wasn't alone anymore, but of course, I could be hallucinating for all I knew!

"You've been sleeping like a log" I heard a fruity, female voice speak to me as soon as I woke up and rubbed my eyes. I let panic colour my face and frantically began to gather my things. She looked at me as if I was mentally handicapped but then she understood... "Don't worry! We still have about two hours of the journey left."

"I've not had a wink of sleep in the past two days, you see." I croaked, my voice sounding hoarse with sleep.

"Oh, I see, but..." she couldn't finish for a catering boy entered our coach the very same moment. "What would you like to have, 'café au lait' or 'masala chai'?" he asked us politely.

Well, considering this to be the Indian railways, we hadn't expected either of the drinks, so we just continued to look at him, blankly. He laughed and said, "It's our 100th anniversary and we're giving away free beverages to our customers as a part of our celebration!"

Thus, our conversation with him ended with two steaming cafés au lait sitting comfortably on our common train table.

"So what brings you on this journey to Agra?" asked the lady, as she sipped her coffee, in an attempt to strike a conversation.

"My dad works at a construction site in Agra. He says it's a big project and that it's high time I act sensibly and work with him." I answered flatly.

"So you mean you weren't being sensible all this while?" she giggled.

"No, it's not like that..." I smiled and then continued, "ever since I was a kid, I'd wanted to be a painter. For me, painting is nothing less than magic! You know, that moment you begin to paint, when the canvas comes to life and you become both the governor and spectator to your own event, now that is something which really gives me a high!"

"Then what stops you from becoming the next Abanindranath Tagore?" she asked, feeling completely puzzled.

"It's rather complicated" I replied, sounding unsure.

"Try me."

"Okay then...ever heard of a 'faking dalit'? Well that's what people call me back there. I belong to a dalit family alright, but unlike them, I don't have an umber skin. Moreover, the fact that I would rather paint than join my dad only adds fuel to the fire. My dad's of the opinion that I should engage in jobs that demand physical labour, being out in the sun etc. That way, he feels, I could get that umber tone too and be 'manly'. Unlike painting which my father thinks to be a 'girly affair'. I've tried to convince him several times but he just doesn't seem to budge an inch and I'm tired of his taunts..."

"By the way, don't you think the coffee is insipid?" she asked, interrupting my monologue. Listening to her question made me feel a little offended, to be honest. Here I was sharing some very personal experiences of my life, and she was bothered about the coffee! I sipped it all the same and realized that she was right, the coffee indeed was tasteless.

After several seconds when I still didn't say anything, she prodded, "you know what's special about 'café au lait'?" she paused, and then continued, "It tastes great only when 'milk' and 'coffee' are put in the correct ratio, that is 1:1. You see, even a thing as simple as 'coffee' has something to offer! Everything in nature has its own essence, its own flavour that is obtained by a careful balance of 'ingredients' and because this balance is not the same for all things, we experience 'variability'. It's the same for us humans too! Our hair, eyes, skin tone etc. are the 'ingredients' that give us our unique essence, forming the core of our identity of which we must never

be ashamed. Nature doesn't discriminate, it only accepts and accommodates! We being humans have got quite a lot to learn from nature! Sorry for this analogy, but that's the best that my mind could conjure up this instant" she added sheepishly.

I still couldn't answer...I just couldn't find the right words to express how strongly her words had impacted me!

"Thank you, but how..." I had to leave my sentence hanging midair for I couldn't control the wave of emotion that swept over me.

She smiled, as she comprehended what I was about to say, and then answered, "You know, I was brought up being told that my body was my prison...that I wasn't marriage material, and such reminders gave me inferiority complex."

I realized then that I'd never paid enough attention to how she looked! So I studied her more attentively this time...her hair was a rich shade of black, flowing in waves to adorn her glowing, bronzed skin...her eyes, framed by long lashes, were a deep chocolate brown, complimenting her straight nose and full lips. To me, sitting in a simple white dress, she seemed the picture of perfection!

"My only source of inspiration was my father, who was hell-bent on getting me educated so that I could find myself a decent job and prove to others that success in life didn't depend upon the colour of my skin!" she said, and for once I noticed the speed of the train, now slowing down at a considerable rate...I wished for the train to never stop, but when it did, she gathered her belongings, stood up and got to the door. Then just before leaving, she turned and said, "you know, always treat your knowledge, skills and talent like your weapons...for your success depends on how well you use them! Besides, it's only once you find what sparks a light in you, that you, in your own way, can illuminate the world!"

As soon as I heard those words, my self-pity got replaced by a blazing determination to prove my worth, and I knew that I was ready to set the world on fire!

With understanding as a major emotion playing on her face, she smiled her brilliant smile one last time and then left.



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Wounded Victory

Purnima Singh

Fall of a dynasty, intrusion of capitalism
Vasco da Gama's ill-fated discovery landed us in the hands of colonialism.

1857 Mutiny, the sepoys and their cries
Soldiers salughtered in the battlefield, it was humanity's demise.

Our economy was in shatters, with no one to care
The artisans dwelt in the maladies of despair.

The sight of our caged humiliation incited many
so came those who coveted brutal retaliation.

Valour it was that ran through the veins of the martyrs.
But callous politics segregated the land in quarters.

Patriotic, we became to make a nation free
Nationalism it was that sparked fire and made some flee.

Independence Day, we called it a victory
15th August 1947 is etched in our history.

The white left us, with the Tricolour well stood
It was a triumph that scarred us, severed brotherhood.



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Inside my Brain

— Magdhi Diksha —

Death stands in this room. It does not have a face or a body, but I can feel its presence in that corner. I believe it is watching me, weighing my good versus my bad. I laugh when this thought crosses my mind, what is it weighing? I have hardly done any good! I look in the corner, challenging it to come towards me, but it doesn't move, just keeps weighing.

"You..you..YOU!"

I can hear them, those other humans, calling for my attention. But I do not answer. They think I am a freak. Maybe I am, but at least I am not one of them. I haven't sold my soul, you know. Death has begun to write something now, curiously I move towards it when suddenly a flash of light appears in the room. It blinds me and I stagger a few steps back. When I look at the source of light, all the excitement in my veins for death disappears. Peacefulness takes over me, charmed I start to glide towards it when I catch death following my eyes.

Hazy, hazy, it's all misty!

"What is happening?" I cry

"Stop crying, you're making it rain." Somebody scolds me.

Death, which had no face a while back, suddenly seems to be giving a sly grin. It speaks, almost hisses, "is she dead yet?"

"No, there is something wrong. My drug seems not to be affecting her," replies the light.

They turn and look at me. "So you're one of those, aren't you? You think you can greet pain with a smile?"

I start to laugh, uncontrollably. I stretch my right hand and call them forward. When they are close enough, I take their hands and put them on my chest. They take it back in disgust.

"Where is your mind?" They begin circling me.

"Lost it."

"Lost it? Lost it where?"

"Somewhere, in the ocean when I drowned there."

"And your heart?"

I do not say anything this time.

"SPEAK!"

"I offered it to moon for dinner."

"You fool! Who are you trying to save?" They chastise.

"Who can I save?" I say after a moment.

"Perhaps, no one. Who will remember you when you're gone? Infinity is beyond your reach, you little bastard."

"Is universe within my reach?"

"The universe will die. Nothing is yours, not even these eyes." They scratch out my eyes.

As I fall in my own pool of blood, I hear them leave.

Soon the blood dries and I get used to the pain. Darkness is my new frenemy now. From stumbling, falling and crawling, I am running on my toes now. Observing is more important than seeing, I have realized.

One night, I hear the moon wailing, "My painting!"

I step out and ask, "What about it, my heart?"

"Oh, don't look at it! I have been betrayed. It does not speak!"

I cradle its face and urge it to speak.

It stomps towards the ocean and brings out its painting.

"LOOK! Look at it. What have they done! They slaughtered it."

"Who? Speak no more riddles for heaven's sake!"

"Pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath and sloth, they came in broad daylight. Oh, how they butchered it!" It throws the painting in my direction.

Miracle! I can see. Or, a curse? True, the painting does not speak. I lose my tongue at its sight. Somewhere far off, they laugh again monstrously.

The painting is of love. Enchanting beauty is in its each stroke. Nothing could be purer or more serene. My hands begin to move on its own, forming many words, some I did not even know of. Day and night, I write. In one of such moments, I hear the painting whimper slightly.

Does love need words? Or something more? I give it what it wants and send it on its journey with the waves.

Days, months, years pass. They come many times, each time breaking or stealing something of mine.

Today I have received a letter. The painting has been chosen by somebody. My friends play a tune and I dance with the stars. My reflection is beauty. My lips part and my eyes shine. My blood is now stronger than steel. That rebel, I laugh.

They are here again, this time with a scythe. They thunder my name but my eyes remain fixated on the mirror.

"Give us what is ours" They threaten.

"Nothing is yours," utters my veins uninterestingly.

They step forward, break my mirror and hold me by my collar. "It is time to go." With that they slay me with the scythe. I laugh this time.

"You little bitch, where is your soul?" They say, throwing me against the wall.

Blood gushes out of my head, screaming in joy. "GONE! Long gone in that painting," it mocks.

"You will not live forever. One day when your soul keeper dies, you will too." They say in a snark tone.

"Look into my eyes, it does not have infinity. It has the universe. Eternity is a curse on you, my friend. But universe, you see, is in my reach. My keeper holds it for so long my soul remains obscure with it. It will kiss you before you find it. Then will you understand why you cannot control death anymore. A second or a millennium is equal for us. Life and death is same for us. We are but one."

"Love..LOVE! You think it can save you?"

"Death brings darkness, life brings light. How will either of you understand love?" I say as the last of my breath leaves. When the moon comes, it takes my lifeless body and builds a grave for me in the sea. Paradise, my home I have returned. I get up and begin to decorate my house, waiting patiently for my painting keeper. I smile as I look at her from above; she is working on another piece. I twirl with the winds and kiss her on the cheek. What a beauty, how did I get so lucky? I breathe.



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