20 Poem Kafla International Magazine.pdf

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Smt. Nirmala Bhardwaj
(1952-2017)
Nirmala’s memories: Left to Right clockwise: (1) With Dev in 2001 (2) With Dev and son Kumar during early 1990s (3) With Riva in 2008 (4) With Dev and grandchildren Arvaan, Aver and Riva in 2010
On the night of 13th January, 2017, she suddenly left me forever. It was a terrible feeling… darkness engulfed me. There was no meaning in my life anymore. It felt like everything had come to an end… everything had turned to stone.

What should I do now? I was lost… me, my computer, my walls… everything became silent… as if everything had been destroyed.

Relatives and friends started calling me up. All of them wanted to bolster my mental strength. My literary friends advised me to start writing, especially about my departed wife. Days passed and one day I picked up my pen to write. I decided to gather the memorable moments spent with my dear wife for the last 44 years.

The Kafla magazine had taken a backseat at the time of my grief. I didn’t have the strength of will to publish a new issue but when I started writing about my soul-mate, my wife, I thought about dedicating an issue of Kafla to her. So, I decided on a women-centric issue, where all articles and poems would be written about women. My children and my writer friends supported me immensely in my endeavour. Months passed and ultimately the issue which I had visualised started taking shape.

My heartfelt gratitude to my relatives and friends, who have been with me in my time of intense grief and also helped me materialise this issue of Kafla, dedicated to my departed wife, Smt. Nirmala Bhardwaj.

Dev Bhardwaj
I will always remember her smiling face as she came to pick me up at my bus stop with my little sister Myra. She was always ready to do anything for me, anytime. My closet is full of sweaters she has knitted. I love her more than anyone. On 13th January, 2017, I was coming home from my bus stop with my grandma when she suddenly told me to stop walking for a moment. She said she was feeling dizzy, I was shocked to hear this, I took my bag from her and held her hand and we walked home. When we reached home, I rushed upstairs and told my father about what happened at the bus stop. He went down quickly and gave her medicine to recover. Then she was alright and went back to her daily chores. Till the evening everything was fine and we all got ready to celebrate Lohri. She went to the washroom to change. After a while my mother asked where is my grandma, I told her she had gone to change. After 10 minutes my mom got worried and asked my father to call her. My father looked everywhere for her, he got very worried and knocked the washroom door and called out, Mamma. He heard no reply and tried again but there was no reply. He tried to open the door but it was locked from inside. So, he went to the other side. With shaky hands he opened the door and saw her lying on the floor. He shouted loudly again and again, Mamma, Mamma. Everyone came quickly, picked her up and lay her down on the bed and started rubbing her hands and feet. She did not get up. They took her to the hospital and my mother, my sister and I stayed at home. The doctor said she had a heart attack. They tried to save her but could not. All of us were in shock. I miss her very much and I remember her all the time. My sister was very small when Daadi (grand-mother) died, so she does not remember her.

Whenever Daadi heard me crying or shouting, she would rush up quickly to see what had happened. She would be there any time for me. My bond with her was very strong. I wish she was here with all of us.

GRANDMAS hold our hands for just a while, but our hearts FOREVER.
The Unexpected Turns

Dev Bhardwaj
(Translated by Gurdev Chauhan)

Sometimes… things happen… which are beyond our comprehension or imagination. The thoughts that never occurred to us in our wildest dreams become a reality and freeze our consciousness.

The companionship of 44 long years with my wife would come to an abrupt end like this… I could never have imagined. Only a few moments ago she was talking amiably with me. Then how could this happen? All this is beyond my understanding.

Almost 44 years ago, my chance meeting with her is also beyond my comprehension. I used to live all alone in a rented accommodation in Sector 19 of Chandigarh. I have been residing in rented rooms one after another and met many young girls but was never attracted to anyone. In fact, I rather liked living alone. Before coming to Chandigarh, I lived at my ancestral house in Marar village near Batala (Punjab). I was told that I was just two years old when my father, Shri Chuni Lal, died. I was raised by my mother, Smt. Gian Devi, with lots of love and care. Being the youngest in the family, I was pampered a lot. My Tayaji (Uncle – father’s elder brother) Shri Ram Chand, took care of us, because he had no family of his own. Although we belonged to a Brahmin family, we had some agricultural land to fall back upon. I was born in that village on 20th November, 1948. Those days, very few people had jobs, so they mostly followed the barter system. People exchanged goods from the village shops and elsewhere with grains of equal value. I remember buying sugar, soap, tea and other groceries with quantities of wheat grains, rice or grams that I took for shopping bound in my shirt front.

Being the youngest, I was the most loved child of my mother. I too loved my mother very much. She never got angry with me or rebuked me. Every full moon, (Puranmashi), she cooked, baked and prepared Kheer and served the street children with the dessert. She regarded all the boys and girls of the Mohalla as her own children. In those times, there were no flour or rice mills in the countryside. Mother used a household grinding-stone to grind wheat grains and Okhali for winnowing rice. All village women did these chores. Women milked cows and buffaloes. They stayed healthy doing such strenuous activities.

I can never forget my uncle, Shri Ram Chand ji, for his loving care. He was a very good calligrapher in Urdu. He used to prepare loan papers, promissory notes, agreements, and did all kinds of land deeds documentation. He got one rupee for writing every such document. At that time, this was considered a very good amount. He used to spend that money to purchase cigarettes for himself and the remaining to run the house. I still remember the day when he was playing cards with his friends outside a grocer’s shop. I must be six or seven years old at the most. I went up to him, and putting my arms around his neck said, “I want candy”. Those days, rounded candies were very popular with children. He took out
one cigarette from the pack and said to the shopkeeper, “Laala... take this cigarette and give one candy to my boy.” I used to enjoy such sweets, which were offered for free with the purchase of groceries from the village shop in exchange for grains. But I can never forget that Candy bought with one cigarette. My uncle had a very helpful nature.

I was just in my eighth standard when my mother died after a short illness. Four days later, my uncle, who was not keeping well, also passed away. My future became dark and gloomy. All around, there were clouds of misery and sorrow. “What would happen now?” There was no answer to this question. My sister, Sheela, just two years elder to me, was at home. My brother, Shri Hari Dutt, who was much elder to me, had already got a job in Chandigarh. He was unable to leave his job to return to the village. During these difficult times, my Bua (father’s sister) came to stay with us. After some time, my brother and sister, both got married. After my matriculation, it was impossible for me to stay at the village. So, my brother took me to Chandigarh. Under his guidance and with his efforts, I too got a government job. I spent some years at my brother’s house but my loneliness always remained with me. The atmosphere in my brother’s house did not agree with me, so one day, I put all my clothes in a small box and left for good. I started living in a rented room.

I decided not to marry as I was afraid to be a family man. Whenever a friend or relative asked me to marry, I avoided the matter.

I started studying further. First, I joined evening classes and then privately, I did Giani (Honours in Punjabi), B.A., and after that M.A. (Punjabi). During this period, I started taking interest in reading literature. Books gave me great solace during my lonely hours.

I was single and wanted to remain so all my life. I was never attracted to any girl. Love and marriage were out of question. In fact, the thought of renunciation had taken deep roots in me. I did not want to marry and raise a family. I wanted to run away and become a Sadhu (monk), but I was, as if unwittingly, caught in the trap of literature. During my preparation for Giani, B.A. and M.A. exams, I had read so many books of fiction, prose and poetry, that I was smitten by literature.

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It was during this state of affairs when I was residing on the ground floor of a house in Sector 19 in Chandigarh that something I could never fathom happened to me.

I used to take my meals in a nearby restaurant. One day I saw some sort of activity on the first floor of the house next to mine. A big family had landed up there on that very day. I saw a few girls, may be three or four, coming out and going to school or on some other errand. The eldest would stand out on the terrace to see them off. She would continue to watch them going till they were out of sight. One day, I don’t know how, I caught her attention. She looked at me for a few moments. I didn’t quite know what it was that I first said to her. Maybe she too said something to me. I don’t know now what it really was. I got edgy. I went to the office in that nervous state. After work, I came straight home. For a long time, I continued to look at that terrace, but could see nobody up there. I went to my room but my impatience refused to subside. I would come out of my room after every few minutes and look up, only to find the terrace empty. Then I tried to rest on my bed, and soon
found myself busy thinking about different things. Then suddenly, somebody knocked at my
door. I got up in a disturbed state and opened the door. A man stood outside, holding a plate
decked in multicolored cloth. “I am Mama (maternal uncle) from the first floor of the house
adjacent to yours. This is for you.” I understood but said nothing. I took the plate, and he
went back.

After some time, I uncovered the plate. There were rotis (Indian flatbread), dal (pulse),
vegetable and salad. The food seemed excellently prepared, as if from a good restaurant. I
was afraid of eating, thinking it might contain something to make me a puppet in their hands.
Then I thought I was already bewitched, what more could I lose. I gathered courage and
ate the food. Then I waited for something to happen. The maternal uncle appeared again to
take back the plate. I was wonderstruck at how he knew I had finished eating. Maybe he
saw me washing my hands outside in the front courtyard.

The next day was a holiday. The maternal uncle came again at noon. “Come with me.
They are calling you,” he said in a low voice. Though I was afraid, I still accompanied him.

They were all assembled there to welcome me.

“Go on…..” she said. She meant that I must say something. What could I say? I had
never spoken about my state of affairs to anybody. She brought me a cup of tea and some
eatables. I wanted to get out from there fast because her parents, grandparents, brothers
and sisters were all present. I took tea and came back to my room. Lying on the bed, I
began musing about what had transpired. I was restless and impatient to go to her house
again, but was afraid as well.

In the evening, the Mama came again, holding a plate loaded with food. “Now you
need not eat at the restaurant anymore. I will get you dinner every day,” he said. I didn’t say
anything. Every evening he started to bring food for me. I started eating what he brought
me. I did not feel anything untoward happening to me.

Oh yes, I got more and more impatient to meet her. When I went to the office in the
morning, she would invariably be standing outside on the porch to see me off, raising her
hand till I disappeared from her sight. She would often find some excuse to come out and I
too started talking with her for a minute or two. What kind of things we talked at that time,
I don’t remember now. One day, I copied some poetry, wrote it on a magazine and sent it to
her through Mama. The very next day, she sent back the magazine, writing some Urdu
couplets in Hindi script. I thus came to know that she liked poetry. Later, I got to know that
she read Sushma magazine. But I was not a poet. I simply wrote stories.

So, in this way, story and poetry went side by side. After some days, there came a new
twist to this story of ours. The family was shifting. In fact, they had rented that house for a
few days only, in order to search for a bigger house. Before this, they resided in a government
accommodation in the military area in Chandimandir (near Chandigarh), which they had to
vacate after her father got posted elsewhere.

They were loading their stuff on a horse-driven cart. As the cart started making its
rounds, my heart started sinking. Their new house was a little far, so it was not possible for
us to see each other as often as we had got used to. However, I visited her sometimes.
Oh yes, I just remembered that during my first visit to her house near my room, I had asked her name while having tea. “Mariam”, she told me. Upon the wall of their house, there hung a small picture of Mother Mary. On hearing this name, my heart started to pound. I was just about to touch her hand but was dumbstruck now. I thought of Mother… Mother of Jesus… and me! I was caught in a bind. Although after that I continued to meet her, I never called her by this name. We addressed each other without taking names. This continued even after our marriage.

Christmas was around the corner, the Christmas of December 1972. I was told that there would be a great celebration in the church and the family wanted me to accompany them. I agreed. A few days before this, I took from their house a pocket size picture of young Jesus in the arms of His mother. I had noticed that they did not have any such photo or painting in a large size on their walls. I had an office colleague, Ripudaman Singh, who painted as a hobby. I gave him that pocket size picture and asked him to make a bigger painting after that image. He did it in oil colours on an artboard and got it framed as well. I wrapped the painting in a newspaper and took it to her house. It was Christmas. My sudden morning visit amazed them. I presented the painting to her and said, “Merry Christmas”.

She unfolded the present slowly. She and her family were very happy to see the painting. They hung it on the wall. Now, this painting became the image of worship. My respect in their house increased manifold. Her grandma was impressed, thinking I was religious and respected Christianity.

As days passed, I became more and more restless. I did not know how to talk to her parents. Though, I had made up my mind to marry that girl, I did not want to confide this to anyone. I didn’t even want to share this with my brother and sisters. I was afraid that they would not agree to this inter-caste marriage.

Shortly after that they shifted to another residence. It was not very far… in the same locality… a ground floor house with a big front yard. I did not go to their new house for some days. Meanwhile, I too shifted my room. My room was also on the ground floor. But the landlord had rented it to me on the condition that only one person could stay and no cooking was allowed in the room.

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One day I went to meet her in the evening and told her that I wanted her to meet a relative of mine who lived nearby. She agreed to go after taking permission from her parents. We went to the house of Shri Harkrishan, son-in-law of my Mausi (mother’s sister), who at that time was posted as an engineer at the Radio Station, Chandigarh. Since he was very kind to me, I told him the whole story. My sister, Urmila, prepared a meal for us. We got very late talking. We both stayed in their house that night. She had full faith in me and knew that I would protect her all her life. My Jijaji (brother-in-law) asked her name. She said, “Mariam”. Her name made him serious. He said it was a very noble and pious name. It was the name of the Mother of the World. He asked her whether there was any other name she was addressed to by her parents when she was quite young. She said, “Yes, she was called Nim or Nima by everyone.” Jijaji at once got the clue. “Oh, it means pure, meaning,
Nirmal or Nirmala. Well, we’ll call you Nirmal or Nirmala. This name will suit our family.”
So, from Mariam she became Nirmal. Both these names reflected purity.

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The next morning, I took her to her house. Everyone at her house was terribly angry.
Her father, Shri Sham Lal, dragged her into the room. Her mother, Smt. Shanti Devi, was
frightened. I overheard, “I warn you never to put foot out of this house now. I will beat you
to death.”

I stood transfixed. Her grandma said, “Son, you go now. Come at some other time. I
am with you.” I walked back to my room. That night sleep evaded me.

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Next morning, instead of going to the office, I went to their house. When her family
refused to allow me to meet her, I said, “I have come to marry her. Yes, today itself. It is up
to you to arrange the ceremony urgently. I am ready to go to any church, mandir or gurdwara
(temples) and marry her with any custom. Everybody fell silent. Her grandma was sensible.
She said, “Son! You sit here, I will discuss the matter with the Father (Priest of Church) and
come soon.”

The church was quite nearby. So, she was quick. She said Father had asked us to wait
for a few days as Christians were observing fasts (Lent) during those days. But, upon her
insistence, he had agreed to perform a very simple wedding ceremony in the evening. All
were happy. They had realized that I was not in the wrong. They started preparations. The
wedding dress was readied. They purchased two silver rings. I did not need to prepare for
anything. I simply waited till it was evening. From my side, I called my Jijaji as witness. I
did not tell anybody else... just a bridegroom with one witness. After performing a simple
ritual, the Father pronounced us husband and wife in the matter of a few minutes.

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I took a rickshaw from outside the church and took her to my room. I said to her, “I am
grateful to God that with your arrival, this room has become a home.”

With fear writ large on my face, I told my landlord that I just got married and he may
meet my wife. Now, with her coming to my house, Mariam had become Nirmala. Contrary
to what I thought, my landlord expressed his happiness on hearing this. He said if other
young men started such simple marriages, the society would change overnight and every
parent would feel happy to give birth to a daughter. Immediately, I went to the bazaar and
brought home some bottles of Coca Cola and a boxful of sweets, and distributed them to
everyone living in that building as part of my wedding celebration.

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The next day, we went to the Mansa Devi Mandir (Temple) in Panchkula near
Chandigarh. Although those were Lent days (days of mourning) in Christianity, but Hindus
considered them auspicious, being the Navratras. We bowed and prayed at the Mansha
Devi Shrine for happiness and success in our married life.

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I had an old stove which worked on kerosene oil. Though, it did not make any noise while burning, but to blow it off we had to sprinkle water over it, which gave off a lot of smoke. We thought of an idea. We had an almirah to hang clothes. Instead of hanging any clothes in it we used to put the stove in it. She would cook rice, dal, etc., and after that sprinkle water on the stove, and shut the almirah. The smoke would slowly dissipate. So, like this, we spent six months in our one-room shanty.

Our wedding had taken place on 9th April, 1973. Those were kind of mild hot days. We did not have any electric fan. Her grandma bought us a new electric fan. This fan has always stayed with us wherever we shifted. In fact, this fan is still working fine in our bedroom. It has rarely given any trouble. We had to repaint it once when its colour faded. However, a few years back, it started running very slow on the first two points and on the next points it runs very fast. We never got this problem fixed, fearing that once an electrician opened it, the fan might stop working altogether. We have grown to love its speed. Today, I am alone in the room, and it gives me company.

At last, in the year 1982, we finally shifted to our present house in Sector 46-C, which was allotted by the Chandigarh Housing Board on the payment of monthly installments.

From her house, someone would come almost daily to meet us; sometimes her grandma, sometimes one or the other of her sisters. We also used to dine at her parents’ house almost daily. One day her grandma asked us if we needed anything. My wife simply asked for two things: one her old sewing machine and other, the wall painting of young playful Jesus in the lap of Mother Mary, which I had presented to her on Christmas. These two things have always remained with us and still do. My granddaughter Riva says that she would keep that sewing machine as a keepsake, a gift from her grandma, which was given to her by her grandma.

Before marriage, I used to go to my office on foot or on a local bus. After marriage, we thought of buying a bicycle so that I may come back home for lunch. Those days, a bicycle almost cost as much as my monthly salary. So that proposition was not possible. But, in this, my government job helped me. I got a bicycle loan on easy installments. The monthly installment was just Rs 10. I purchased a bike of ‘Eastern Star’ company. To humour me, my sisters-in-law had started to call me ‘Eastern Star’ those days. I thought that this was perhaps a proper epithet. Yes, I was the star of the East, but I imagined myself to glitter in the West too. Those days, I was reading Samuel Beckett and was also translating one of his plays, ‘Endgame’, into Punjabi. It was my wish to go to France and meet this wonderful writer. But my wish could not be translated into reality. By the time I got the chance to go to France, he had already passed away. To speak the truth, my life and writings have been greatly influenced by this writer.

We shifted to a new house. It was a one-room-one-kitchen house. There, my elder son was born. Out of love we would call him Gullu and this name always stayed with us. I
looked into Indian mythology and chose the name Kumar Vansh. This name was somewhat
difficult to call out but it did go well with him. He is residing in the USA these days. He and
his wife, Ruby, both are software engineers, and both their sons were born there. Their sons
are called Arvaan and Aver. They are now American citizens… American by residence and
Indian by heart. They speak Punjabi at home but American English when outside.

Two years after that, in the year 1976, our second son was born. We lovingly called
him Gittu. So, in this way the elder was Gullu, and the younger was Gittu. We have always
called them by these names. When it came to be choosing the name for the younger son, my
wife said that this time she would decide on a name that rolled off the tongue. So, she chose
Raman as his name. Raman is now a big name in the Art World. He has worked as an
illustrator in newspapers of National repute, The Indian Express and The Times of India.
These days, he is running his own art company. When he was working in The Indian
Express, he met Dimpy, a journalist, and they married. They have two daughters, Riva and
Myra. I must make it clear here that my sons’ brides were their own choices, and both are
from Sikh families. Both my sons are hard working like me. I consider this as my great
achievement.

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With the birth of children, we managed the household together with much assiduousness.
She had the knack of making do with my meager salary and never demanded anything her
entire life. What she did, she did only for her sons or for running the household. When we
admitted our children to school, it was she who took on the responsibility of dropping and
picking them up. Even the hot summer or severe winter did not deter her from performing
her duty. The school was not far from our residence. She performed all the household
chores herself, never asking for or taking anyone’s help.

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After just a few years, in 1982, we got the possession of our own house built by the
Chandigarh Housing Board. It consisted of a ground floor, which was in an incomplete
state. It was due to her efforts that it would, in the coming years, be extended to a three-
story house. But, we needed money for that. I went to my village and met my childhood
friend Lakhbir Singh and sought his help to sell some portion of my land. He solved this
problem. He is the only person from my village who is still in regular touch with me. I am
proud of his friendship.

Further construction of the house began. She would keep a sharp eye on the workers
and made sure they worked in the best possible manner. She also had the good habit of
keeping the house spick and span and of placing things exactly where they belonged. She
would not let me do anything.

I had nothing to do as far as housework was concerned. In the morning, she helped me
choose my office clothes and made preparations to send me off.

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In the 44-year-long companionship, she had given me a lot of comfort and happiness. To speak the truth, I was living like a king in my house. After retirement, I used to spend most of my time on the computer. She would come to my room and say at mealtimes, “Get up now. You have been working since a long time. You can complete the remaining work tomorrow.”

Every day before I used to get up, tea was prepared. She would keep saying repeatedly, “Do get up… Do get up now.” Mostly, I would go on sleeping. Just a few days before her demise, I said to her, “May be one day you will continue to say ‘Get up… Get up now…’ and I would be gone forever to infinite sleep…” Upon that she smiled and said that nothing such would ever happen.

Three years ago, in 2014, I had a heart problem and underwent Angioplasty. She always worried about my health and took great care of me. I would also ask her to undergo ECG, Echo and Angiography but she never agreed to undergo such tests. She did not even take the advice of our son, Raman, seriously.

She had a mind of her own and was in the habit to getting whatever she desired. She lived life on her own terms. She always enjoyed her full say in the matters of family, be it our home or that of her parents before marriage. She used to do all household chores herself. She never asked for my help nor told me how to do them the particular way she wanted them done. She did not even teach me to operate the washing machine.

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There is so much to write about her. Now, I just wonder why this tragedy occurred. Everything is still a mystery to me. This year, i.e., 2017, we celebrated her 65th birthday on the 5th of January. Just after eight days, the Lohri festival arrived. The entire day she continued doing all chores and run errands as per her schedule. In the afternoon, she picked up Riva from the bus stop. While returning, she complained of giddiness. I thought she might be feeling weak (as she had observed the Pooranmashi fast a day before) or may be experiencing a bit of low blood pressure. But, in a few minutes she felt fine and was up and about, doing her household tasks one after another like any other day. She was knitting woolen socks for our granddaughter and she continued to work on them. In the afternoon, her sisters paid a visit and she made tea and offered sweetmeats to them. There was laughter and happiness all around as it was Myra’s first Lohri. She was nine months old.

She had made elaborate preparations for the big day. She lit a bonfire in our backyard with Raman’s help. Our elder daughter-in-law, Ruby, had come over from the USA just four days ago to spend a few days with us. Our younger daughter-in-law, Dimpy, was also helping out in the preparations. There was warmth and merriment all around. We were all sitting around the bonfire, munching Gachak, Revari, and chatting and singing.
We had plans to attend a similar function at Raman’s in-laws’ place after our celebration rituals were done here in the house. She asked me to get ready and put on my newly ironed clothes. I said that the clothes I was wearing were quite good but she insisted that I change, so I did. After that I told her that she should also get ready to go out and change her clothes. She got up from her chair and took a piece of Til Bhugga (sweetmeat) from the plate. She broke it into two pieces and offered one to me. I said that my piece was a little bigger and I wanted the smaller one but, she said, “No, you have the bigger piece.” These were her last words and the last sweet thing she offered to me. After that, she went to the washroom to change but never came back. After about 10 minutes, my son, Raman, called out to her but got no response. He rushed to the other door of the washroom which was not bolted. A shriek… then another… Maamaa……Maamaa……aaaaaaa, Raman was shouting loudly and frantically. Hearing him, we all ran towards the washroom. She was lying there unconscious… all dressed up, her hair made… ready to go. We lifted her out with great difficulty… it seemed there was no life in her. We took her to the hospital but what could the doctors do, except inform us that she was no more and hand us a certificate of her death. That night was the darkest night of my life. My voice went hoarse with crying.

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I remembered my mother. I do not know how my mother had taken her last breath. I did not get to see that… nor did I get to see how my wife must have drawn her last breath. When my mother died, I was not in the house. I was in a Haveli, a little away from our house. I used to study there with some friends and would sleep over there sometimes. I had wept a lot upon my mother’s death. I must be only 14 years old at that time. I had cried nonstop, saying that I had become an orphan. Now, after the death of my wife, I cried again. I have become an orphan again. But this time my cries were not heard by anyone except myself.

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I am wonderstruck how suddenly she had gone all alone. All her life she had never gone anywhere alone, except to America on three instances, twice at the birth of our grandsons, and once on a visit. Ever since our wedding, she never stayed over at her parents’ house. She always took me along. She would take me to the market whenever she wanted something. Most of the women in our neighbourhood would go to the temple or bazaar without their husbands but she never did. I asked her many times to go to the bazaar or at least to the nearby temple with the neighborhood women but she would never do so. She never stayed overnight with her sisters despite my insistence, on the pretext of her health and happiness. She would say, “You don’t want me to stay at home? Why do you ask me to stay for some days with my sisters or parents?” So, why has she gone all alone for good now, leaving us to cry in agony? If she was suffering from some disease then of
course it was another matter but it was not so. How could she die, being happy and healthy, as she was that day? These unanswered questions always haunt me.

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The pain of her separation is unbearable. My life has become very tedious, and it looks as if everything has ended for me. I would also end up like this now. My friends and relatives ask me to bear it as the Will of God. It is so easy to say that but very difficult for the person concerned. Jis tann laage so tann jaane (No one, except he who is experiencing the pain knows how much it hurts.) There is no solution. Yes, there is no solution to death. Only death is its own solution.

After living 44 long years together, she, for me, was not just a woman or a wife... she was much more... and always will be...

She was not only a woman
She was not only a wife
She was much more
Much more to me

44 years’ companionship
Spent like it was just a day
The happy period lay ahead
My every morning, every evening
Would be spent in no time
Telling things to her
Or hearing things from her

She kept herself busy
I always saw her at work
Going about in the house
Doing things one after another
Endlessly, untiringly
She did everything herself
As if others would ruin
What she wanted done

From the morning tea
To cooking dinner
She did all to my liking
My happiness was her purpose, her goal

I had never thought
Losing every such thing
And so soon
I was living like a king in my house
All my worries that kept surrounding me
Outside, just melted, went away
As soon as I stepped into the house
Every worry lost its bite
Lost its very body

Like a mother she nurtured me
Like a sister, she showered affection on me
Like a lover, she romanced me
And like a wife she always gave me comfort

A complete woman she was
A complete wife
A complete mother
A complete grandmother
A mother to all
Mine and my children
And grandmother to our grandchildren

Apart from that
She was much more
Yes… much more to me.

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REMEMBERING MAMMA
Raman Bhardwaj (Chandigarh)

“Gittu, let’s go for the walk soon, or it will get dark.” This was a routine call for me from my mother to go on a long evening walk everyday for many years. Often my daughter Riva joined us. My mother’s bond with Riva was very strong and almost obsessive.

She had taken great care of Riva since she was an infant. Even now, Riva has hung a large picture of herself and her Daadi (grand-mother) in her room.

After the birth of my second daughter, Myra, my mother was overjoyed. For the last year she was very happy, as if all that she ever desired was in her possession. Till a few moments before she breathed her last, she was knitting woolen socks for baby Myra. She had plans to knit a lot more for both my kids but God suddenly disposed of her plans.

I became a full time freelance artist in 2010 and since my studio is at home, I mostly remained indoors. This gave my mother ample time to interact with me. Many times during the day she would call me up on my cellphone to ask trivial questions and do mundane talk. She lived on the ground floor and I was on the first floor. She avoided taking the stairs. I still have her number saved on my phone but now I miss seeing her contact ringing and picture flashing on my phone screen. And I don’t go for evening walks too anymore. I go in the morning instead.

I can still hear her voice ringing in my ears like it used to be for the last 40 years. I never drew her portrait. She didn’t like being photographed or being drawn, because she wasn’t very confident about her looks. So, I never drew her. I never did what she didn’t like.

She always appreciated my art, and I would show all my artworks to her, as if seeking an approval, even now out of habit. She has preserved my childhood doodles on various books, my childhood awards, certificates, etc. She was truly proud of me and that filled me with confidence and happiness.

I faintly remember that as a child of about 6 or 7 years I would follow her everywhere through the house, holding her dupatta wherever she went, finishing her household chores in the night time, as I would get sleepy.

She never wanted me to go far from her, not even for studies or a job. I was lucky to study in the same city and later find a job while still in college… as if God was supporting her wishes.

My elder brother had already settled abroad while I was still studying and that brought her closer to me emotionally. And I too relied on her a great deal since I am somewhat of an introvert person.

Although she took pride in my being an artist, I can’t forget the day when she threatened to burn my sketchbook as I used to stay out late during my Fine Art student days. It brings a smile to my face even today when I remember this. She was an authoritarian figure for me and I never had any reason not to agree with her. Couldn’t face her anger… I was too afraid.

Even if I would feel annoyed with her on trivial matters, when she behaved rather childishly or obstinately, I never let her know that. I realised that she won’t understand my point of view.
and would rather feel hurt. She was sensitive, and would get upset about petty matters concerning so many people. Sometimes, I felt as if I had taken on the role of a mother, as I often tried to talk her out of her angst and frustration over petty problems. She always listened to me seriously and often tried to take my advice. Knowing my interest in astrology, homeopathy and acupressure, she would often seek my suggestions on health and religious matters.

“I don’t want a long life,” she often said, as she was too proud to imagine herself being weakened by old age and depending on others to be fed and taken care of.

God did listen to this wish of hers. She was walking, and working, and talking till her last breath. She was a silent walker and would often startle us by walking silently into the room. She walked out of our lives the same way, shockingly and silently, of a sudden cardiac failure.

Many people say this is the best way to exit from this world. No pain… no realization… no fear… no wait. Everyone has to leave one way or other… this day or the other. She went happy, satisfied, peacefully, that’s a solace, though the void of absence can’t be filled.

We move on with thousands of memories, lessons, bitter and fond.

About two months before her death I had a dream. My mother, my daughter and I were going for a walk. It’s a foggy day, nothing much is visible and we were all walking towards a wide iron gate with a brick boundary wall around it. She stopped us near the gate and bid goodbye, as if we were there to see her off. And I ask her surprisingly, “Bas yahin tak jaana tha? (What? Did you only have to go this far?).” I woke up with a feeling of impending doom, but I rubbed it, taking comfort in the thought that maybe she would travel abroad to visit my brother. Never knew it was such a prophetic dream. I was reminded of this dream when we were going to cremate her. I saw that same bricked boundary wall and the same iron gate at the Chandigarh crematorium and it was a depressing foggy day.

I don’t want to end this article on a depressing note. I wrote and illustrated my first small children’s book after she passed away and dedicated it to her. I know she is looking at me, smiling and proud of me, as always...

<www.artistraman.com>
A TRIBUTE TO MY MOTHER(IN-LAW)

Ruby Singh Bhardwaj (U.S.A.)

On the day I married her son on Oct. 12th 1995, she said, “You are now my daughter, and although you have a mother, I am now your Mama #2.” I am not sure how much that was sealed as a promise, but from that moment on, I felt myself fortunate to have two mothers, biological and adopted.

I met her son in my last year of college. He was my first love and boyfriend ever. The three-story home at the end of the lane, beautifully decorated with her impeccable taste in lawn and plants. She cooked and cleaned relentlessly with little help from outside (maids) to keep up with her husband and her two boys. I admired her never-ending devotion to her family, especially her husband.

A few years later, when her son and I moved to America, she hugged me warmly and with tear-filled eyes said, “Bring my son back safely”.

Thereafter, we made a beautiful life away from home and planned to start our own family. Soon, we were expecting our first child and I remember she was the most excited to hear the news. She wanted to fly down immediately to hold that baby before it was born. She came to live with us a month before the birth of our first child. She reminded me every day that the baby was due any moment; hilarious but irritating sometimes. Now, I understand how anxious she was for her first grandchild. She stayed for six month and loved her grandchild unconditionally. That was one moment when she actually dedicated herself to someone else besides her husband, “her first grandson—Arvaan”.

During her last visit when our second child “Aver” was born, she started staying to herself, walking and watching television. She looked relaxed and proud of her children living their life to the best and enjoyed her grandchildren, like a true grandmother.

Even though there were times when we saw things differently, yet we shared an appreciation and respect for each other. In the last couple of years, we both shared our lives openly with each other. She stood by me, as I stood by her. She remained kind to me despite her own pain. She sided with me when I was in despair and helped me by listening to me endlessly.

In 2016, after being with the corporate world for 20 years, I bid my goodbye and my desire was to visit my motherland India alone. My plans kept going on and off until one day my husband said, “Pack your bags, you are leaving in two days.” It was a shock but I took no time and off I went to see my family.

First stop, Chandigarh. I arrived on January 9th 2017 and my Mama #2 welcomed me with so much love. Every morning she and I enjoyed tea, while watching and chatting with her son via facetime. She seemed so happy to see me that she never complained of missing her son and grandsons. She enjoyed sharing her diet plans and daily activities with me. She was looking forward to meeting her son on his next visit soon.
January 13\textsuperscript{th} 2017, the night of her passing from this life to the next, she was excited to celebrate her granddaughter’s first \textit{Lohri}. She did the preparations and had a short conversation with me before she left to get ready for the function. She breathed her last with the moon shining above on the most auspicious day of the year 2017. She was held in the arms of her loved ones. Her words, “Bring my son back safely,” echoed in my ears throughout the last rites. Till this day, I fail to find a correlation of my visit and her departure, but maybe it’s too soon to understand. She has definitely left a big void in my life. It saddens me to not have her around to share the ups and downs of our lives.

What I know for sure is that something beautiful came from the love she gave to all of her children and grandchildren. Even though her grandkids may not remember their grandmother and my Mama #2, they “know” her. They know her because she is alive in our home, in the stories and memories we share, and in the face of their dad.

Farewell, Mama #2, we love you and miss you!

“A mother gives you a life, a mother-in-law gives you her life.”

~ Amit Kalantri

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Dev’s \textit{Jija} Sh. Hari Krishan, Dev, Kumar, Kavita, Ruby and Nirmala (1999)
MEMORIES LIVE ON…

Jagdeep Sambey Bhardwaj (Chandigarh)

I stepped into her life and her home in the winter of 2001. That’s when I got married to Raman, her younger son. Though I had met her a couple of times before my wedding, I was pretty intimidated by her. She had a strong presence and was a force to reckon with. “Love me or hate me, don’t ignore me,” were the unspoken words.

Being a journalist, I worked late into the night. She would stand at the main gate with our (me and Raman’s) tiffin to see us off and always open the door herself, be it 2am or 3am. It was only much later that we started taking our keys (so we could let ourselves in) and would ask her to lock up and sleep. Her tiffin was much sought after among our journalist colleagues. They loved her delicious sabzi and would wait for us to lay out our dinner.

I remember the countless times Mummyji and I would go shopping as she chatted endlessly throughout the way. She relied a great deal on my choice for clothes, sweaters, shoes, and other household items; and would pick up whatever I would lay my finger on. We planned together for festivals like Diwali, Karwa Chauth, Kanjaks, Lohri and shopped together for diyas, candles, bangles. I would prepare a few dishes and so would she. We would all sit down to a grand dinner then, as she concentrated on feeding her granddaughter Riva with her own hands.

It was five years after my wedding that my first baby, Riva, was born. She was ecstatic at having a granddaughter and loved her immensely. She was ready to do anything and everything for her, fulfilling her every whim. She was possessive about her and very protective too. Woe begone to anyone who dared to hurt her. She would take on the world for her and would never let her out of her sight, accompanying her to the park as she went to play in the evenings. Her love for her grandkids was deep and profound. She would count the days for her grandkids and elder son in America to come and visit, looking forward to the big day and planning endlessly.

When she got news of the arrival of Riva’s sibling, her joy knew no bounds. She always worried and fretted that Riva was all alone and had no company. When Myra was born, her happiness was complete. It seemed she needed nothing more out of life. Then began the tireless job of knitting little booties and sweaters for the little one. Till the last day Mummyji was busy knitting little blue socks. Unfortunately, she could complete only one.

She was very passionate about her family and devoted herself completely to her husband, sons, grandchildren and the house. All her energies went into keeping everything spick and span and in complete order. I was greatly impressed by her organizational skills and the methodical and impeccable way she put every little thing where it belonged. Her little ‘store’ was a storehouse of quick-fixes, containing a solution to every practical need. From a teeny weeny nail to Diwali lights, to every tool, wood pieces, paints, cement, empty cardboard
boxes, and lots of nondescript material… she would store everything carefully for any quick-fix requirement. At a moment’s notice, she would dial the number of her carpenter, *mistri*, painter, *maali*, electrician, *sabziwala*, *sheeshewala*, *cylinderwala*, plumber to repair, mend and provide around the house.

It was due to her perfectionist and sensitive nature that she grew upset at mundane matters. She would get irritated and agitated at trivial things. I would often placate Mummyji and make her understand the insignificance of the situation.

I can never forget the fateful day of *Lohri* when she breathed her last. It will remain etched in my memory forever. Just a week before, we had celebrated her 65th birthday. She was very proud to have lost weight recently due to long walks and special diets. She said beaming, “I am 65 years old today and my weight is also 65kg.” Everything seemed perfect in her little world. Her elder daughter-in-law was also here from the States for a visit. Things never seemed better. She was content with her life and delighted with her family.

She started making elaborate plans from the morning, sending *Papaji* to get *Revari*, *Gachak*, sweets, and numerous other eatables. Her sisters too came to wish *Lohri* and she chatted happily with them, knitting socks. In the evening, she lit the bonfire with Raman, arranging firewood herself. In high spirits, she left to change her clothes for a *Lohri* celebration at my brother’s place. When I came downstairs, Mummyji was nowhere to be seen. Everyone said she had gone to change. I waited for around 10 minutes. It was not like her to disappear when I came downstairs. She would come instantly to greet me. I asked Raman to go find out what was taking her so long. It was only when I heard him shouting “Mamma” that I knew something was wrong. I rushed to find him kneeling on the floor where Mamma was sitting, lifeless, trying to revive her. By that time everyone had rushed over. We carried her to the bed and tried to revive her. She was taken to the hospital, but she never came back to us. If only she had collapsed in front of us, maybe she would be with us today. If only the doctors could have done something to save her? What did we do wrong? Why couldn’t we extend her life? Why didn’t we take her for a thorough check-up when she complained of dizziness and then brushed it off as a bout of “cervical pain”? Countless unanswered questions remain. I guess they will haunt us all our life.

We thought she left too soon. Wish she had time to enjoy Myra’s childhood, hear her laughter, her first baby words and feel pride in her first baby steps.

We miss you Mummyji… we miss your laughter ringing through the house… your confident and authoritative voice calling out to us… your strict tone as you reprove us… your instant ‘*kya hua*’ (what happened?) at the slightest out-of-ordinary sound. Your memory will always live on with us. I pray you find peace and solace wherever you are.

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MY SISTER

Margaret (Chandigarh)

My sister is really great. Why am I using ‘is’ instead of ‘was’…. The reason behind is she lives in the heart and soul of her near and dear ones though she has changed her place of living. Now she is living in heaven but distance does not do us part. I am talking about a sister who is great who never stepped out of her house alone even if the market was half a kilometer away. She would always wait for her husband and both would either walk or go by car to get the grocery. But then one day her son Gullu sends a visa for her to go to USA as she was blessed with a son. Hearing the news of her grandson she flew to USA all alone. That is the reason I call her great… Today after losing her closeness as a human being I feel now that she is an angel. She has again left the world all alone. I would like to mention the year she got married and the 1st April is often termed as fools day but for innocence people. I would call it as innocence day. My grandmother (Amma) planned to make her an April fool. Actually Amma was missing her badly. So she asked me to tell her that Amma is no more. Can you believe it she was in sector 21 and we were staying in Sector 19. She ran bare footed crying loudly with her husband Dev making him also cry but of course Amma had only tested her love for her. She was a real gem or when I say it hindi Heera. Sitting alone in my room I can quote number of incidents proving her innocence. Every time she cooked food I would just stand near her as she was an excellent cook and when she was cooking the gravy, I would just drop a chappatti and say sorry just to enjoy that cooked curry which was so yummy but till date she did not understand that isn’t this height of her innocence. My son Mohit would often tell her to go to Master Chef contest and also assured her that she would be the winner but for her to leave her husband and children was near to impossible and look today she has left everyone of us. She did not even think how we all, in special her husband, will live without her. She had no complains against anyone… not even the workers of her house. I have heard of none talking ill of her. Everyone always praised her for her dedication towards her house and family. About three years back, when her husband was admitted in the hospital for a heart problem, she just stood outside the hospital with tears in her eyes and praying for his speedy recovery. She did not take food or water till the doctor had placed stents and declared him out of danger. Her husband does not know about this till date. After that she made it a point that he takes healthy and fresh food. She would time to time cut fruits and serve him. She had his food chart put on the kitchen wall and strictly followed. Within days her husband Dev recovered. But Destiny had in store something beyond our imagination she was snatched away by the cruel hands leaving us wailing and crying. I wonder why God wanted her, an angel on earth. Why He called her to heaven.

My sister had a happy go family… a loving husband and two caring sons. The elder one Gullu lives in USA. He would call her every week and talk for hours. The younger one is Raman who stayed with her always made it a point to take out time from his busy schedule and go for a morning and evening walk with her. Such a loving mother she was. She as a devoted wife waited for her husband to dine first and served him hot chappattis and later had her food. She would call me up daily to inquire about my health. I remember
the day I had a fall and fractured my back. She came to see me and said where is the need to keep your house so neat that you had a fall, whereas she too sailed in the same boat. She always kept her house spick and span. Everything was kept in its proper place. Even the poañy-bags were folded and kept in a bag and hung behind the kitchen door. What to talk about her as a grandmother to her two loving grand daughters. She spent maximum of her time knitting sweaters for them. Even on her last day, she was knitting for her 9 months old grand daughter Myra. If today too you visit her house and open the fridge you will find variety of chocolates stacked for her grand daughter Riva though she never ate chocolates herself. May her soul rest in peace.

A simple, kindhearted and a devoted woman who lived all her life for her family first at parent’s house and later at her husband’s house. She did not know she would leave the world so soon for her plans were laid down for a long life. She had even planned what she intends to give to her granddaughters, on their marriages but God almighty had other plans for her. On 13th January 2017 at 8 pm after completing all her chores she got ready to leave all of us wailing and crying. No sad or happy notes were exchanged with her sisters. She just left us in a shock never to be recovered. I only keep talking to God everyday where has He taken her and why? What was the need for Him to separate us. When asked to her grandson where is daadi? he said to a better place. No doubt God would always keep her happy but He did not think about us. He made us orphans for an eldest sister is a mother to younger ones. If on earth there is anyway I can meet her or talk to her I would want her back as my eldest sister loving and simple. She is always in my thoughts and I ask God oh! kind and loving God bring back my sister to me.

Alice, I.K. Malhotra (Alice’s husband), Kumar, Margaret, Kavita, Raman, Mohit, Dev & Nirmala
MY MAASI (Mother’s sister)
Kavita (Chandigarh)

My very sweet maasi where have you gone, over the hills or over the mountains? Over the seas or over the oceans? Where on earth is the world you are in? I fail to understand this mystery of God. One evening while I was sitting in my pensive mood, My Mom came to call me. But looking at me she asked me, Dolly what bothers you so much. I could not control my emotions. I hugged my Mom and cried bitterly and asked her as to where has maasi gone? My Mom wiped my tears and took me out in the garden and pointing at the sky, she said there… that brightest star that shines up in the sky is your maasi. I could not believe her but suddenly I could see maasi blessing me as if to say— Gudia be a good girl… take care of your Mom and continue to visit your uncle Dev, whenever you find time. And on my forehead a drop of water fell from the sky as she was blessing me.

Oh God, please keep her in your loving care.

IN MEMORIES OF MY BHABI JEE
Lilyana Kovatcheva (Bulgaria)

I am a Roma-Gypsy woman from Bulgaria. I was told that we people came from India about 1000 years ago. When I finished my University education, I studied the History of migration of Roma from India. It fascinated me and I decided to see India. It was in year 2000 that I took one year visa from Indian Embassy in Sofia and arrived in Delhi in April. There was no one to receive me at the Airport, because I donot have any friend or relative there. There were two co-passengers with me who were from Russia and going to visit an Ashram in South India. I asked them if I can also join them. They agreed and took me there. The atmosphere at the Ashram was a different kind of feelings for me. I became a devout of it. After some days I came to Delhi and started living in Asharam’s branch there. I started looking after some persons engaged with Roma community in Europe.

The University of Delhi gave me some names including that of Dev Bhardwaj living in Chandigarh. I asked them to kindly inform Mr. Dev that I will visit him within few days. I took address of Dev and after two days boarded the bus from Delhi to see him. I did not inform him before-hand about my coming to Chandigarh. I took Bus at 8.00 a.m. and reached Chandigarh by 1.00 p.m. I took auto rickshaw from Bus station and reached at Dev’s house. His wife Nirmala was there. I introduced myself and asked about Dev. She told that he is in office and will inform him about you. She took
me inside, prepared tea and meal for me. She called Dev who informed that he will reach home within one hour.

When he reached home he was surprised to see me and asked, “You not informed me about your coming here before-hand…?”

I replied that “I was coming to my brother’s house. So a sister need not to inform the brother about her coming to his place in advance… This is my brother’s house…my own house…. This made him much happy and said, “O.K. I take you my real sister and will do the ritual of Rakhi Bandhan (tying a red thread on wrist). Nirmala immediately went in to the kitchen, brought a red thread in a plate…. with some sweets. She asked me to tie the red-thread to Dev’s wrist. After finishing she asked me to offer sweet to Dev. After that she declared, “Now you both are brother and sister…. more than real ones….. and Rakhi-bandhan is symbol of protection of a sister by her brother.” We enjoyed this happy ceremony. She told me that now she is your Bhabi and Dev your Bhara. I wondered we also call Pharala to brother in Romani language. In the evening Dev took me and Nirmala to Uttam Restaurant in the locality. The owner of the restaurant, Mr. Balwinder Singh is the best friend of Dev. Later Nirmala took me to a Saari shop and purchased a beautiful saari for me.

Next day we planned to visit Mcloadganj, place of His Holiness Dalai Lama. Dev prepared our journey. He called a poet-friend Mr. Vijay Vishal who was living near that town and told that his wife and a Roma sister will come to your place tomorrow…. they will stay there for two-three days….. visiting Dalai Lama and nearby places.

So I enjoyed that trip in the company of Nirmala. After reaching back Chandigarh I stayed few days more at Dev’s house. I was to go back to Delhi because I wanted to learn Hindi there. On the day of my leaving, my Bhabi jee prepared some delicious Pranthas for me and wrapped it in a container and asked – you may eat this any time during journey. We both hugged and cried. I can never forget her words— “This is your own house, its doors are always open for you… You can come any time. You are always welcome.”

I lived a year in India. I used to visit Dev every month and enjoyed the company of Bhabi jee. I always found her a loving wife and a caring mother. When I returned to Bulgaria, we continued to communicate by phone and e-mails. Dev came to Bulgaria several times and Bhabi jee sent presents for me and I sent gifts for her from Bulgaria. When I got message from Dev about her demise I could not believe. She was a healthy and cheerful person. But God has His own ways.

Nirmala will live in my memories and heart forever. Her bright memory and peace of mind.

<lilyana_kovatcheva@abv.bg>
Dev Bhadwaj is such an impulsive short story writer of Punjabi who is averse to any advice on his writing under progress. He lets his story in hand drift as it might, wild and untrammeled. Almost the same thing may be said of his choice for his better-half; in that too, he showed the same no-care attitude.

He heard only the voice of his heart, so much so that he did not disclose his marriage proposal to anybody, not even to his own brother and sisters. Whenever any friend or relative would visit him he or she would be astounded to see a young girl in his room. Upon asking by them who the girl was, Dev would not hesitate to tell them that she was his wife. It seemed hard for them to believe that it was so. Such assertion of Dev cut no ice with them because there was nothing in their room to suggest that they were leading a married life as husband and wife: no newly purchased furniture, clothes, ornaments or other articles of use in the house. It seemed as if he had just absconded with this girl. If someone asked where and how the marriage was performed, he would say what was the use of asking those things. He would say that the stark truth was that he had already married that girl and now they were living as a married couple. If they agreed with him it was alright, if not then he was sorry.

Dev’s brother used to visit him at his room quite off and on. When he for the first time saw Dev living with the girl it greatly upset him. He could never have thought that Dev could live with a girl like that without performing proper marriage. He went to his sisters and his maternal uncles telling them that Dev had not done the right thing marrying without any ceremony and without their knowledge and that what was more, the girl was from a non-Hindu family. He told them that they must do something. He told that they must drive this girl out of his house, come what may. After this was done, they would find some good girl for Dev. His maternal uncle was uneducated, but had folk wisdom. He advised that they must not rush to do anything like this without Dev’s consent because if they did, the matter would take a bad turn if they had already done a court marriage. So, the fire of their anger burned for some time then it went completely away. Slowly the relatives started pouring in with their blessings for him and his wife. The sisters were never with Dev’s elder brother in this regard. They said that Dev was an intelligent boy so whatever he had done must be good for him, so they must express their happiness with Dev’s happiness.

I had met Dev Bharadwaj for the first time at the marriage ceremony of Bhushan Dhianpuri. I found him very gentle and friendly. We felt happy to talk to each other. Our common literary taste brought us closer. Later, I exchanged books that we read those days. We visited each other’s house so very often.

When I looked at Dev’s wife for the first time, I took her for a Bangali girl. She was in a black Saari. (Dev tells me that he loves people who are light black). Then, I had asked
Nirmala what was her name before their marriage. My question had obviously of upset her. She had skirted the straight answer to my question saying that what was there in a name. I thought that hers must be some Christian name. I knew that Dev had all these years have been calling her by the name of Nirmala. Now he simply calls her without saying the word Nirmala. Similarly, Nirmala calls Dev just by saying, ‘Listen’.

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Now some years after the above event, I am sitting with them to hear all this from them. More from the mouth of Nirmala than from Dev’s mouth as she takes more interest in this interesting tale of their love. The office, home, the children, the printing press, the souring of relations with his brother and relatives over their marriage, financial hardship and deterioration in the local literary society and absurdity in the contemporary life etc. etc. The earlier tint of freshness on her face was gone. Her loving smile too. Worries, complaints and tiredness now marked her face.

This pen sketch is the result of my years’ long association with Dev and his family. During this period, I have seen so many phases in their life. Dev is very honest and clean both in his life and in his writings. His self-control is remarkable. He is work alcoholic. I have learnt about so many Dev’s qualities from Nirmala which have made his image higher in my mind. Dev is a Brahman and Nirmala a Christian. She has studied in a convent school. When they were just married, Dev was translating Salome, a play by Oscar Wilde. You can say that Dev gave this translation to Nirmala as a gift upon their honeymoon. Nirmala helped Dev in this task too. After finishing Salome, Dev took to translating Endgame by Samuel Beckett. Nirmala showed utmost dedication to him with no let up under any circumstances. She is a good cook too. Dev’s fleshy cheeks are a ready proof.

“Once he teased me by pinching me too much. I got annoyed. Then, out of mischief, I said that I don’t love him and that I regret to have married him. Just as I said this, he stopped teasing me but he also stopped speaking with me.

“Did he stop eating also?” I asked.

“No. He can’t stop that. Eating is his passion. So, in one way I was good that it happened.”

“How?”

“He took to writing more vigorously. Story after story. But I couldn’t make anything out of his stories. His stories were as absurd as an engine-less car making the front of a hut.”

“Do you know Punjabi?”

“Yea. The very first thing he did after our marriage was to teach me Punjabi.”

“And the second?”

“The second and third are right in front of you.” I saw that both their sons were busy playing at upturning things in the house.

“Like Dev they eat too much and tease me too much.”

“Which of Dev’s habits do you like most?”
“All and none of them. In fact, his habits are extreme and hence unlikeable. For example, silence is good but extreme silence is worse than noise. Such is the case with his other habits.”

“When he writes, do you notice any change in his behavior?”

“When he is writing, he becomes a kind of deaf and dumb person. You ask him something but he answers something else. Sometimes whatever you ask his answer in invariably a yes. Sometimes this answer serves a purpose but many times his absent mindedness gets caught right away. For example, if I ask him which vegetable he will like tonight. He says yes. I say will he take a bath before taking tea. He says yes. When I hand him his towel and a cake of soap and ask him to take a bath then he asks when did he say that.”

“I say Dev ji will you again install printing press... he would say. I say will he eat poison he says yes. I say will he chock up my throat he says yes. I say will he throw in the garbage bin all the books lying in the rack, he says yes. Will he touch my feet? He says yes. I then ask him to touch my feet.”

I think Dev can act on all those yeses he promises to any one only if made by him in his full sense. He is such a man. More so, if he gets a good story on the page. What he means by a good story is a story that is too illusive to understand. A story which is as deep as his mind. Perhaps it would be absurd to put a label of an absurd story on his story. Dev loves abstractionism. He says that contemporary literature is flat and uninspired. It is superficial and one-sided. The real fiction is that which ably translates the concrete into an abstract. He is a worshipper of abstraction. He says he is engaged in catching the essence of the fleeting present moment. There is negation and irrationalism in his stories. Dev and his wife have unto them an immense love. It is another thing that he had to pay enormously in terms of his brother’s criticism for their love marriage. But he is happy. He has presented an ideal. Sitting in his house now, I see that there are one or two paintings hanging on the walls. They are depicting incidents about Christ’s life. I find that a Bible is also lying there and a cross.

“I do you go to Church?”

She said, “Yes.”

“Dev lets you willingly go or not?” I asked.

She told that he never forbade her to go there.

“Dev do you believe in religion?”

“Have you read my story, ‘I’?”

“I have read that but in that you have simply criticized the traditional modes of religion. It does not attack a belief in God.”

“Every age has its own God. What I take the word God for, here, for is not God figure but the natural order. I am, talking of a personal God. My views resemble somewhat Camus and Nietzsche’s.”

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“Tell me something about Dev?”

“He talks very little. He talks only at the time of sitting for taking the dinner or at the time of going to sleep. The day he speaks less, he writes more. He likes to read books. But his reading choice is very queer. He reads a different kind of stuff. A tough kind which is

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difficult to understand. He writes the same way. I have been able to understand only some
of his stories, those too after he explained them to me. Some of his stories are just Greek to
me like, ‘The Poison of 24 Hours’, and ‘Lizard at the mouth of a scythe’. His story, ‘I’ is the
one like most.

I saw that Dev had meanwhile undergone a kind of reverie listening to his wife praising
his work. He was peeling onions, sitting on the bare floor, wearing a lungi. Those days Dev
had let his moustaches grown.

“Does he read his stuff to you?”

“He likes to read out his stories to me. But I like reading stories of writers of my own
choice. But I must listen to his stuff too. I try to understand the things he writes. Now I have
become habitual to get used to all this. But the children sometimes don’t let me read. In the
early days of our marriage, we enjoyed a lot. Going to the cinema so many times in a month,
longish love talks, sound sleep just everything one needs in life.

“What is the routine these days?”

“We get up quite early. Usually I make tea and food. He is very fond of eating delicious
dishes. When children get up, I prepare them their meal. Then I help them in the washroom.
But if I accidently start to talk of the printing press, he gets upset. That is his main sore point,
his main pain.”

The printing press has always been Dev’s main weakness. He has loved the printing
press the most and now he hates it most. He wanted to become a publisher of Punjabi
books. He sold his share of landed property at his village Marar in Gurdaspur dist. of Punjab
and invested that money on setting up Gugloo printing press in Sector 10 in Chandigarh and
later shifted it to Sector 15. Maybe it would have turn into success but soon after he received
the eviction orders from the Chandigarh Administration which prohibited to run printing
press from residential areas. He had sold it after incurring a back breaking loss.

“What influences if any Nirmala has made on you”? I said to Dev.

“By nature I am such a kind who is quite averse to getting influenced by any one so
easily. That way, I am hard-skinned. I had a need of a life partner who could fulfill my bodily
needs but could let my mind remain with me. I take my mind as a very sacred kind of thing.
I am happy that Nirmala has never tried to encroach upon that. She has never ventured into
that territory.”

“Does not all this mean that your relationship is only corporeal and not spiritual?”

“No. I have great respect for the relation between the soul and the body.”

“Dev if you were given a chance for another life would you choose Nirmala again?”

Dev went into long silence. He stopped peeling onions and sat up gathering his lungi.
Now he looked taller. His eyes didn’t give the impression that he was averse to my asking
him such questions. But he kept his silent. After a pause that seemed longer to me, he got
up, looked up his watch, and drank a glass of water. During this moment, he was as if
born again and had taken up the hand of Nirmala with more deep conviction and passion.
But what he actually said was something like this: “Gurdev, I could have told you a lie and
thus could have saved myself. But the truth is as dear to me as it must be to you or for
anybody. I have taken more time in telling you with due honesty and satisfaction that what I have done in this life I would like to do the same in the same situation and circumstances in my next lives. When I married Nirmala my father and mother both were already dead. I rested content offering all my love to my only brother but I felt that my brother was helpless to reciprocate my love due to his wife. What I needed drastically at that time was parental care.

I let this matter stay here, lingering on as it were forever, as Dev does to each story of his. He says that life itself is like this, incomplete and in a state of being unfinished. This very thing makes our life more beautiful, the limit of time lending it more longing, more attraction.

I turn to Dev’s wife. She is now busy at cooking something in the kitchen. I fall silent and let the clouds of things we were discussing disappear in the thin air. Both their sons were now looking for Nirmala. She reappeared from the kitchen.

“Nirmala do you have any grouse against Dev?”

“Yes I have one. It is a big one. It is that he still loves me too much. I see now there is no need of such passion of love. Happily, both our two sons have left no need for that kind of indulgence.

It seemed to me, that in the case of Dev, Nirmala is clean as her very name means. She does not mince her words. Some people believe that Dev had chosen his better half rather in a haste. To this, Dev has a readymade answer. He laughingly says that why one should not make haste while the sun shines. Both life and time are fleeting. Time has only one knot of hair on his bald head. I don’t think Dev has done any wrong by catching that knot.

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The above Zikray Khair (A happy pen-portrait) of Dev Bhardwaj’s wife, Nirmala, was penned after it was sponsored by Amrita Pritam, almost 40 years ago. It was published in the late seventies in her famous literary magazine, ‘Nagmani’ and later also included in Hindi translation in a book. So, obviously, it has become very old. But as they say the old is gold. I read it again few months back, I was overwhelmed with a feeling of pleasure and pain for the lost time. So, only we get old, not the writing on the page of time. Now, I take pleasure to add few words to that piece to make it updated. I have not revised it as then it would have lost its time-bound grace and charm.

So far Dev’s life after that period piece is concerned, he has progressed manifold on his chosen path. But so far, his literary and social doings and personal habits and tastes are concerned, he has refused to change and has managed equally successfully to remain the same old Dev of early seventies which were the beginning years of his literary and social cultural career. The same can be said about his wife, Nirmala.

We know more and more with the passing of time that life is itself a great period piece. It has got more to do with time then with space-related but personal events. I have been a witness to the fact all these years Dev-Nirmala family has been on the forefront in all manners and matters of social, cultural and intellectual path. Both their sons are accomplished in their own fields as are their wives. Both his sons have gone after Dev for inter-religion
and inter-caste love marriages. His one son is in the USA practicing in the field of computer engineering. The younger is a practicing commercial artist now working from home on web art and design. His wife is a journalist. Both have at one time been working together in Chandigarh Editions of the Indian Express and later in the Hindustan Times. Both their granddaughters from their younger son have received immense love and care in the hands of Nirmala, who is now no more.

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Nirmala was very social when it came to Dev’s friends and her own brothers and sisters-in-laws. Being elder in her parental family, she was looked to by all in the extended family with respect and awe. This very year I had come from Canada to meet with our daughter, grandson and other relatives and friends. We also wanted to celebrated first Lohri of our grandson, Samar, at our native place.

On Lohri day, we were in Mohali busy in the family Lohri function. I thought of meeting with Dev and his family anytime the week next to Lohri day. To make the best use of our family time together we had arranged a three-in-one fast track trip to the Goden Temple, our ancestral village and Anandpur Sahib all this starting from the very next day after Lohri. We started very early and we were just crossing Ropar that I found a message from Dev on my phone saying that Nirmala has passed away the previous night all of a sudden.

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Now Dev is left alone. His children and grand children can not fill the gap left by Nirmala in his life. He is unable to swallow the naked fact that she is no more. But as we know such separations are the fact and part of life. The sufferings make the life dear and more precious. We believe that Nirmala has truly refused to go from Dev’s life and mind and has become a forever thing or phenomenon.

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The other day I met the wife of a CEO of an academic organisation. I was praising her husband and she said that she does nothing. I was aghast! I said, “How can you do nothing when you are looking after your growing son and taking care of the house so that your husband can concentrate on his professional life?” Yes many homemakers think that they do nothing. A housewife or homemaker as they are called today does so much for her family. If the amount of work they do is listed it will make up hundreds of volumes of a book.

So our society needs to change its attitude to homemakers. They are mothers, they are wives who are devoted and dedicated. Their devotion has no comparison. They work tirelessly whole day but get no salary, no perks or benefits. A few lines from a lovely anonymous poem “I am the keeper” show what a mother does..... I am the keeper of schedules, of practises, games and lessons; of projects, parties and dinners; of appointments and homework assignments. We all need to respect homemakers who have and are sacrificing so much for the smooth running of their families. Praises, gratitude and love are what they want and deserve.

I get emotional when I think about my mother. She had always looked after us with so much love. I may quote a few lines from my poem, “My Mother”........

Your values, your virtues,
Your sacrifices, your talents.
Have all come down to me.
Have empowered me
And made me the real ME.

Yes a mother, a homemaker not only helps and supports her family physically but strengthens them with values and virtues and empowers them. No wonder that the 2017 Miss World contest was won by Manushi Chillar when she answered that the profession which deserves the highest salary is that of a mother.

So homemakers cheer up! Do not take yourselves to be less as you are the fulcrum of the family. Just as a see-saw is able to be stable with a fulcrum so are your dear ones stable and sound because you are there to support and be with them always.

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A LETTER TO MY DAUGHTER

Sevdija Demirova Abdulova (Mecadonia)

My life is a kaleidoscope. This December I am turning 42. If I look at myself in the mirror I won’t see much. That’s why I prefer to use my Kaleidoscope. It’s very colorful and plain with interesting stories. So, this is one story that gathers many small ones.

Dear Gemma, the moments that I am going to share with you are very precious. Forgive me that I have told you only parts of them, sometimes I was using them to teach you lessons, sometimes they were your punishment, sometimes they were your reward. This time you can put many pieces in one place and you will understand better the life.

When I was young I thought that being part of one people is not important at all. I was Romani girl that grew up in a country that was falling apart and I spent my teenage days in a new independent country formed as a small part of my previous big homeland. I wasn’t thinking much of the difference between living in Yugoslavia and Macedonia. I had to study, I was following my path. My path was very straight those days. School, coffees with my three best friends, parties at weekends… It was so good, so painless, so innocent. My mom was giving me pocket money every day and for the weekends, my father was tripling the amount I was given from my mom. You see, we never had financial struggling. Daddy was a clerk with a good pay, mom was working only to fulfill her free time, money were not important to her.

But, everything changed when I enrolled University. That first day as an academic citizen was my first day as journalist in Roma News Department in Macedonian television. For couple of years I was fighting with myself. Before that I didn’t pay any attention of my origin, but working for Romani audience has awakened in me different feelings. So, I started my fight for the rights of Roma women. I was everywhere - I followed events, stories, conferences, seminars, workshops. I was eager to learn about my roots, about our motherland India and the reason why we had left her.

While I was using every single minute of my life to learn more about my people’s past, you were with me. I didn’t want to bother your grand-mothers to look after you, so you were with me as a special guest of almost every cultural event I was visiting. When I was working, I was spotting a familiar face and asking if they could look after you. And this is how you were learning with me. These moments were very precious to me. I was working hard, I was learning new things, I was spending my time with you and you were learning almost the same things as me. Being a good wife, a good daughter and daughter-in-law, a good mother and at the same time to pay attention on your carrier and your education was not easy. I hated easy things, so the most difficult tasks for me were not dangerous, I just loved them.

But, being a Romani woman, especially before 20 years was something that bring me into tears. Thank God I am very strong person! I was a revolutionary woman, something like Jeanne D’Arc, Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxembourg, just not in the same sample. When
I got married, Romani daughter-in-laws in the Romani families were supposed to be housewives, to work all the domestic duties, not to talk too much, not to tell their opinion, they were not allowed to visit their parents more than one day for the weekends and their parents should have come to visit their daughters ones a week as well. They reminded me on a situation when you are watching TV and the voice is muted. I was probably one of the first daughter-in-laws that had a job and I took my liberty to act independently. I was lucky that my husband was very supportive. He respected my freedom, my hunger to learn, to fill my heart and soul with knowledge. Other members of our family clan were not supportive at all. They were trying to tide me up in a leash. Lucky for me, I was persistent. They couldn’t make me do things that were opposite to my beliefs. So, I stayed solid on my feet and continued to do the things I best knew.

My dear Gemma, tradition should be respected, but when a tradition is opposite to your beliefs and it causes you pain, than you should follow your heart. This is how you got your name. I followed my heart and I made a combination of tradition and modern. Many of us don’t understand the real meaning of tradition. Many of us are stuck in the past. For me, tradition should be in our lives only to remind us who we are and from where we have come. The tradition should be continued with making new things that will become a tradition to the next generations.

For me, the best way to make new tradition was to help many young Romani girls to understand their rights. They have right to educate, to be academic citizens, to be working woman, to become what they dream to be, to have dreams and to fulfill them. I worked in each of my activity with many young girls. I motivated them to be strong, to be independent, to learn and study, to be modern and very proud. After years of working on emancipation of Roma women in Macedonia, I am very happy to see through my Kaleidoscope many Romani women that are now role-models for younger generations. We have, doctors, MA’s, lawyers, actresses, nurses, police officers, NGO activists…

And, do you know, which is the greatest success for me? My colorful Kaleidoscope has shown to me that all the things I wanted to give as knowledge to many Romani girls, now I can see as a reflection in the mirror when I see you. Yes, you become all I was struggling to achieve for years. You are University student, you are very active in Romani students movements, you are fighting for gender equality, you respect the values of family, you are a brilliant sister and an idol to your little brother, you stand for your rights and you are not afraid to share your opinion and to tell others when they are wrong. You know that the key of success or the key to happiness is to follow your dreams and to find ways to follow your heart and not to be afraid to be a world’s citizen. When I look into your eyes I see a song ready to be sung! And I feel very calm because I know that this song will enchant the world! La la la la la…

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MOTHER’S AFFECTION AND BLESSINGS

Gargi Saha (Hyderabad-Telangana)

Mother is the most adorable, benevolent, sweet, kind person in the world. From the spur a mother conceives she knows every heartbeat, every cry, every laughter of her child. The relation is very rum and amazing of a child and mother. Whenever the infant awakens with a loud cry the mother cuddles him and to quench his thirst magically the milk flows. A mother comprehends her children’s needs right from their birth down the ages.

A mother not only gives birth of her child despite insurmountable obstacles, but also nourishes him selflessly just as a river enriches all the habitats within, near and surrounding it. A mother attends to all the child’s needs through thick and thin without any hassle. She loves, cares, soothes, blesses, forgives, helps, befriends always to her children thus attaining divinity here and above.

Whoever is called by the name of mother feels grateful, honoured and revered and is eager to maintain its status.

A women in her fifties came to stay in my friend’s house as a nanny to her child Rishi. Rishi was then a play group going child of two and a half years old in his swaddling clothes who amused us by his sweet antics. However on befriending the lady I used to call her “Mashi” meaning Mother’s sister who is no less than a ‘Mom’ in every aspect of the term.

However Mashi loved us all and was a well-wisher of our family. We loved children very much but was barren till we met Rishi. We become a fan of Rishi’s sweet words, gestures and his intelligence. Rishi’s mother was a working lady and she could not spend much time with him and Rishi longed for a mother’s love, affection, solidarity, patience and mercy. Whenever Rishi came from school he wished to be hugged by the arms of a mother. When he fell down he wished to be nursed. Whenever he cried, he wanted a mom to wipe his tears. When he was hungry, he wanted to be fed by mother’s hands. But all his wishes were perhaps half-heartedly fulfilled by a nanny. Since we loved children very much, in Rishi and Mashi’s leisure hours they used to drop in and make our days delightful, cheerful and lovely. Realizing our love for Rishi, Mashi ardently aspired for our parenthood. Miraculously our lonely, desperate, dark hours blossomed into pools of joy, jubilance, laughter, cheer and mirth as a tiny tot swept into our arms sooner.

However, love and blessings knows no boundaries. Today by God’s grace even by an unknown Mashi’s prayers and blessings have helped us to attain parenthood. Blessings never fall short to transform a desert into deep lush greenery. Blessings have no boundaries, be it of the rich or poor, high or low, elites or laymen, illiterates or wizards.

A mom is and will always remain a ‘mom’. None can replace her. A million vows and debts to her which can’t ever be repayed. You are Mother and will always remain a monument of unageing intellect.

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MOTHER’S ROLE IN ISLAM

Anjuman Ara Shilpi (Bangladesh)

A good mother has outstanding qualities. No one can replace her in the life of her children. Mother’s word is very sweet. There is no one on earth in this world. A Muslim mother has a valued and dignified role. Her contribution is acknowledged and appreciated.

Every society is made up of blocks of family units. The stronger each block is, the stronger the structure of the society. Families are thus the building blocks upon which rests the fate of society. For the development of good families, the mother plays a vital role. Many women today have aspirations of progress in their careers, and degrees in various fields.

However it is indisputable that the most important achievement of a mother is the raising of sensible, virtuous children who will then move on to build other strong blocks for society. It has been said that it is easy to bear children but it is difficult to raise them well. In that lies the challenge for all mothers.

Her unparalleled gifts to the child have been aptly described by Imam Zaynul ‘Abidin (a) in Risalatul Huqooq – The Chapter of Rights.

It is the right of your mother that you should appreciate that she carried you [in her womb] the way nobody carries anybody. She fed you the fruits of her heart which nobody feeds anybody. She protected you [during pregnancy] with her ears, eyes, hands, legs, hair, limbs, [in short] with her whole being, gladly, cheerfully, and carefully; suffering patiently all the worries, pains, difficulties, and sorrows.

Till the hand of ALLAH removed you from her and brought you into this world. Then she was most happy, feeding you forgetting her own hunger, clothing you even if she herself had no clothes, giving you milk and water not caring for her own thirst, keeping you in the shade, even if she had to suffer from the heat of the sun, giving you every comfort with her own hardships; lulling you to sleep while keeping herself awake.

The foundation of the family is laid with the decision to marry, and the importance of the mother is evident in Islamic teachings beginning with marriage, conception and then child rearing.

ALLAH says in Sura Luqman:

And We have enjoined man in respect of his parents - his mother bears him with faintings upon faintings, and his weaning takes two years - saying: “Be grateful to Me and to both your parents, to Me is the eternal coming. (31:14)

And in Sura Ahqaf He says:

And We have enjoined on man doing of good to his parents; with troubles did his mother bear him and with troubles did she bring him forth; and the bearing and the weaning of him was thirty months. (46:15)
In both the above verses, although both parents are mentioned, the mother is singled out as she bears a greater responsibility and ultimately a greater reward.

Two mothers are mentioned by name in the Qur’an. When Bibi Maryam, the mother of Nabi Isa (a) suffered the pangs of childbirth, she wished she was dead. She was all alone and worried about what was about to happen to her. At that time ALLAH consoled her and told her not to grieve. She was provided with fresh dates and water. She was also told to fast for three days by abstaining from talk, and ALLAH made the baby talk to prove that he was a miraculous baby (19:23-26).

The mother is shown concern and consideration for her state. ALLAH does not abandon her, or reprove her by telling her that she is privileged to give birth to a Prophet. Although that was true, motherhood entails great difficulty, a fact recognized by the Qur’an.

Another mother mentioned by the Qur’an is the mother of Prophet Musa (a). When she was told to put her baby in the river, she was given an assurance that the baby would be returned to her. Allah knows the love of the mother, and knows it is difficult to give away one’s child.

When the baby was picked up by Firawn’s wife, he refused to suck the milk of any foster mother. Prophet Musa’s sister then suggested that they try her mother. Mother and baby unite, and ALLAH’s promise was fulfilled. (Sura TaHa 37-40, Qasas 7-13)

As Muslims, we are commanded to obey, honour, and respect our parents in our entire lifetime except when it comes to the disobedience of Allah. Unlike other religions, Islam raised the status of parents especially our mothers. A man came to Prophet Muhammed and asked him who he should obey after obeying Allah and his Messenger; Prophet Muhammed told him your mother, your mother, your mother and then your father. Is it the right of a parent to be loved and respected but with every right comes a responsibility. The role of parents in Islam does not stop at providing basic necessities for their children; it is something more than that because in the day of judgement, Allah the Almighty is going to question you about how you brought up your children. Children have the right to be educated, guided, scolded, fed, loved and provided for. In this generation we are living in, parents need to get close to their children, they need to be friends with them because if they are not close to them, society will raise their kids. The future of a child depends on the teachings given to them by their parents.

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PERSONALLY SPEAKING

K. S. Sivakumaran (Sri Lanka)

This is a biographical short account of my close relatives of the womankind. I was not fortunate in having born with sisters.

As a Hindu professing Saivaisam in Sri Lanka, I believe in the mighty Goddess, Aadhi Para Shakthi who is also known by different names assuming different attributes to perform different forms: Lakshmi, Saraswathi, Kaali et al.

Women - I see them as incarnation of Shakthi. Therefore I respect them in the form of my own mother, wife, daughters-in law and grandchildren and my friends.

My mother bore five boys including me. I was the eldest. Two of my younger brothers were twins. They all are no more. Only I am left with. I was a Caesarian child. My parents married late. I learned later my mother labored hard to bring me up. I loved my mother dearly for all what she has done for me whenever I had fallen ill several times until my teenage. As any mother in the similar situations she sacrificed all her comforts to bring me and two of my brothers. One of the twins and another brother died very early in their infancy.

I learnt from my mother to be patient, endure, be hospitable and cheerful, and to entertain others.

I got married when I was 29. I was a very shy person until I got married. My wife was educated and petty, honest, bold and strict since she was a teacher. I learnt from her neatness, perfection, how to argue over even silly things, simplicity and the idea of giving lavishly to the needy, appreciating Carnatic Music. Old Thamil and Hindi films and the like. My wife’s name is Pushpa Vilochani.

My older daughter in law is Michele, an American. I learnt from her sophistication. Never give up anything and we should try several times to achieve the goals.

The other daughter in law is Sharee, an Australian. She taught me to appreciate aesthetic things like painting, music, theatre, films and the like.

I have three grand children who are girls Maya, my eldest son’s daughter who is 14 and Shyama and Meera, my second son’s daughters who are 12 and 8 respectively. They taught me how to understand the young mind.

All in all these seven old and little women shaped my personality unknowingly and I respect them as representative of Mother Goddess.

The woman power is superior and therefore deserve to be respected and revered.

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THE WONDER OF A WOMAN

Miss Sankalpita Mullick (Mumbai-Maharashtra)
(15 years old)

It isn’t a wonder that there isn’t one particular statement or expression to define a woman. A woman ranges from a daughter to a mother, from a professional or a business person to a home-maker but whatever she may be, every woman is truly a wonder. Women have fought a lot of battles of discrimination due to their gender from the ancient battle against Sati to the modern one of equal pay. Inspite of all hardships and sacrifices, women stand tall and proud. Throughout the world women have been known to have limitless strength, courage, determination and potential whether it is Malala, P.V.Sindhu or Marie Curie.

I admire all women. I am constantly in awe of my mother, Dr. Paramita Mukherjee Mullick is a multifaceted lady. She is academically brilliant being a national scholar and had done her Ph.D. in Genetic Toxicology with the coveted CSIR scholarship. She had been a lecturer of a college and a principal of a junior college. She is an educationist with NABET, a government of India concern. Apart from her academics she can sing well, she paints and of course! She is quite well known as a poet. My Ma is my role model....wish I can be like her when I grow up, beautiful externally and a beautiful inner being.

My grandmother, Mrs. Sima Mukherjee, is another woman par excellence. My maternal grandmother is the embodiment of strength and courage. She is an author and a mother of four. She has also had a short stint in politics. She is a 21st century warrior who has extensive knowledge of sword-fighting and horse-riding. There isn’t a limit to her talents whether it is being a champion in the whole of Bengal in poetry recitation or being a Rabindra Sangeet exponent or cooking mouth-watering cuisines. She has also done a lot of research in the field of Sociology. Now she is battling dementia but every time I see her, she is positive and strong.

There is a need for equality and upliftment of women or feminism because women are the basis of society and all of mankind.

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MY GRANDMOTHER
Samra Syed (Barielly - Uttar Pradesh)
(Class-X)

My grandmother, Dr. Shagufta Ghazal is about 60 years old. Yet she is very active. She has a slim and healthy body. She still walks straight. She uses glasses for reading. She loves me very much. She has a great affection for us. She is very gentle too. She is never angry with me. She gets up daily at about 5 a.m. After morning calls she takes bath, prays to God and reads the Quran for about two hours. Then she goes to her office. She is a Police Inspector in LIU department. She is also a poetess, script writer, fiction-writer, ghazal and songs writer. She also attends cultural and literary programmes. She has also participated in several International Writers’ Festival and Conferences. I must say she is very talented. She believes in simple living and high thinking. She takes simple food. She is fond of tea. She is very soft-spoken. In our locality also she is respected by all for her gentleness and sweet language. All the people call her ‘Amma’ with great respect. She is my ideal.

In future I want to be like her only. I really can’t imagine life without her. Without her I am nothing. I love her so much. At the end I would say that I wish that both of us to be together in all the times to come.

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SURJIT’S POETRY GIVING NEW MEANING TO FEMINISM
Jatinder Aulakh (Amritsar-Punjab)

Feminist poetry usually talks about injustice to women. Most of the Punjabi women poetry addresses to the sufferings of Indian women under the patriarchal system. This is the main tone of Punjab’s female poets. When I started to read the book of Surjit, a poet of Punjabi origin, settled in Canada, I thought that it would be the same as others’, but when I went deep into it, then I realised that it is completely different than other female poets.

Until now Surjit has published three poetry books, ‘Shikasht Rang’, ‘Hey Sakhi’ and ‘Vismaad’. She has good recognition among the Punjabi communities associated with poetry. Soon after a glance I was compelled to read her poetry throughout.

Once Surjit talked to me about her poetry, my question was that, why your poetry is free from all common categories like Diaspora, Feminism, Progressiveness etc? She replied that poetry is the dialect of mind and relates to all aspects of life. Nature of human mind is volatile so human’s ideology is always variable.

She studied various spiritual and social ideologies and now strongly believe that peace and harmony always reside in human heart and it starts flowing with meditation and we can have full control over our thoughts.

Phone: 98376-47221
When her career and life was disturbed after a political upheaval in India in 1984, she migrated to Thailand with her family and began working as a teacher there. After residing for 10 years in Thailand she migrated to USA and now she is settled in Canada with her family. Surjit’s husband Mr. Piara Singh Kudowal too is a Punjabi poet. Her only son Fatehjit Singh known as Fateh Doe is a well known rap singer and came in limelight after acting in many famous Punjabi and English singer’s music albums.

Surjit’s book ‘Hey Sakhi’ is a philosophy of her own mind and life. She has a quest for knowing more about life and beyond. She tries to find answers not from external world or society but from within, the inner core of her heart and soul. When she feels completely frustrated with the wrong doings of this world, Surjit takes a refuse in spirituality. She did deep meditation for few years and revealed that happiness stays within. So book ‘Hey Sakhi’, is a quest for truth, life and death and soul. This book depicts the universe and describes human existence in this endless universe:

...How vast is the universe
How little is our earth?
Drop is ignorant of
Vastness of the ocean.(Hey Sakhi’)

Another poem from ‘Shikasht Rang’:

...Far away, at the firmament
There is a glowing light.
And
I am unaware that
It will burn me
Like a moth in candle light.
Or perhaps!
It will enlighten my path.

Surjit told me that we should enjoy every moment of life. She also revealed that she still is in quest. And on this soul journey poetry is her cummer….her soul mate.

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=================================
RED
Aleksandar Nikolic (Serbia)

You’re in a red dress with wine, which of you two is stronger in love for me? With that red color under my skin you came in and I so want to be awake with you. What has this room for the two of us? You jump from the door to me and kiss me with all the power of devotional passion, your eyes are in despair, the lips are red with wine and I know I should fall on them. But I do not know whether it is happiness or a curse Because you can only show me the taste of these love starties. How the glass is coming to its bottom as well as my desire for you. Can I put you inside me like a mine? And forever to have you with me..

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***

FRITTER’S HONEY
(To my mother with love and respect)
Alicia Minjarez Ramírez (Morroco)
Translated by: Alaric Gutiérrez

She kneads in the flour her little girl song. Memories in the air, tactile smells of clove-cinnamon, remains of dawns over green meadows; treasures in cotton sacks yearnings filled up and sterile that never grow. She kneads in the flour utopian blue suns. More than tortillas she extends small fish rivulets; dismiss her bare feet bathed in frost while she rinses childhood voids, digs short stories from the cupboard and tears refuse to stay or go brown sugar loaf dissolves the sorrows, melodic essences fly away like a chased kite through endless golden avenues.

She kneads in the flour captivated pebbles among ball-and-stick toys scarf tips. Ethereal weaver of dormant passions; odours meanwhile pave the wind, the lightness of silence blurs away her smile.

She kneads in the flour long gone illusions saved by time. It rains in her broken sky, chords with no sound where poetry converges. Soaking chimeras my mother prepares
a sweet syrup  
upon the aromatic oil  
of fritters.  

I DREAM TO BE A WOMAN  
Anis Mohammad  
(Bangladesh)

I dream to be a woman  
Like a weaver-bird  
I also want a house of tender grass  
In the bosom of palmyra leaves.  
I had also a dream like a woman  
I had also a sky like a dream  
I had also water-fowls,  
yellow-breasted singing birds  
And small shades of sparrows.  
I also like flowers, rivers and cloud  
I also love butterflies  
and sweet notes of pigeons  
Like a woman heavy water-falls  
also roll from my eyes.

I dream to be a woman  
Like a rabbit I also want soft grass,  
lady’s finger, turmeric,  
Small sour fruits, cucumber and carrot.  
I also dive into the lake,  
into the sky, into the dove  
Embrace the young hands of water-lily.  
Flocks of wet diver-birds  
also flutter within my soul  
I also nurse in me mild melody of violins  
Water-lotus laughs in my mind  
Bride-chambers of kingfishers  
also abound in my chest  
I also want to eat unsweetened pie  
in the kissing rays of the sun.

I dream to be a woman  
I also like folk-music  
in the virgin breeze of dawn  
I also like to inhale the sweet scent of saffron  
bathed in dew  
I also have heart, heartache  
and the taste of pomeloes.  
At the dead of night

---

ME  
Angelova Olga  (Russia)

Mountain ash has become bright red,  
The maple leaves have absorbed the sun!  
What a great happiness  
To realize myself fall in love,  
To realize myself beloved  
And every fiber of me to feel  
How is pulling me irresistibly  
In the arms to rush again!  

***

TREES IN FRUITFULNESS  
Anjuman Ara Shilpi  (Bangladesh)  
Translation: Anis Mohammad

No one thinks differently,  
Are women nothing but fruitful trees?  
No one even bothers  
if she dies burning in desire,  
No one tries to discover  
the full moon of their truth;  
Everybody ignores the fact;  
Every vein of every people  
carries women’s blood.  
That’s why  
In demand of equal rights,  
Women erupt like volcanoes,  
How long will this giant discrimination perish  
women’s desire!

***
I also hear the sweet note of cuckoos
I love seeing the beauty of night
while undressing its black clothes.
Herds of deer also call me
in the night of full moon
I also love the green, drops of rain
and the whistle of magpie robin
I also want rainbow-colored flute
built with youthful leaves of jackfruit trees
Within my spirit yellow hearts of Hilsa fish
dance in the season of rain.

I dream to be a woman
Like a burning ground,
funeral pyres also flare up in my soul
Millions of un conquered flowers
giggle in amusement
Within me dance fire, winter, autumn
and red flowers of dark-complexioned trees
Mango-buds toss and bend
Silk-cotton and evergreen trees dance
in jocund mood.
Spring glitters in me and white geese float
I also have dawn, dew and dance of autumn
I am filled to the brim
with the chorus of crickets,
Fire of fire-fly and the lonely anguish
of late-autumn-paddy.

I dream to be a woman
I wish I were a brother like uterine sisters
I also have wombs of melody
And all the love a wooden flute can produce
Like a visionary, I also create, revolt
and burst out in passion.
For million years have I been watching
aggression on women?
I have turned sick of seeing the
torrent torment over female-folk
As if mistrust and misfortune
were other name of man’s face.
Man is not animal;
rascals are meaner than the meanest beast;
As I am born as a son of my parents
I undertake the legacy of being man
Billion times have I been raped
through all my blood-cells and veins
I am bleeding with acute affliction,
pain and pangs
Why shall black image of cowards be
looked for in my eyes?

***

THAT TIME
Anuradha Bhattacharyya (Chandigarh)

Vital shower of caresses
Like the storm of flowers
Sprinkled in colourful splendor
In green tree-shade.

Voluptuous embrace
Like the scream of a waterfall
Echoing through the green foliage
Of summer cool siesta.

Glorious applause
For all that I did and never deserved
For all that I was and never revealed
And for my presence.

A vanishing queen
Like a dewdrop in the sun,
A time before my eyes,
There, my mother.

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***
AN ALCHEMIST
Ayathurai Santhan (Sri Lanka)

An Alchemist turning
Superman out of simpleton!
An embodiment of will of steel
In delicate form of frail!
A source of strength,
Anchor of ship,
And a main spring to any machine,
Like a building’s foundation,
Bearing load of whole family,
Or even many generations!
The maker of world who
Makes world worth of living in!
What other ways could one tell?
What other ways could one tell?
How many adjectives do we need?
No word would ever suffice full,
To marvel at any woman’s worth!

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**

DEAR MOM IN HEAVEN
(In Loving Memory of My Mother Girija Pathak)
Banajit Pathak (Assam)

What you have given
Is precious
And as bright as
The sunshine is
You have even
Overcome death
And spread its
Perfume to horizons
Mother,
As I march throughout the expedition of life
I memorize how you helped me to develop
With adore, reality and sincerity
I judge how you depicted me vision
To decide the true path

With ideals, ethics and moral philosophies
I learn how you speculated my actuality
To widened the extent
With ambition and mind power
My spirit still aches with sorrow
Secret tears still run
What is destined to say I adore you
Nobody can ever identify
It’s now you are not perceptible
To observe with human eye
Except speak in stillness
Strength will respond
To memorize all the cheerful times
Life still has a lot in hoard
As you will by no means be forgotten
I swear to you at the moment
A hollowed place inside my mind
Wherever you will always continue
All the way through existence
You are always close me.

<Ph. 96781-83886>

***

WOMAN
Batukdas Nimavat (Ahmedabad-Gujarat)

It is you from where I emerged
You shaped me in your womb
And kept me alive.
You fed me
You nurtured me
I kicked at the walls of your womb.
You never complained
Kept smiling
And waited for me
Day and night.
You went through death like
Pain when I pushed my way out.
You saw me
Touching my tiny soft body.  
You suckled me  
With the ambrosia of your breast.  

I soon grew into a man  
Enveloped into the amnesia of patriarchy.  
I was proud of my manhood  
Thinking that I was born to dominate.  

Now I am an old man  
My knees make me limp  
My eyes are hazy and tired  
Now I feel  
You were my strength  
You were my life.  
Without you  
I am  
Like a blade  
Of grass  
Amidst the raging storm of life.  

In simple unadulterated conjugal love,  
Dear to one, like bliss divine.  

While giving you all worldly things  
Within my capacity, I kept a part of me  
Reserved to myself in my crazy quest,  

Hoping at the same time to keep you smiling,  
To see you satisfied and cheerful  
While you move around me.  

Not interested in any other thing, you waited  
Silently for that part, my errant poetic heart,  
That I thought, you might not take care of.  

But you nursed it and cared, I did not see.  
You shared all my sorrow and like a shadow  
You followed all along the path I fared.  

Little did I know that it was me  
Your lips murmured in silence  
When you were all alone.  

Far and wide I travelled, saw many a hue  
As I roamed in my world of imagination  
And gathered experiences new.  

But each time I felt hurt and exhausted,  
I came back to you, my loving, artless wife,  
And got your cool comfort in all  
strain and strife.  

I still remember that fateful day, so sad,  
When once in a fit of anger I threw away  
All that I had written, all that I had preserved.  

I was spell bound to see what you did.  
You were crying and crying  
but at the same time  
Collecting from the ground  
those scattered sheets  

With utmost care, collecting, as it were,  
The scattered fragments of myself,  
Though you never understand  
a word of what I write.  

---

A TRIBUTE TO MY WIFE MANJU
Bipin Patsani (Odisha)

Your silent acceptance,  
Your tears tell everything,  
That you could not say through the years.  

The daughter of a rich Land Lord,  
Choosing a home of no much means,  
Quietly you loved me and never said so.  

All that you cared for was my happiness.  
My choice was your choice,  
my voice your own.  
You didn’t dream of a different dawn,  

Nor did you ever seek salvation  
In the words of any enlightened being,  
As in your perception, I was everything;  
The meaning and purpose of living  

---

Kafka Intercontinental/2017/43
You nurtured the hope all the years of your life
With your tears, that I would understand you one day,
Since I am a poet of some sort, if not great.

And see, the poor poet has taken an entire life
To give due recognition to the infinite love
Of a simple village lass who became his wife.

You have been a part of me,
an inseparable part.
Do I need to say “I will do this for you,
I will do that?”
No my wife, my mother, my sister;
one life is insufficient.

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***

A WOMAN

Biplab Majee (West Bengal)

A woman may bring you to a dream
(She) may bring you to a nightmare
Transforming you into water a woman may play piano
Or becoming a piano she can ask you to play piano
Whatever language of the world translates a woman
A woman carries the load of half of this world
A woman can light up an oven
Again carring an AK-47 on the shoulder
She can lead the world forward
A woman if wishes become a good dream of yours. ...

(Translated from Bengali by Nandita Bhattacharya
<mbiplab@rediffmail.com>

***

THE MOTHER

C. D. Singh (Bihar)

A poor widow in rags
Lying on a very loose and broken cot
Before her cottage is nothing
Her five years old son
Chewing dried up bread
Sitting on the ground nearby her cot.
The baby looked up at the mother
And said “Mum, get me somesalt”.
All the earthen pots
Cottage were empty.
The mother moaned because of poverty
As she was not capable to serve
Even salt to her baby.
That moment, she burst into tears and the drops
Fell on the dried up bread.
Snatching the bread the baby said gladly, “Mum, now I need no salt”.
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***

HOMAGE TO MAA

C. L. Khatri (Bihar)

I was holding her in my arms
In the icy winter morning
Her breath slipped out of my hands
My numb fingers could not hold her
My palms were greasy, vision hazy.
They got smeared with sand and soil
Of the fibrous roots of the fallen tree
Stream of tears washed the roots clean
Only salt survived in the quaint eyes
I lost myself in the maze of memory.

Every cleaned root told me a tale
Of her petal like hand on my head
Of her tears and kisses
Of her frolicking fairy tales
Of her lullabies lulling me to sleep.

She was standing like Mother Mary
Feeding me from her breast
Alas! I could not be her Christ
She bore the Cross all through her life
I slept in peace, bloomed in spring.

Her glowing figure flashed in my tears
Mopping floor bent on her knees
Cooking food on chulha\(^1\) fed with cow dung cakes
Making noodles, paapars, pickles, sattu\(^2\)
Oh, the aroma of frying grains in sand!

Grinding grains in grindstone
Boiling and drying paddy for the rice mill
The granary is filled with soil and husk
A feast for her gods and guests
A frugal house keeper counting coins.

She looked goddess incarnate
Offering oblation to the setting sun
And the rising sun on chhath\(^3\)
Giving us thekua,\(^4\) kasaar\(^5\)
and fruits in prasad\(^6\)
Guerdon of three days observance.

How dearly I cherish my domestic deputation
In teej, jeetia, bhai dooj...?\(^7\)
Decking home with flaming earthen lamps
White washing the sanctum
of ancestral deities
On Deewali, savouring laddu\(^8\)
and balushahi.\(^9\)

She taught me: everything has its day
Kartik Purnima\(^10\) was the day of
khaza\(^11\) and milk
Sweets of sesame seeds (tilkut),
curd and beaten rice
On Makarsankranti\(^12\), gram flour
and raw mango slice
On sattuani\(^13\) were the breakfast.

Ganesh revolved round his parents
Won the race for circling the earth first.
She was in the centre of my diurnal course
I did wag, nag but rest on her lap.
She whispered, “Thank God, I am dying married.”

Absence shows one’s real worth.
Today I feel her more intensely
Than ever I did. A deity in the sanctum
She lives in me, breathes through me.
Who cares if I win or lose the race
I am not in?

1. Chulha: Earthen Stove
2. Sattu: Gram flour
3. Chhath: A folk festival of Bihar
4 & 5. Thekua & Kasaar: Sweet snacks offered to Sun god on chhath
6. Prasad: The remnants of food items offered to god and then given away to a person
7, 10, 12 & 13. Bhai dooj, Kartik Purnima, Makarsankranti & Sattuani: Folk festivals
8, 9 & 11. Laddu, Balushahi & Khaza: Sweets

***

**BENEVOLENT MOTHER**

Dharmendra Kumar Nanda (Odisha)

Gracefully affectionate
Loving and ameliorative
My dear mother
My hands bows down
Under your feet
Gratefully indebted for ever.

From dawn till midnight
She would be running
And running
Within her dwelling
Gratifying the family members
Amiably
Delightfully planning
For the days upcoming
A wonderful woman
My mom is
Having solemnity
She does shoulder
Bestowed responsibilities
Not becoming indiscreet
And amoral
But being indispensable
Discharging primal duties
Being solicitous
And aromatic
All the time
She does long for
Our well-being
Her advice, benevolence
And liveliness
So influential
Affirming her to be
Responsive and welcoming

like life.
The earth showered
with salty pearls.

At her Dream Beach,
she heard the waves
talking to the waves,
heard him saying:
I’m fine with you.
Did he lie?
Did they lie?

It’s nothing
that he was just imaginary,
but
still possible.
For her, everything and nothing.

Translated by Artur Komoter

SILENCE OF DIALOGUE
Eliza Segiet (Poland)

With a sigh
you soothed my senses.
Sufficient were words,
those
unspoken.
Significant.
Strung like
beads.
The sighs soothed
the senses.
Silence of dialogue -
silence
that is spoken.

Translated by Artur Komoter
<eliza.anna@op.pl>

SHAPE OF LOVE
Eliza Segiet (Poland)

She painted him with thoughts,
she even felt a touch.
Silky hands
drawing on her lips
the shape of love.
She was with him,
probably
at the end of the earth
pulsating like…

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Kafka Intercontinental/2017/46
HER SILENCE
Gayatri Mavuru (Odisha)

Her silence
Doesn’t give you licence
To do violence
It’s her patience
Not her innocence
She is the woman of substance

Her silence
Is as loud as
the flower’s fragrance
Bold, regal and elegant

Her silence
Is as noisy as
the river’s turbulence
Deep, placid and sacred

Her silence
Is as clattering as
The Moon’s radiance
Gentle, iconic and mysterious

Her silence
Is as chattering as
The shower of raindrops
Mild, intense and relentless

Her silence
Is as roaring as
The immobile pebbles
Hard, polished and sustainable

Her silence
Is as screamly as
The darkest nights
Scary, dreary and sinful

Her silence
Is as shrieking as
The stormy grey clouds
Hazy, massive and pitiless

Her silence
Is as creepy as
The Sandy deserts
Harsh, extreme and endless

Her silence
Is as alarming as
The mortal tornados
Terrific, vigorous and destructive

So never take her silence
As her weakness
Its a warning to your attitudes
For humiliating her abilities
She proves her existence
With her grace and persistence

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***

TO EVE EVERYWHERE FROM
ADAM OF ALL TIMES
George Onsy (Egypt)

It took you God
More than just one rib
To form her structure
So tender, so fancy
To let my impossible dream
Step out of the realm of fantasy.

It took you God
More than just one rib
To answer the yearning of my heart,
Modeling this living piece of fine art.

But God, did you really take only one rib,
Altering my whole anatomy, promising
To put instead, pleasure in place
Of loneliness, of agony?

Yes, God, you did take that one rib,
Filling its gloomy void
With strawberry-red flame of fire
That when I just woke up
I found no name but called it “desire”.

Thanks be to you God!
For throughout my whole life
She waves wondering
Between reality and myth
And without her, my so-called life
Would have the very taste of death.

O God, if you had not done
I would have taken
My very heart out of my core
Holding it up, asking:
And this, God, what’s it for??

-------------------

TO GOD FOR THE WOMAN
George Onsy (Egypt)

O God
Thank you for
The woman
In man’s life
She gives him
A reason
To be, to try, to strive.

She is your very touch
Through which
You would like
To love giving so much.

She is the melody
Of your guiding voice
Where dancing
Will be the only choice.

She is the colors
Spread by
Your shining sun
Filling the air with
Laughs, songs and fun.

She is the reflection of
Your smiling moon
On joyful rivers
Flowing soft.
Running fast
Until they dive into
The boundless ocean
To be one at last.

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***

REMEMBER WOMAN
IN ITS REALITY
Guptajit Pathak (Guwahati-Assam)

Woman, you were born
As a life giver
Wonder architect
Magic creator

You were born by means of
The spirit of thousand of mothers
Untie, courageous and sugary

You were born
With the flames of conquerors

You are new than you can glimpse
Love eternally

Your influence and elegance
The deepness of your bottomless mind

You are woman, heavenly
As you have been from the begin

No matter which but you
You are insufferable
You are the mother, daughter, wife, sister
You are a person
Brawny, elegant
Liberal, brave, fervent
While you are in action, sensation, dedication
You recognize how to draw it
You give a life which gives you admiration
Love and appreciation
Believes in you
Woman, a component of realism
Meadow of life
The inner feelings
Woman, a sign of confident
Loveliness in words
Shine in sunshine
Woman, you appear like
A wife
A mother
A daughter
Woman, you are influential in your essence
Is a gift to the world.

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<guptajitpathak@yahoo.com>

***

MOTHER
Harekrushna Mahanta (Odisha)

She descended as a fairy
My mother dearest.
Just a baby innocent
Never I remember her.
Sublime and humble
She a pious woman.
All praise her sainthood.
Urmila called her parents
Oceanic bliss like a silent oasis she

influenced.
Mother!
The great soul she captures
Like Maitrei and Gargi.
But alas!
How I adore her?
In heaven she a star!
Like Buddha in meditation
Like holy OM essence
She having influence
On my path devotion.
Maa!
Like poetry of Brax in America
Overwhelmed I am in ecstacy.
There remains her presence
Holy divine spirituality.
In my path of meditation
A real inspiration
My mother, oh my mother!
In your early demise
You gave me galaxy
Of wishes to overcome
To savour the Aatma
The true essence of Almighty.
And I follow you Mother
Unto your path
Towards samadhi
Super consciousness bliss
and enlightenment with blessings of yours
From heaven the land
Of angels gods and goddesses.

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***
MOTHER
Harish K. Thakur (Shimla - H.P)

I have lived for centuries
Under the myth of shadow
Satan’s millennia
And the dread of Hades engulfs
Ah! A long night of groans
The ghosts of the rumpled skins
And the starved guts
Haunt me

In the land of dead
The rivers of blood flow
The curls of life drown
In the deluge of sea waves
Wolves lick the stains
Over the stolid bones
Under the wide gyrates of Vultures
And the deadened hearts bury deep
In the canyon of unconscious

Withered I look for the dawn
The Mana
For the warmth of your supple arms
And the touch of soul.

Like a tall cypress
You rise far above the weeds
And sing the melody out of your psalter
To salve the wounds
Roof well
The ferocities of time

IN THE SHADOW OF MOTHER
Hilal Karahan (Turky)

Suddenly the wind blew
to the roots of a plane tree
Loudly her eyes bowed
from two knots, life is free.

When rain is waiting for
absentee fathers
The sparrows suck her eyes
seeking shelter in her branches.

A child grows by eating
her heart out
The pain of teeth
cools down in her winding sheet.

A child grows like a snake
swallowing its tail end
Escape from her love cage
is through her tears.

SENSE OF ENIGMA
Jacob Isaac (Kerala & South Africa)

She stared and said
Evaporation of emotions.....
Erupting and diluting the events
Can we prove the frothy
Timidity of time....... 

My sense of enigma
Her crude leverage of reasoning clusters
Provokes me to respond
Her penetrating eyes prevent my tips

She murmured ! Evaporation of desire!
She stood and nodded....
Tickling the map of my mind
Pricking the lap of my impulses
But the change of chastity
and the relocation of certainty
wiped my ego and elevation....

She said, let us make a trip
to the map of aspirations
Where we sit and pat our theme
There we pay the levy of leisure
There we roar and rare the rate.

GIRL
Janardhan Singh Pathania (J & K)

Before the birth of the Girl,
the Man wants to kill her,
it is a big – shame for the Man !
After the birth of the Girl,
Man wants to get rid of the Girl,
It is a big - Shame for Man !

When the Girl is with Man,
He does not give her equal rights,
it is a big-Shame for the Man !

Man forcibly catch hold of Girl,
And makes sexual attacks on her,
it is a big-Shame for the Man !

When with all the pain Girl cries,
then Man throws Acid on her,
It is a big-Shame for the Man !

Whenever Man is frustrated,
He abuses and beats her,
It is a big-Shame for the Man !

That she gives birth to we all men,
the Blind stupid Man doesn’t know that,
It is a big-Shame for a Man.

Don’t blame, the innocent Girls,
give them education and equal respect,
then our good – Days will come !

YOU ARE MY DEAR
Jayanta Kar Sharma (Odisha)

You are my dear who made me the whole
you are the second half
of every first half of mine
because of you I feel complete
a happiness I cannot retreat
the reason for me to breathe and live
without whom I cannot thrive.

There’s ecstasy and peace in your embrace
You are my motivation
resurrection is what your love
the secret of my existence
what makes my world spin around
you care, share and always there
right in my life that removes every wrong
you are power that makes me strong.

you are my partner with whom I can share
all the feelings, I wouldn’t be able to bear
you are not just my companion,
but my inspiration
you hold my hands tight,
support me in my fight
its you make my life worth living
and I don’t have much to give you
except thanking for everything.

A gift so worthy that I can’t measure
It’s you dear my wealthy treasure
the right in my life that removes every wrong
power in my life that makes everything strong
bestowed the belief to blindly
trust my instincts
the ray that connects between you and me
it’s so magical that no one can see.
It makes me comfortable
when you are by my side
my love is obvious which I cannot hide
the path I walk; you shed light on my way
with your company all my pain goes away
you are my only light when
everything is black
never do I feel scared even amidst the dark
I promise to pursue you passionately
and sustain to love you compassionately.

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***

MOTHER
Krishnakshi Bhagabati (Guwahati - Assam)
(X class student)

Mother,
A precious gift
To a child.
She is priceless,
She willingly
Take intense care of us.
What we can’t afford
To buy
Is her love.
Teaching me many
Unknown things,
Helping me
To achieve my dreams,
Is my loving mother.

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***

NOT A WOE TO MAN
Dr. Leo Rebello (Mumbai)

I am an honorable woman,
not a Woe to man.
I deserve much respect
'coz I am the mother, sister,
daughter, wife, aunt or grandma.
I am the constant person.
I can do without man.
Whether it is Krisna or Karna,
Budha, Horus or Zoroaster,
I can bear children on my own.
I was a child,
When I begot Jesus.
I may be a fragile flower
But I am not weak.
I am an honorable woman,
not a Woe to man.

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***

MY DIVINE GALAXY
Ljubomir Mihajlovski (Macedonia)
(dedicated to my lifetime angel..my wife
Marija Mihajlovska)

...I love your astral body,
my divine galaxy,
your eyes are mysterious nebuloses,
your lips
are watered
with the fire of Supernovas,
your hair
is a comet tunic,
with hands like strange meteors
that cares the heart of mine,
your physic is the Milky Way,
your breath is a beam of universe,
the Saturn ring
around your head hands over
and the red star inside your chest
babbles,
while I am making love to you.....

--------------------

YOUR HEALING GARDEN
OF SILENCE
Ljubomir Mihajlovski (Macedonia)
(dedicated to my sister Petra Mihajlovska)

....the deepness of universe
pricks my eyes,
and the tiredness is too big,
and that is
why I want to be
in your
healing garden of silence,
in it
all infinity worlds
are in the palm of yours,
which caressing my face
grants me the whole universe...

<ljupcomihajlovski@yahoo.com>

***

THIS SOCIETY IS SPOILED
Lovely Bashar (Bangladesh)

World has been created because of Women
Yet, Women gets criticized
Falsehood of this society stinks
…it’s a spoiled society

Sita is banished for loving Ram
The male-heart is stinkingly blackened
…it’s a spoiled society

Upon divorce, remarrying wife
Yet, it’s the Woman who is sent to another*

Spoiled! ... it’s a spoiled society
Social-parasites misuse the ‘three words’
It’s the Women who is punished
Spoiled! ... it’s a spoiled society

Creation embarking from the very navel
Yet, denying the same naval-root

torture and embarrassment
humiliates women,
The male principles,
are false…

Spoiled!
... it’s a spoiled society.

* Hilla: Religious ritual inhibits staying with another man prior to remarriage

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***

OBLIVION
Luz María López (Puerto Rico)

It means endearment
this anarchy of my soul
for I hold you dearest
like a cloud about to rain
yet so timeless over the sky
for I allowed your soul
to pull me with strong winds
over the limit of myself,
as full bloom hallucination.
yet love always sparks a cry,
and the red rose succumbs
resuscitating in ellipsis
of fire and days gone
- a carnal reverie-
resilient yet fragile
unaware of oblivion.

<luzmlopez@gmail.com>

***
A LETTER TO MY MOTHER
Makhfuza Imamova (Uzbekistan)

Is there flour in our Supra?
What about oil in our boilers?
Did the firewood become wet?
Today the world seems shrank.
Mother, after several years,
Perhaps our village misses me.
I am still passing through places,
Although I was created as a girl,

My dreams are measuring behind the sky,
But my legs are still dusty on the Earth.
Lilacs are holding my collar,
Streets disperse day by day.
Which one should I complete?

Now,
My forgiven days come for revenge.
O, how wonderful were my dreams,
It is easier to sleep than thinking about my dreams.
I wake up and search the guppy world,
I seek from my father’s left robes.
I can’t adjust if there is no space inside a home,
I become thin from your each sorrow,
O, my age is growing with the thinking.
Now the suspense is hitting my soul,
Is our home cold?
Did my brother clean the snow?
In front of the door,
Keep yourself hot,
Patience may warm you.
Mother, is there a love in our home?

<mahfuza_saloh@nail.ru>

***

SPIDER’S WEB
Manjit Indira (Chandigarh)

How long would you keep
Fearing gasping and sobbing
This way …

How long would you keep
Burning lamps of hope
At your threshold…

He only wants you
As a statue
A decorative piece
To don his bed room

Transforming
From the statue to a woman
is forbidden for you

The day
The statuesque woman
Awakens
Furious he gets
Curses the day
She appeared
Your being
A woman
To my mind
Was a sin

A sin
Had it not been
You wouldn’t be awaking
Sobbing bemoaning
And groaning
Smoulder you can
But burn you cannot
My dear

Like a spider
Weaving a web
Around your own self
Moving about
In your wide world
But escape you can't
From this web
Solutions exist
To all problems
Of this world
So transform yourself
From statue to a woman
Cut off the dirty web
Gulp a draught of poison
And go on dying dear
Bit by bit
Till the end
Of the span of life

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***

EMPTY
Margaret O’Driscoll (Ireland)

Feeling cold and empty
like the carriage of that train
a flurry of snowflakes falling
her heart crystallized in pain
She had waited on the platform
not expecting a 'no show'
now her hope have swirled downwards
she leaves empty in the snow
I am me
I am carefree, smiling, happy
I am woman, I am free
I am dancing, hair windswept
I am yours, protect me
I am poetry in motion
I’m a poet, I am me

<margaretodriscoll7@gmail.com>

***

BIOGRAPHY
Minakshi Goswami Borthakur (Assam)

With the plea of a large peg.
there comes sleep in the eyes
Even if the ailing eyes fall in deep sleep
there continues a war in the brain.
Leaving behind occupational concern
the busy Termites come up.
They climb over every page of life and
declares leverage of their own.
Grief prevailed on the pages that
disappeared due to consuming by Termites.
Like in every implicit page
with full of stealth inside
the choreography of suffering continues.
You would write my biography.
What I’ve never said is not in the life pages
and what I’ve said has vanished from life.
You went standstill by watching
my blue night, unfulfilled crave and the
pangs of my sufferings.
Please don’t start to cease.
Rather you do write conversation
of long night.
Only you could write erotic lessons
from first to last page
and again from the end to the beginning.
At least for once I wish to touch the grief
of my suffering.
I want to perceive the outfit of light
on the anatomy of happiness
What life has given is over now
along with the writings of destiny
Oh my dear eternal lover
You please write to me once again....

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***

Kafka Intercontinental/2017/55
DRAG ME
Monsif Beroual (Morocco)

With her I live, with her I feel
Like am living another day
Another love, another smile
And another hope.
She drags me to this side
She puts me inside, another life.
She makes me happy all the time
Living in a sweet moment
Sweet memories, flying so high
No limits for our love
Is so big than everything or anything
She drags me to another life
Another love, to the light
Forever and beyond the life
A rainbow into our souls, our bodies.
She writing the lyrics on my skin
Full of love, with endless ink.
Taken the dreams in our hands
to make it a reality
And with her all the times.
She drags me to another day
Another smile, and another desires
Endless... Without limits.

***

PAIN IN THE BODY
Morve Roshan (Gujarat)

The existence of my mother in me,
she gives birth and the struggle start for me,
who thought? If I am a daughter,
is it my fault?
then why was I born?
Her pain in me, which makes me painful,
the society realized my being a girl
body and pain have been

birthed in poorer families,
the struggle...struggle...struggle...for what?
She takes the luggage for my worry,
the struggle for collecting
the money for my dowry,
for the adequate food, but failed to get,
why? because of the exploitation,
in the selfish world, who cares for you?
who needs you?
Yes, they need you to exploit more and
more and more....
I always held out hope for the future....
one day, future will change but in the end,
what we get, nothing else beyond the pain,
the existence of my mother in me.

<morve_roshan@rediffmail.com>

***

HOLY TRINE
Mydavolu Venkatasesha
Sathyanarayana (Andhra Pradesh)

From where, in the beginning emerged
this Universe; and in the end
where gets it embedded?!
The spinning planets, the azure sky
and oceans fathomless; the crawling rivers,
deep dales and mountains tall;
the colours bright and pale,
the scents and flavours sweet and sour...
all these lovely charms of all shapes
and forms
and grace of every phenomenon;
seen, sensed and savored....
O man, O man,
ever imagined you,
from where originated they....
that power pool of eternal blaze
that source and sorbent in one?!
Oh try thee know that Holy trine, 
that Mother divine!
Not just the woman, a mortal effigy 
oppressed under the hombre hoofs is She!
Know her O man as the sacred Pneuma, 
the Generatrix Providence!

Take my word, all my fellow men, 
whatever be her worldly nomen 
sister, daughter, wife or mistress...
She is always the Holy Mother 
in whose heavenly ardor 
you’re destined to dissolve 
in life and after, as well!

She... a woman of strength capable of 
learning, unlearning, 
relearning in her journey of life.
She undergoes difficulty 
a beautiful butterfly to transmute 
into a sensible woman.,
She an embodiment of love, 
kindness and patience, 
a gift to mankind and the world.

**<m.mahathi58@gmail.com>***

SHE

Dr. P. Vijayalakshmi Pandit (Telangana)

She brings fragrance of love 
into her world like a flower that perfuse the 
garden with sweet scent.
She shares her precious love 
with the desire to get drenched 
in the shower of love.,
She looks delicate and fragile 
that shroud her inner essence...
the woman of metal when time demands.
She... a born manager of multiple roles 
balancing her moods and deeds.
She gives solace to human life and hence 
the eternal flow of life on earth,
She inherent of mystical layers unlimited 
that hide her real core ..
She... though so amiable externally .., 
fiercely strong and powerful inwardly.

I run, I rush
I walk, I stride
I fly, I soar
I pilot, I glide
I drive, I lead
I steer, I ride
I talk, I discuss
I argue, I chide
I multi-task, I serve
I score, I achieve
I suffer, I bear
I reinvent, I live
I am the storm
I am the calm
I am the hunter
I am the hunted
I am the seeker
I am the sought (after)
I am Shakti, I am Bhukti
I am Siddhi, I am Riddhi

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***

I AM...WHO I AM ...

Padmaja Iyengar-Paddy (Andhra Pradesh)
I am a woo-man
I am a wow-man.
(Shakti = Power, Empower, Strength, To be able, etc., Bhukti = enjoyment, consumption, limit, possession etc., Siddhi = Accomplishment, Attainment, Success, Perfection, etc., Riddhi = Prosperity, Good Fortune, Growth, Magic etc. These are Sanskrit words)

***

SUCH IS SHE
Pallavi Kiran (Jharkhand)

Could see the sad eyes,
on my happy face.
such was SHE..
when love between us persisted!!

Could catch the lies,
on my quivering lips.
such was SHE..
when love between us obeyed!!

Could unmask the storms,
in my fake retorts.
such was SHE..
when love between us abided!!

Bracing me now,
from the HEAVEN,
to survive the severance.
SUCH IS SHE..
yet, when our love is mortified!!

< pallavikiran@ymail.com>

***

MY MOTHER
Dr. Paramita Mukherjee Mullick
(Mumbai)

A strong lady, a beautiful lady,
A caring lady, an amazing lady,
Sensible and kind.
A wonderful lady, hard to find.

What luck did I have to be her daughter?
What luck did I have to be with her?
I have got so much from you.
So much that emotion blurs my view.

You have given me love.
Love to enwrap the world.
You have given me beauty.
Beauty to beautify the world.

Awareness of the inner being.
Righteousness of thought,
To form an integrity ring.
All because of you MA.
A beautiful mind.
All because of you MA.

Where would I be?
If you didn’t give birth to me?
I would be lost
and confused in this sea.

Your values, your virtues,
Your sacrifices, your talents.
Have all come down to me.
Have empowered me
and made me the real ME.

Ma, I have always got strength from you.
Ma, I have broadened my horizon
because of you.

The beautiful lady is still there in you.
The strong woman is still alive in you.
I am amazed at the strength in your sickness.
I am amazed at your beauty in your weakness.

Every time I call you Ma, you always tell me You are fine.
I am still learning from you Ma.
I am still making my life beautiful because of you Ma.

------------------

**VOICE**

**Dr. Paramita Mukherjee Mullick**
(Mumbai)

The sweet soft voice.
The voice so dear.
The melodious, loving voice.
The voice which makes me want to be near.

The strength of character in the voice.
The clarity, the brilliance of diction.
The childhood memory filled voice.
The righteousness, full of conviction.

The love, the affection in the voice.
The voice of lullabies when I was small.
The love enwrapping voice.
The harbinger of happiness now, when I am tall.

The mellifluous, solacing voice.
The voice of the most beautiful lady on earth.
The octogenarian forgetting so many things but still the positivity in her voice.

Oh mother! So blessed to be your child, so blessed from my birth.

---

**TAJMAHAL**

**Philipose Michael** (Kerala)

The conch is blown
It’s time to open
The compartments of a new era.
My memories fell
Like wingless dreams,
Hey love
Why did you come to my hermitage
Like a gentle breeze?

It’s not easy to pen *Shakunthalam*
Yet again,
Cannot consider you as another *Sita*
In the difficult paths of time.
I would live alone
If you could sing like a female cuckoo
I would construct love temple.
If you turn into a chalice
I will melt like candle.
I will wait for you
In the prison of divine love.
Hey beloved
You are not here.
Your memories are here.
I made a glorious temple for you
You live in the temple as an angle.

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---

**THE SILENT KITCHEN**

**P. L. Sreedharan Parokode** (Kerala)

From the kitchen
A soft voice heard.
‘Time for lunch’?
‘Yes,’ he nodded.
With all the items she prepared
Without a third hand support,
Dining table was decorated.
‘Come, let’s sit together,’

She repeated:
‘as there is no class in the afternoon
They (grand children) would come soon!’

Wiping out sweat from the forehead
She added:
‘Some snacks be made ready for them,’.
‘Didn’t you forget
They won’t take bakery food?’
As they reach she too
Becomes a naughty child.

Days passed (peacefully)
Now the kitchen doors
Receive them in
Cold silence.
They also mute..

And, whenever he
Tries to open the windows
Of his heart
A soft breeze enters as if
Some golden words, thrown,

‘let’s sit together’?....

A girl becomes a woman,
A woman becomes a wife,
A wife, to someone,
That someone, unknown,
Unexpected and never known
But she braves herself to become
Wife by sacrificing her life
Her life, moments of happiness
Moments of sadness are all moments
Of sacrifice in her life.

Every wife, a woman basically,
Struggles, within her own web,
Its a spiders web or any other,
Its a web connected, binded,
Bonded and gravely bounded

A wife’s desire to be herself,
Herself remains her and self,
Self becomes selfless
And selfless becomes without self,
Self less and finally no self,
Self sacrificed by women to be a wife,
Faithful, loyal and beautiful wife in her duties

-------------

THE DUTIFUL WIFE
Rajesh Kumar (Karnataka)

Wives are beautiful,
They are beautiful in their sense of duty,
They love, they care,
Their care and concern is their love.

They are related to us as wives,
Though they don’t share our blood,
But still they become our living breath,
They live with us every day,
Every day and day today,
Protecting the bond of love,
And bind themselves into our selves.

A TRIBUTE TO WOMAN
Rajesh Kumar (Karnataka)

A woman was a girl,
A girl was an infant baby,
A baby was a soul,
A soul that lived in every birth,
Every birth taken by her
To complete the incomplete life
And contemplates the present birth.

-------------
The bond makes them bonded
And bounded to us.
A wife’s duty a never ending one
And ever binding one,
They never rest,
They make us to take rest,
They are dutiful and more than dutiful.
They spend their entire time,
With a sense of duty,
Un paid and un payable duty,
Thanks, never thanked,
Her services unrecognized,
Her beauty unglorified,
But still she has no regrets,
She leaves her impressions in the past,
By sacrificing her present.

<rajeshvaishnaw7@gmail.com>

***

MY MOTHER IS TIRED
Dr Ramakrishna Perugu (Andhra Pradesh)

She smoothed along
for not one or two,
but oh for eighty years...
Mother...our Mother...
at last now got a little respite!
Not really a respite...
but a fatigue, a languor,
and a resultant deep reticence!

She’s now looking like a
dangling relic of burnt-out spirits!

For all these decades,
she carried our joys and pains,
our sweet lines and acrimonious utterances...
as undying mixed memories
in an all in one large portmanteau
of her tender heart.

At our toddling days,
when released our father
his tender grip over our little fingers
to leave for other worlds,
who’s there at that time for us...
yeah...our Mother, who nestled us
with her secure arms and love!

Her lap was our roost...
where grew we and learned to fly,
safe and far in the wicked skies
of human-jungle!
Yes...now, after all these years
she’s looking tired...
but with an unfailing simple smile
of walking her family safe and happy
through tough times and hampering travails
to reach at last the pinnacle of fulfilment...
of life her and that of her dependents!

But now...why became she so laconic?
For the first time I saw her glued
to her ancient cot
and heard her saying
“I’m tired!?”

All these three days
I too relinquished the outside world
and squatted by her side,
basking in her benevolent aureol,
watching her, winkless, wordless
as if at last I found my real world...
my only world!
Yeah...now nothing is important
for me...nothing else!
I am here...she’s here...
we’re near as never before...
and around me the brilliant halos
of her eternal love...
Yeah...now nothing is important
for me...nothing else!

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***

Kafka Intercontinental/2017/61
BEAUTY

Sanaa Uppal (Punjab)

To know that she is a beauty
You have to question everything about yourself first
Once you know that there is no answer, you will know her
She will conquer you magnanimously once you realize that she is the slender one in beauty
Having her is dating your own passion
You don’t have to be a genius or a fool
You simply have to look at her
Her whole body
Each part
Knowing that she depicts nothing but freedom
When you know that she is the word in your mouth
Then you will have her all
When you ask yourself
Does it hurt her somewhere when you touch her
Does she smile when you love her
Have you ever seen that sometimes she just wont regret lament or cry
Once you see all that in great measure!
Once you see that it is the same pain that makes her beautiful
Once you see all she is capable of giving in muteness like a king
Once you see all that you had been receiving
Till you see all that, you can’t be forgiving in your brutal ego
She will then surprise you
With all the beauty she is
She will reveal all the nudity that she has inherited from you like house on fire,
june sun and march moon
With all that she carries in her bunch
For you to burn
To see to touch to feel the slithering life
Once you hold her in your infamous hands, you will know
The more you separate her... the more powerful she becomes
The more you push her aside... the more centered position she gains
You are a man because you carry her traits at the deepest level
She is the soul carrying nothing but you
Taking you beyond sin
<sanaauppal@gmail.com>

***

EUDEMOMIA OF A WORKING WOMAN

Dr Sangeeta Singh (Rajasthan)

Walk on the tight rope;
you don’t have any stick to balance,
Only hands and feet to cope with the speed and chance
You can’t afford to fall ill, rather fall in love
With your work, husband and your li’le dove.
Neither are you an actress, nor a dancer,
Not even a showgirl, just a worker
At home and at workplace, people wonder
Serving delicacies at home and sometimes ordering burger.
How you manage with the opportunistic maid, colleagues, in-laws
With confidence and smiles defeat the time’s bloody claws.
Managing kids with their studies, hiding TV high on the niche,
Sometimes lipstick hides the fatigue, tears are now cliché.
But do not be a subject of humour and satire,
Throw all old strategic sloughs into the fire. Before people call you shirker, evasive, mendacious Decide to get retired in forties and be at home, precious. There is nothing like peace and satisfaction Dragging the job instead of relaxation? Work from home or work at home in suitable slot, Will definitely upgrade your personality and lot Have counselling, ere you fall down from the rope Prioritise your choices and don’t lose hope. With thought only. But women can be pregnant, Capable of rearing for months And after immeasurable pain Delivers a thinking infant Who is ever-new and inimitable. But women are different, Different in many ways, Which are good for them, Good for nature. Women sustain nature, She maintains and is aware of Countdown of destruction. In contrast men operates And destroys ruthlessly. Men and women are equal now, There are slogans of gender equality And unisex commodities Yet still they are unequal, inimitable. That is the law nature. Therefore, Three cheers for all men and women Mushrooming this beautiful planet We call earth, unique in cosmos.

***

MEN & WOMEN
Sashibhusan Rath (Odisha)

Not all women Are equally attractive To all men, all the time. Not all but some women Are strongly attractive For some men. Women’s whole body From tip to toe Has always remained A soft being for men. Some say, Women are from Venus And men from Mars. Others say, Women can’t read maps Men can’t listen for long. Women can contain men Men can’t contain women. Men can dance, Can play the role of women. Men can be pregnant But women are different, Different in many ways, Which are good for them, Good for nature. Women sustain nature, She maintains and is aware of Countdown of destruction. In contrast men operates And destroys ruthlessly. Men and women are equal now, There are slogans of gender equality And unisex commodities Yet still they are unequal, inimitable. That is the law nature. Therefore, Three cheers for all men and women Mushrooming this beautiful planet We call earth, unique in cosmos.

***

AUTUMN HAS TO COME
Shwetabh and Padmasha (Bihar)

Perhaps, the autumn has come. It may be, your face looks cloudy May be, the deep effects of weather Has shaken you In your tough rout of alas And bereave. All the way your time. But remember The hope that we lived together And once we smiled with
The green trees in summer
And remember
We had promised to share
Composing poems and
Couplets together.
Any way, keep our promises
And also, we have to smile forever.

Autumn is knocking at the door.

Ph. (Shwetabh)- 94306-78478

***

YOU ARE AN ANGEL, MOM!
Subhashree Barik (Odisha)

In the darkness
When I had opened my frightful eyes
I found, I was swimming
Across the ripples of dark
I felt like falling awfully
Floating in an enigmatic
Grayish space
I kicked,
To survive the waves .
And suddenly found a soothing tact
the support of your tactile loving palm.
In the light,
When I had opened my frightful eyes
Searching for a familiar face
In the unfamiliar world;
A face, clad with smile
Smooched my saliva smeared lips
And the same soothing,
I found
The tact of your tactile palm.
My tottering toe
Found the refuge of your lap,
When I had been tottered.
I felt a divine ecstasy in your arms
I had been grown

Root to shoot,
Leaf to foliage, I was bloomed
The shower of your love
Nurtured my each cell
My each limb, you caressed.
And now you are struggling
For my struggle free life!
You are an angel mom
Boold-and-flesh frame of the God
You are my angel.
A fortified fort
A protection for me
From stones and sinister beings
Curse and corps
A reservoir of love and care.
You are my divinity, my angel mom.

<subhashree151617@gmail.com>

***

SHE
Susrisangeeta Mishra (Tamilnadu)

Scorching heat
And furious rain
Bend before her
In her existence take shelter
Light and darkness
Who duel since ages.
Inside the fire of living
She sits untouched
As witness
To stars, planets
And elements at their work
A lone spectator to the delusions weaved around
She waits
For herself.
She knows ,
Someday
Sky would scrub its cast
From her eyes
Hue of the lips
Would return to the petals of flowers
Glow of the skin
To be soaked by the sun
For truth to surface
In the sea of tears
Time may churn.

A sliced infinity wrapped in silence
A piece of solitude
Pressed under whelming awareness
She has no story to tell.

The world can hear
Neither mind nor heart
Nor silence nor words
She evinces
Beyond her presence
Beyond her absence.

On the scroll of time
An unrelenting spell
She knows
Somewhere
Truth waits for her
To share its tale.

Only in your dreams your husband
caressed you,
Only in dreams your wishes took wings.
They spoke about your false devotion,
But you never were satisfied
with your destiny.

You turned to a statue at the window,
Like the gravestone of the dead love.
Neither spring, nor summer
warmed your heart,
Like that autumn and winter of the life.

You kept the fragrant memories,
Only they are left from that love.
It is an add destiny, after marriage,
You are called married, but you feel lonely.
(Translated from Azerbaijani by Sevil Gulten)

***

PARTING WISH
Dr. Vijay Vishal (Rajasthan)

When I first beheld her
She held my heart
Seized my mind
Reigned my thoughts
Road my feelings
Bestrode my emotions
Enthralled me
From top to toe
With her winning smile
Her vivacity and warmth
Her buxom beauty
Her winsome manners
Her incensed innocence
Her guileless laughter
Her deep devotion
Her chaste emotion
My entire being rose
To proclaim to the world
The priceless prize of my search.

She loved and lulled me
With all her heart and soul
Drenched me
Through and through
With showers of love
Dipped me
In an ocean of devotion
Armed me
With her steel sincerity.

My unfailing companion
In weal or woe
Cool or sunshine
Triumph or defeat
Bitter or sweet.

A shining emblem
Of all womanly virtues
A heavenly hostess
Pride of my household
Paragon of parties
Mother to neighbouring kids
A loved daughter
And much loved
Daughter-in-law.

She bore me four
Blossoms of blooming beauty
Who beautified
The garden of my life
With their rich fragrance
And promise
Of much honour,
A coveted pride
Of all parents.

But ah!
Before blossoms bore fruit

Before basking in sweet sunshine
Of her rose-rich courtyard
Where she toiled hard
Suddenly and silently
She prepared for parting.

A gold-hearted goddess
A giver of joys
A taker of pains
A silent sufferer
Sister of Stoics

She knew not
How to share suffering
Struggled with a smile
On her rose-petalled lips
Dear daughter of
Prometheus
Even while
Inching towards death
Worried about my health.

In my arms she lay
In divine content
And heavenly bliss
Looked on lovingly
With a sweet smile
Dancing on her rosy lips.

Suddenly she winked:
Aghast and alarmed
I questioned her wink,
She smiled and replied:

“Wish to enclose you
In my closing eyes!”

Saying so
She mocked death
With her last winsome smile.
Smilingly she lived
And smilingly
Faded out of life.

A difference to me and mine!

1. Greek philosophers who held that sufferings are an inevitable part of human life and one should bear them bravely.
2. A Greek god who suffered ungrudgingly for the good of mankind.

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***

LOVESICK
Virginia Pasalo (Philippines)

She rocked her chair
as she combed her hair
unmindful of the cat
who dropped a rat
on the left-hand flap
of the linen, on her lap
hidden on her lap, a hot potato
to others, a rotten tomato
and she rocked,
and rocked
she rocked her chair
as she combed her hair

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***

WHAT IS WOMAN...?
Vishal Bodhale (Maharashtra)

Delicate cloth twisted
By masculine arms
Captive beauties
Decorated in golden cages
Womb of generations
Dumb before traditions
Foreheads marked with vermillion
Victims of fatherly world.

Men made religions
Men fought wars
Men made society
Kept them in bars

Devoted though neglected
holy grail
Remained silent forever
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***

YOU
Wahid Mouzawi (Algeria)

You was a word,
a wave in open lips.

You sprang from a throat
as a truth.
All time I possessed you
and you me....
after you my sight was empty.

Loving, awaiting you,
grieving and dreaming,
I burn out in love.

Why, when someone
becomes inaccessible,
I fall in love with very same???

<wahid...swsw@outlook.fr>

***

Kafka Intercontinental/2017/67
समझ से बाहर
deve bharadwaj

जिंदगी में कई बार ऐसा भी घटता है जो हमारी समझ से बाहर होता है। हमने उस समय उस घटना... उस पल का कभी अनुमान भी नहीं किया होता है और जब कुछ अचानक घट जाता है तो हमारी सोच को ताले लग जाते हैं।

उसका लगभग 44 साल का साथ एक दिन एक पल में अचानक खत्म हो जायेगा, यह कभी सोचा भी नहीं था। अभी कुछ पल पहले तो उस के साथ सब कुछ ठीक - ठाक था। फिर यह कैसे घट गया... यह सब कुछ मेरी समझ से बाहर है।

लगभग 44 वर्ष पहले उसका मिलना भी मेरी समझ से बाहर था। मैं चंदीगढ़ के सैक्टर-19 में एक किराये के कमरे में रहता था... प्राइवेट पलायन पे... अकेला। उस से पहले भी कई और स्थानों पर एक के बाद एक कमरे में रहता रहा था परन्तु ऐसे कभी भी नहीं हुआ था। दरअसल अकेलाने मेरे साथ-साथ रह रहा था। चंदीगढ़ शहर में आने से पहले मैं अपने पैदावारी गाँव गई थी। बटाला (गुरुदासपुर) के पास। मुझे बताया गया था कि जब मैं सिर्फ दो वर्ष का ही था तो मेरे सिर से पिता का साथ चला गया था। मुझे मेरी माँ श्रीमती ज्ञान देवी ने पता... बहुत लाल-प्यार के साथ क्योंकि मैं उस का सब से छोटा, लाड़ला और आखिरी बच्चा था।

घर को चलाने के लिए मेरे ताया श्री राम चंद जी का बहुत बड़ा सहयोग रहा जिसे उन्होंने न्यास भर बिवाह नहीं करवाया था। हम ब्राह्मण परिवार में से थे परन्तु हमारी अपनी गुजारे लायक खेती वाली भूमि भी थी। 20 नवम्बर 1948 को मैं इसी गाँव में पैदा हुआ था। उस जमाने में नौकरियों कम होती थीं और अनाज को बेच कर घर चलाए जाते थे। घर की जरूरतों के लिए अगर कोई सामान-रसद दुकान से खरीदी होती तो वस्त्र के एवज में अनाज ही दिया जाता था। मुझे यह है-- कुछ गेहूँ, चाव या धान मेरे कुरटे के पल्लू में बाल दिये जाते थे और मैं राजस्थान की दुकान से जा कर चीनी, चायपत्ती, साबुन बेगारा ले आता था।

घर में सब से छोटा होने के कारण मेरी माँ भी मेरे साथ बहुत लाड़ करती। मैं भी हमेशा उस के साथ-साथ ही रहता। अगर उसने किसी के घर जाना होता तो मुझे साथ ही ले कर जाती।

मुझे वह कभी भी गुर्गा नहीं होती थी और न ही किसी बात से मुझे झिड़कती थी। हर अमावस, संक्रांति को वह अक्सर खीर पूरी या कुछ और पकवान बनाती और गली के बच्चों को बुला कर खिलाती। गली के सभी बच्चे उसे अपने ही लगाते। तब आठटा पीसने या धान से चावल निकालने की मशीनें गाँवों में नहीं होती थी। यह काम वह पर की छोटी सी ओलिखी और चक्की में करती। सभी औरतें अपने-अपने घरों में ऐसे काम करती थीं। गाये, मैस का दूध और आप दुहाती थीं। शायद सारा दिन घर के काम करने से वह सहतमंद रहती थी।

मेरे ताया श्री राम चंद जी का मेरे पास प्यार और स्नेह में कभी नहीं भूल सकता। वह उर्फ में खुशाल लिखने में वह महान थे। गाँव में लोगों के आपसी इकरारनामे, जमीन खरीद-फरीदखरीद की लिखते, उधार पैसे लेने-देने और सुलानामे आदि के लिए वह परनोट लिखते थे और उन को
एक परसोट के लिए एक रुपया मिलता था जो उस समय में एक बड़ी रकम मानी जाती थी। वह उस पैसे में से अपने लिए सिरोटें खरीदते और बाकी घर की जरूरत के लिए इस्तेमाल करते थे।

मुझे आज भी याद है कि एक दिन एक लाला की दुकान के बाहर वह अपने साथियों के साथ ताश खेल रहे थे। मैं कोई 6-7 साल का था। मैं पिछले से आकर उनके गले को चिपक गया और कहा—

“मैं मीठी गोली खानी है!” थब चीनी की मीठी माटी गोलियों बच्चों के खाने, चूसने के लिए मिलती थी। उन्होंने ने अपनी जब में से सिरोटें की डिब्बिया निकाली और उस में से एक सिरोट किया कर लाला को आवाज मारी—“लाला, यह सिरोट के बदले मेरे लाल को एक मीठी गोली दे दे!” ऐसी मीठी गोलियाँ मैंने बचपन में बहुत खाया है जो हम अनाज देखकर घर के लिए सौदा लेते वक्त ले लेते थे। परन्तु एक सिरोट के बदले मुझे मिली वह मीठी गोली मेरे यादों में से कभी बाहर नहीं जा सकती। ताता जी के ऐसे त्यागमयी स्वभाव को मैं करने मुझे सक्ता हूँ?

मैं आठवीं जमात में पढ़ता था कि अनानंत मेरी माँ चल बसी। वह सिरफ कुछ दिन बीमार रही और फिर रवाना के लिए तिकड़ गई। मेरा भविष्य अधकारमयी हो गया था ...सब तरफ अंधेरा छा गया था। 'अब क्या होगा?' यह सवाल बार-बार परेशान करता। घर में मेरे साथ मेरे से दो साल बड़ी मेरी बहन शीला रानी थी। मेरे ताता जी बीमार रहते थे और छोर दिन के बाद वह मी पूरे हो गया। मेरा एक मात्र ज्यादा भाई श्री हरी दत्त पहले ही चंदीगढ़ में सरकारी नौकरी में लग गया था। वह नौकरी छोड़ कर गाँव नहीं आ सकता था। इस मुसीबत घड़ी में मेरी एक बुआ हमारे पास आ कर रहने लगी। इस दौरान पहले मेरे भाई और फिर मेरी बहन का विदाह हो गया।

दसवीं जमात के पास करने के बाद मेरा गाँव मे रहना मुमकिन नहीं था क्योंकि वहाँ में अब अकेला था। मुझे भाई चंदीगढ़ ले आया। उसके नेतृत्व और प्रयास के साथ मुझे भी सात के अंदर-अंदर एक सरकारी नौकरी मिल गई। कुछ वर्ष भाई के घर रहा... लेकिन अकेलापन मेरे साथ हमेशा रहता। भाई जी के घर का माहिल मेरे लिए सुखदाई नहीं था। इस लिए एक दिन अपनी छोटी सी दुकान में अपने कपड़े रख कर वहाँ से निकल गया। मैंने वह घर छोड़ दिया था... हमेशा के लिए। और फिर ये पर एक कमरा लेकर रहना शुरु कर दिया था। नौकरी मेरे साथ थी।

मैं सोचने लगा था कि मैं कभी विदाह नहीं करूँगा। मैं गृहस्थ होने से डरा हुआ था। इसी लिए जब कोई रिस्टोरेंट या मिट्टा मेरे विदाह की बात करता लोग मेरे टैल-मोटर कर जाता।

मैं आगे पढ़ना शुरू कर दिया। पहले यूनिवर्सिटी में शाम के बल्लां और फिर प्राइवेट इलिजहान देते-देते ज्ञानी, श्री. प. पास की और फिर एम. प. पंजाबी। इस दौरान मुझे साहित्य पढ़ने की रचना हो गई। मेरी तनहाई में पृथकों ने मेरा साथ दिया।

मैं अकेला रह रहा था और अकेला ही रहना चाहता था। इसी लिए कभी भी किसी लड़की को लगाव के साथ नहीं देखा था... पार करना या विदाह करना तो बहुत दूर की बात थी।

दसवां मेरे अंदर एक सोच घर कर गई थी कि मुझे सन्यास ले लेना चाहिए। मुझे नौकरी या गृहस्थ-बूंद न में नहीं फर्जा चाहिए। मैं भाग जाना चाहता था... कहीं भी। परन्तु मैं चुपचाप जैसे साहित्य के बंधन में बंध चुका था। ज्ञानी और एम. पंजाबी की परिक्षाओं की तैयारी समय में सिलेंडर के इलाजावर अन्य कई नावल, कहानियों की फिराहे पढ़नी शुरू कर दी थी और ऐसे पूरी तरह साहित्य की दुनिया में बूढ़ गया।

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Kafka Intercontinental/2017/69
इसी माहीत में अचराक कुछ ऐसा घटा जिस के बारे में कभी सोचा भी नहीं था — जो समझ से बाहर था। मैं चंद्रगढ़ के सैकटर- 19 में एक किराये के कमरे में रहता था — ग्राउंड फ्लायर पर। खाना बाहर खाता था। एक दिन साथ के घर की पहली मंजिल में कुछ हटचल नजर आई। एक बड़ा परिवार वहाँ कहीं से शिफ्ट हो कर आया था। तीन—चार जवान लड़कियाँ अक्सर घर से बाहर—अंदर आती—जाती थीं। स्कूल जातीं या किसी और काम से उनको जाना होता तो उन को सी—आफ कहने के लिए एक बड़ी लड़की छोटे में खड़े जातीं और कफी दूर तक उन्हें जाते हुये देखती रहतीं। पता नहीं कैसे हुआ कि एक दिन छोटे में खड़े उस बड़ी लड़की की तरफ में उसा ध्यान चला गया। उसका ध्यान भी मेरी तरफ खामीबिक पड़ गया था। मुझे याद नहीं कि मैंने उसे क्या कहा होगा परंतु मुझे लगा कि मैंने उसको कुछ कहा है। उसे भी शायद पता नहीं कि उस ने मुझे क्या कहा होगा परंतु उसने भी कुछ कहा था। मैं बेचौनी हो गया था। इसी बेचौनी में तैयार हो कर दफ्तर चला गया था परंतु बेचौनी वस्त्रार थी। छुटी होती ही सीघा घर पहुंचा। देर तक साथ के घर के छोटे की तरफ देखता रहा परंतु वहाँ कोई न आया। मैं अपने कमरे में चला गया परंतु बेचौनी मेरा पीछा नहीं छोड़ रही थी। थोड़ी—थोड़ी देर बाद मैं किसी न किसी बहाने करके से बाहर आता और छोटे की तरफ देखता। शाम ठंड गई परंतु छोटे में कोई न आया। फिर मैं आँखें मूँड़ कर चारपाई पर लेत गया और पता नहीं क्या—क्या सोचने लगा। अचराक बाहर से किसी ने मेरे कमरे का दरवाजा खुल गया। मैं बढ़हाल होकर उत्ते बैठा और दरवाजा कहला।

एक आदमी बाहर खड़ा था। उसे क्रू में एक थाली थी जो एक रंग—विरंग कपड़े से साथ ही थी। "मैं मामा हूूं।" उसने कहा। "यह भोजन आपके लिए है... साथ वाले घर से।" मैं समझ गया। मैं कुछ न बोला। थाली ही कर मैंने रख ली और वह वापस चला गया।

मैंने थाली से कपड़ा हटा कर उस में रखे सामान की तरफ देखा... रोटी, चावल, दाल, सब्जी और सलाद। साथ सामान किसी अच्छे होटल में बनाये जाते खाने जैसा था। मैं खाने से झिझक रहा था। डर लग रहा था कि इस में कोई ऐसी—वैसी चीज न मिला दी हो जिस के साथ मेरे मन पर ऐसा भाव हो जाये कि मैं उन का ही गुलाम बन जाऊ। फिर मैंने सौंद ऐसा प्रभाव तो पहले ही हो चुका है, फिर यह खाना खाने से वयो हो जायेगा। मैंने मन को पकवा किया और खाना खा लिया। काफी देर तक मैं प्रतीक्षा करता रहा — शायद मामा की या अपने आप की। थोड़ी देर बाद मामा मिर आ गया। खानी थाली वापस लेने के लिए। मैं सोचने लगा कि इसको कैसे पता लग गया होगा कि मैंने खाना खा लिया है। शायद मैं जब बाहर आंगन में हाथ धोने गया था उस ने यह भींप लिया होगा।

अगले दिन छुटी थी। मामा दोपहर को आ गया, "बलो मेरे साथ। आपको बुलाया है।" उस ने हीमी सुर में कहा। मैं थोड़ा झिझक परमुत पर सिर में होसला किया और उस के साथ चल पड़ा — साथ वाले घर की पहली मंजिल की तरफ।

बहाँ वह सभी थे। वह भी थी, मेरे स्वागत के लिए।

"बलो।" उसने कहा। मैं कुछ समझता नहीं और चारपाई के एक तरफ हो कर बैठ गया।
फिर मुझे उस ने ही बताया कि उसके 'बलो' कहने का मतलब है— कुछ बोलो। मैं क्या बोलता? मैं कभी बोलता ही नहीं था। वह चाय बना कर ले आई और साथ में कुछ खाने को भी। मैं वहाँ।"
से जल्दी जाना चाहता था क्योंकि घर में उसके माता पिता, दादा—दादी सभी थे। मैं चाह पी कर अपने कमरे में आ गया। देर तक चरमपाई पर लेते—लेते सोचता रहा— यह क्या हो रहा है। मैं अपने कमरे में बेचौच था और उस के पर जाने से संकोच भी कर रहा था।

रात को मामा फिर खाना ले कर आ गया और कहने लगा, “आप अब खाना खाने के लिए होटल न जाया करना। रात का खाना मैं देंगे आया करूंगा।” मैं कुछ न बोला। हर रोज रात का खाना आना शुरू हो गया। मुझे कुछ न हुआ।

हीं, उसको मिलने की बेचौची बदती गई। जब मैं सुबह दम्पति जाता, वह पहले से ही छप्पे में खड़ी होती और मुझे भी धार हिला कर दूर तक सी—आफ करती। दफ्तर से आने के बाद भी वह मौका पाकर छुजे में आ जाती और मैं भी बाहर आंगन में खड़ा हो कर एक दो मिनट उस के साथ बात कर लेता, कैसी बात करता करता था? अब यदि नहीं। एक दिन मैंने एक मैंजिन में किसी शायर की कुछ पक्तियाँ लिख कर मैंजिन ममा के हाथ उसे मेज दिया। अगले ही दिन उसने मुझे आयार उसी पहले में लिख कर ममा के हाथ ही मैंजिन वापस मेज दिया। मुझे महसूस हुआ कि वह शायरी परंपरा करती है। बाद में पता लगा कि वह ‘शुभम’ मैंजिन पढ़ती है। परन्तु मैं शायर नहीं था, केवल कहानी सिखता था।

ऐसे ही शायरी और कहानी साथ—साथ चलती रही। अचानक कुछ दिनों बाद ही इस कहानी में एक नया मोड़ आया। वह घर बदल रहे थे। दरअसल यह घर उन्होंने कुछ दिनों के लिए ही लिखा था और वह एक बड़े—खुले घर की तलाश में थे। इस से पहले वह चंद्रगढ़ के नजरदार चंद्रियन्द्र मिलेट्सी एरिया में सरकारी रिहायश में रहते थे जो उसके पिता की बदली के कारण छोड़नी पड़ी थी।

वह अपने घर का सामन ठेले में भर रहे थे। जैसे जैसे ठेले बाला फेरे लगाता, मैं वैसे—वैसे और ज्यादा उदास हो रहा था। उनका का नया घर कुछ दुरी पर था और हम एक-दूसरे को रोज नहीं मिल सकते थे। परन्तु मैं कभी—कभी उनके घर चला जाता।

हीं, मैं बताना भूल गया कि उनके अपने पड़ोस में घर में चाय पीते समय मैं उसका नाम पूछ था। ‘मरियम’ उसने कहा। साहिने बाली दीवार पर माँ मरियम की एक छोटी सी तस्वीर लटक रही थी। वह नाम सुनने ही मेरे बांदर कंकाली सी छिप गई। मैं उसको छूते ही बाला था कि हाथ कुछ दुरी पर ही एक गया। मैंने माँ के बावे में सोचा। प्रय इसा मसीह की मां... और मैं। अजीब सी स्थिति थी। मैं उसको मिलता रहा परन्तु मैंने उसे इस नाम के साथ कभी भी नहीं बुलाया। बिना किसी संबंधन के ही बातें कहता रहा और वह भी इसी तरह बात करती रही।

क्रिसमस का रोड हुआ था। दिसंबर 1972 का क्रिसमस। मुझे बताया गया कि गिरजाघर में बहुत बढ़ा उसका होगा और उन्होंने चाहा कि मैं भी वहां आऊँ। मैं हीं कर दी। क्रिसमस से कुछ दिन पहले मैं उनके घर से माँ मरियम की एक छोटी सी पाकेट साइज फोटो ले गया था जिसमें उसके बाल—ईसा को गोर में उठाया हुआ था। मैंने देखा कि उनके घर में इस के साथ की कोई बड़ी तस्वीर या पेंटिंग नहीं है। मेरे दफ्तर में एक कुजीग था—सिद्धमन सिंह। वह शोकिया पेंटिंग बनाता था। मैंने उसको उस पाकेट साइज फोटो दी और कहा कि एक बड़े आकार की पेंटिंग क्रिसमस से पहले बना। उस ने आई बोर्ड पर आयल कलर्ज के साथ एक अति सुंदर पेंटिंग
तैयार कर दी। उस का पर्यावरण भी लगा दिया। मैं उस पेंटिंग को अखबार में लपेट कर उस पर धारा बांध कर सीधा उस के घर चला गया। क्रिसमस के दिन। मेरा प्रातःकाल उनके घर जाना उनके लिए है। मैंने उसे सुपुर्द की ओर कहा – है। क्रिसमस।

उस ने बहुत विवाह के साथ बहुत धारा उतारा और फिर अखबार का कागज। मॉरियम और धारा ईसा की बड़ी आकार की पेंटिंग देख कर सब बहुत खुश हुए और उन्होंने उसे दीवार पर एक चित्र लगाया पर टूटा पिंपिलिया। वह पेंटिंग अब पूजा के योग्य हो गई थी।

मेरा सामान उस घर में और भी बढ़ गया। उस की दादी को लगा कि लड़का धारिक जाकर वाला है और ईसाई धर्म का आदर करता है।

इस तरह कुछ दिन आज गए। मन की बेवैसी बढ़ती गई। पता नहीं लग रहा था कि मैं उस के माता-पिता या दादा-दादी के साथ कैसे बात करूँ और कब? मैंने वोधलिया था कि मुझे यह रिस्ता भने लेना चाहिए।... जब और वह भी बिना किसी का बताए... यानी अपने भाई, बहनों और अन्य रिस्तेदारों को। कहीं वह कोई अटक न हो जाए एंटेर-जाति विश्वास के कारण।

जब और उन्होंने वह घर भी बदल लिया। बहुत दूर नहीं, उसी हिलाके में। वह एक ऐसे घर में चले गए जिस की एक ही मजत थी और काफी खुला आंगन था। मेरी उदासी बढ़ गई थी और खामीशी मी। मैं कुछ दिन उससे मिलने नहीं गया। इस दौरान मैंने भी अपना क्रमरा बदल लिया था। एक नये-नये बने घर की ग्राउंड पोलर पर। परन्तु वहाँ एक शरीर थी – एक क्रमरा – एक व्यक्ति। उस कमरे में खाना बनाया मना था।

एक दिन में मेरे शाम को मिलने गया और कुछ देर बैठ कर मैंने कहा कि मेरा एक रिस्तेदार है यहीं... पास ही रहता है – मैंने तुझे उस के साथ मिलाना है। वह घर में बता कर मेरे साथ चल पड़ी। मेरी माती का जमाई श्री हरि कुण, जो उस समय धंधेगढ़ रेडियो क्यों में इंजीनियर था, मेरे साथ अच्छा व्यवहार करता था। मैं उसे उस के घर ले गया और सारी बनानी बता दी। मेरी बहन अमरा ने खाना बना दिया और कहने लगी खा कर जाना। खाना खाते और बात करते काफी रात हो गई। हम दोनों रात को वहीं रहे गए। उसको मुझे पर विश्वास व पूरा मनोकामना था, वह जान चुकी थी कि मैं आने वाली हर तुम्हें धड़ी में उस का साथ देने के लिए तैयार हूँ। मैं जीजा ने उस का नाम पूछा। उसने बताया “मरियम”। जीजा सोच में पड़ गया। यह तो बड़ा पत्रिका नाम है। यह तो जगत-मैं है। फिर उसने पूछा कि व्यक्ति में उसे किस नाम के साथ बलाया जाता था या कोई और नाम भी था घर का। उसने बताया कि उसे अपने नाम में निम्न या निम्न कहते थे। जीजा ने तुरंत उस नाम को पकड़ लिया...यानि निम्नलिखित या निम्नलिखित है। ठीक है निम्न या निम्न... हम तुम्हे मरियम नहीं, निम्नलिखित या निम्नलिखित कहा करेंगे। हमारे पत्रिकार के लिए यह नाम और व्यापार उपयुक्त रहेगा।” और ऐसे वह मरियम से निम्नलिखित बन गई। दोनों ही नाम में पवित्रता झलकती थी।

अपने दिन सुबह में उसे उसको घर छोड़ने गया। सभी गुस्से में थे। उस के पिता श्री शाम लाल जी ने उसे घरमर्म कर कमरे के अंदर कर लिया। माता श्रीमती शाति देवी दरी हुई थी।

युगे साफ सुगाई दे रहा था – “खबरदार, अगर आज के बाद घर से बाहर मैं निकला तो तैयार हूँ–पसली एक कर दूंगा।”

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मैं चुपचाप खड़ा था। उस की दादी ने मुझे कहा- "पुत्र तू जा। फिर आना। मैं सब संभाल लूंगी। तू फिकर न कर... मैं तुम्हारे साथ हूं।"

मैं अपने घर आ गया – यानि अपने कमरे में। रात देर तक नींद न आई। क्या घट रहा होगा, उस के साथ...सोचता रहा।

जैसे जैसे रात गुजरी। आगे वाली सुबह में दप्तर जाने की जगह उस के घर पहुँच गया।

मुझे मिलने से रोका गया। परन्तु मैंने कहा- मैं शादी करने आया हूं, आज ही। आप जैसे चाहे तब चाहे। किसी मंदिर, गुफाओं, चर्च में या यहाँ ही घर में... किसी भी रस्म के साथ। मैं आ गया हूं और आज ही विवाह करेंगे। सब संग में पड़ गए। दादी समझदार थी। उसने कहा–

पुत्र तूं बेट, चाचा-पापी पी, मैं फादर (गिरजा का पादरी) को मिल कर आती हूं। गिरजा उनके घर से दूर नहीं था। इस लिए वह जल्दी ही बात करके आ गई। उसने बताया कि फादर ने पहले तो कहा कि इन दिनों रोज़े चल रहे हैं, कुछ दिन तहर जाओ। परन्तु फिर उसके जोर देने पर वह मान गया कि विवाह साधारण रस्म की जायेगी। शाम का समय दिया गया। सभी खुश दिखाई दिए। उन को यकीन हो गया कि मैं गलत नहीं हूं। वह तैयारी करने लगे। शादी की झूठी में तैयार कर ली। चाँदी की एक अंगूठियाँ खिसी ली गई। मुझे किसी तैयारी की जरूरत नहीं थी। मैं सिक्क शाम का इंतजार कर रहा था। अपनी तरफ से मैंने अपनी मोसी के जमाई को बुला लिया, गवाही के लिए और किसी को न बताया और न बुलाया। एक दूल्हा और एक बाराती। एक साधारण रस्म से फादर ने कुछ मिनटों में ही हमें पत्ता-पत्ती बना दिया।

मैं गिरजे के बाहर से एक रिश्ता ले लिया और उसे साथ भिड़ा कर अपने कमरे में ले आया। मैंने उसको मेरी चारपाई पर बिठाया और कहा– मैं शुक्रगुजार हूं, परमाला का –

तुम्हारे आने से यह कमरा अब घर बन गया है।

उसके-उसके मालिक मकान को बताया कि मैंने विवाह कर लिया है और आप मेरी पत्नी से मिल सकते हो। मेरी पत्नी इस घर में आ कर मरियम से निर्मला बन गई थी। मालिक मकान ने जान कर बहुत खुश हुआ। उसने कहा कि यदि और नीज़वान वो इसी तरह विवा किसी खर्च किए, विवाह करने लगे लोगा-पिता बेटियों के पैदा होने से भी खुश होंगे। मैं फाफरट बाज़ार गया। कोका कोला की कुछ बोतलें और मिठाई का डिब्बा ठेआ और उस घर में रहने वाले सब लोगों को बॉंट दिया। सेलिनेशन... जस्ता... विवाह की पाटी...।

अगले दिन हम दोनों चंडीगढ़ के नजदीक ही माता मनसा देवी मंदिर गए। ईसाई धर्म के

लिए चाहे वह दिन शाक वाले थे परन्तु तब नवरात्र चल रहे थे जो हिंदू धर्म अनुसार रुप मिन

थे। हमने माता मनसा देवी की प्रतिमा के आगे नमस्कार कर अपने गृहस्थ जीवन की

कामयाबी के लिए प्रार्थना की।

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मेरे छात्र बच्चों का एक खाली गृह जो मिट्ठी के तेल के साथ जलता था। वह जलते समय

कोई आवाज नहीं देता था परन्तु उसे बुझाने के लिए उस की आग धीमा करके उस पर जोर

से पानी का छीटा मारना पड़ता था जिस के साथ कुछ घुमा पैंदा होता था। हमने एक तकीब

सोची। कमरे में कपड़े टोंगने वाली एक अलमारी थी। हमने उस अलमारी में कपड़े टोंगने की

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जगह स्टोव रख दिया। वह चावल—दाल रख देती और जब स्टोव बंद करना होता तो पानी का छीटा मारकर अलगावी तुरन्त बंद कर देती... दुआ अंदर ही अंदर दम तोड़ देता। ऐसे दम दम पर्सन वाले इस कमरे में हम चार: महीने रहे... जहाँ खाना बनाने की मनाही थी।

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विवाह 9 अप्रैल 1973 को हुआ था। थोड़ी—थोड़ी गर्मी थी। मेरे पास बिजली वाला पंख नहीं था। उसकी दादी ने एक नया पंख खरीद कर मेज दिया। यह पंखा हमेशा हमारे साथ रहा। हमने कई घर बदले और आखिर 1982 में अपने घर में आ गए... चंडीगढ़ के सैक्टर 46 के मकान नंबर 3437 में। यह घर चंडीगढ़ हाउसिंग बोर्ड की तरफ से दिया गया था जिस की कीमत किस्तों में अदा की जानी थी। यह पंखा आज भी इस घर में हमारे बेड—रूम में चल रहा है। यह कभी खराब नहीं हुआ। ही, सिफ्ट एक बार इस का रंग धीमा पड़ जाने पर इस को पेंट करवाया था। परतु तिरले कुछ सालों से यह पहले के एक या दो पुआईट पर बड़ा धीमा चलता है और बाद के पुआईट पर बहुत तेज। इस की इस प्रौढ़ को ठीक इस लिए नहीं करवाया कि महिलाओं इस को खोल लेगा, फिर ठीक होने के बजाय कभी चलता ही न बंद हो जाये। हमें इस की यही रफ़्तार सुहानी लगती रही है। आज में अकेला हूं। तो यह उसी तरह मेषा साथ दे रहा है।

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उस के घर से दादी, उस की कोई न कोई बहन हर रोज मिलने आती। हम भी रात का खाना आम तौर पर उनके घर ही जा कर खाते। एक दिन दादी ने हमें पूछा कि हमें किसी चीज़ की जरूरत है तो बताओ। मेरी पत्नी ने सिफ्ट दो ही चीज़ बॉग्सीं — एक अपनी सिलाई मशीन और दूसरी मेरे तरफ से निर्माण पर मेट की मॉ मशीन और बाल—ईसा वाली पेंटिंग। यह दोनों वर्षुएं हमेशा हमारे पास रही हैं और आज भी। मेरी पत्नी रीवा कहती है कि वह यह सिलाई मशीन अपने पास रखेगी... अपनी दादी की नियामकों के तौर पर जो उसे उसकी दादी से मिली थी।

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विवाह से पहले तक में दप्तर पेडल है जाता था या लोकल बस पर। विवाह के बाद साइकिल खरीदने का विचार किया जिससे में दोपहर को घर आ कर खाना खा लिया कर्रूँ। दप्तर घर से कोई दो किलोमीटर दूर था। नये साइकिल की कीमत उनकी थी जितनी मेरी एक महीने की पूरी तय किया। सो सवार नहीं था। परतु दप्तर ने मेरी मदद की। मुझे आसान किस्तों में ऐसे वापस करने वाला साइकिल लौन मिल गया। महीने की किस्त सिफ्ट दस रुपए। साइकिल 'इस्टर्न स्टार' कंपनी का था। मजाक—मजाक में मेरी सालियों मुझे 'इस्टर्न स्टार' कहने लगीं। मैंने सोचा यह ठीक ही है — मैं बेहद पूर्व का तारा हूँ परतु में जरूर किसी न किसी दिन पश्चिम में भी चमके। उन दिनों में समुच्च बैकेट को पढ़ रहा था और उसके नाटक 'एंड गेम' का पंजाबी में अनुवाद कर रहा था। मेरी तीव्र इच्छा जानी कि मैं किसी न किसी तत्त्व प्राप्त जाऊँ और इस लेख के मिलें। परतु ऐसे न हो सका। जब मुझे फ्रांस जाने का मौका मिला तब वह इस संसार से जा चुका था। सच तो यह है कि मेरा अपना जीवन और रचनाये बैकेट से बहुत प्रभावित है।

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फिर हम एक नये घर में चले गए। एक कमरा और एक रसोई वाला घर। वहाँ ही 1974 में फरवरी महीने में बड़े बेटे ने जन्म दिया। उसे लाड में हम गुल्लू कहने लगे और हमेशा के लिए वह गुल्लू ही बन गया। मैंने भारतीय पुराण में से दूँढ़ते दूँढ़ते उस के लिए कुछ नामों का सुझाव दिया और आखिर हमारी सहमति बनी — कुमार वंश। नाम कुछ कठिन था परन्तु चल गया। वह आजकल अमरिका में रहता है। वह और उसकी पत्नी सबी दोनों ही सॉफ्टवेयर इंजीनियर हैं। उन के दो बेटे हैं जो वहाँ ही पैदा हुए हैं। उनके नाम उन्होंने खुद ही रखे —
— आर्यन और अवर। वह सबी अब वहाँ के नागरिक हैं।...अमरिकी परन्तु दिल हिन्दुस्तानी है। घर में पंजाबी बोलते हैं बाहर अमरिकी इंग्लिश।

do साल बाद यानि जनवरी 1976 में छोटा बेटा पैदा हुआ — लाड के साथ उसे गिरदू कहने लगे। इस तह बड़ा गुल्लू और छोटा गिरदू। हम इन नामों के साथ ही बुलाते आए हैं। जब छोटे बेटे का नाम रखने की बारी आई तो पत्नी कहने लगी कि इस बार वह कोई आसान सा नाम रखेगी। तो उसने रखा— रमन। आज रमन लिट्रेटर के क्षेत्र में एक बड़ा नाम है। उस ने राष्ट्रीय स्तर की अखबार 'इंडियन ऐक्सप्रेस' और 'टाइम्स ऑफ इंडिया' में इलेक्ट्रॉनिक यानि आर्टिस्ट के तौर पर बहुत साल काम किया। आज कल प्री— लाजिंग करता है। 'इंडियन ऐक्सप्रेस' में ही उस का मेल डिम्बी के साथ हुआ और फिर उस के साथ विवाह। उस के दो लड़कियाँ हैं। शया और माया। मैं बताना चाहता हूँ कि मेरे मृत्यु के बाद न कंगर और रमन ने अपनी—अपनी परवर की लड़कियों के साथ शादी की है जो सिखवा पति नवं याँ में से हैं। दोनों पुत्रों ने मेरे सख्त मेहनत करने के रंग—ढंग और स्वभाव को अपनाया है। यह मेरे लिए बड़ी प्राप्ति रही है।

बच्चों के जन्म के साथ ही हमने गुहरी को बहुत जिम्मेदारी के साथ चलाया रखा। मेरी पत्नी गुहरी थोड़ी सी तनबुवाह में भी अच्छा गुजारा करती रही। सारी उसने अपने लिए कोई मंग न रखी। जो कुछ किया सिर्फ बेटों के लिए या घर के लिए। उन को खुद पैदल ही चल कर स्कूल छोड़ने जाती और छुट्टी होने पर ले कर आती थी। बच्चों का स्कूल घर से बहुत दूर नहीं था। वह गर्मी, वर्षा या बारिश में यह जिम्मेदारी निभाने में कभी पीछे न हटती।

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कुछ वर्षों के बाद ही 1982 में हमें अपना घर मिल गया। चंदीगढ़ हाउसिंग बोर्ड की तरफ से बना बनाया घर। जो सिर्फ़ एक मजिल ही था और वह भी अधूरा। जिस को आगे बढ़े वर्षों में तीन मजिला खड़ा करना सिर्फ़ उस की ही मेहनत थी। हाँ, इस के लिए पैसों की जरूरत थी। मैं अपने गाँव गए गया। वहाँ अपने बाप के दोस्त लखबीर सिंह को सब बताया और मशहरा किया कि मैं अपने हिस्से की जमीन कैसे बेच सकता हूँ और किसको। उसने मेरा यह काम आसान कर दिया। आज भी गाँव के साथ में रिश्ता लखबीर सिंह की वजह से ही बना हुआ है। हम अब भी फोन पर एक दुसरे का हाल—चाल पूछते रहते हैं। जमीन से मिले पैसों से ही घर की दो मजिलों की उस्तादी की। सारां दिन कारीगरों की निर्माणी करती और स्तर काम उत्तम ठग के साथ करवाती। मुझे कुछ करने ही न देती। प्रातःकाल दफ्तर जाने के समय पर वह अलमारी में से मेरे कपड़े निकालती; पहनाती — टाई बींगती, जुर्पटी देतीं...

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मेरे 44 सालों के साथ में उस ने सिर्फ खुद खुद ही सुख दिया। तभी हंस तो यह है कि मैं अपने घर में एक महाराजा की तरह रहा था। रिटायररेंट के बाद भी मैं जयपुर तो समय अपने कंप्यूटर वाले कमरे में काम करता रहता। खाना खाने के समय पर उसने कहना— उठ जाओ अब। बहुत टाइम हो गया। बाकी काल कर लेना।

हर प्रातःकाल मेरे उठने से पहले चाचा कन्हा लेती थी और फिर आवाज लगाती— उठ जाओ ..., उठ जाओ। मैं अक्सर नींद का ओर आनंद लेने के लिए आंखें मूंद कर पड़ा रहता। उस के जाने से कुछ दिन पहले ही मैंने मजाक में कहा था— किसी दिन तुम खुद उठ जाओ... उठ जाओ... कहती रह जाएगी — और मैं अनन्त नींद में चला गया होता था। परन्तु उसने कुछ गलती से दु:ख इंकार करवा दिया— इतने नींद के बाद भी ही ही ही होता था। मैं उसे कई बार कहता कि वह भी अपना चौकाप करवा ले... इं. सी. जी... इसको... ऐंजीयोग्राफी... पर उस ने हमेशा न ही की। बेटा राम भी कहता परन्तु उसके बाद न मानी।

वह अपनी मृत्यु की मालिक थी। जो चाहती थी वह करवा कर साँस लेती थी। उसने हमेशा रोव के साथ अपना जीवन जिया... चाहे उसे अपने माता—पिता का पार था और चाहे मेरे साथ इस अपने घर में। उस दोनों घरों में नंबर एक पोजीशन पर बन कर रही। वह को अपने मुनाफिक चलने के लिए ही कहती। घर के सभी काम आप ही करती थी। न मेरी मदद लेती थी न कुछ बताती थी कि कौन सा काम क्यों करना है। उसके नंबर 13 कहीं बसका यह भी नहीं बताया था कि कपड़े धोने वाली मशीन कैसे चलाई जाती है।

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बहुत कुछ है उसके बारे में लिखने को। वस अब तो बार—बार यही सोचता हूँ कि यह जो हुआ, सब मेरी समझ से बाहर है। इस साल 2017 पहले महीने जनवरी की पूरी तारीख को उस का जन्म दिन मनाया गया था। और फिर आठ दिन बाद लोहिड़ा का दिन 13 जनवरी। सारा दिन वह अपनी छोटी सी की तरह काम करती रही। दोपहर को रीवा को स्कूल बस से ले कर आई। और आ कर कहा— "मुझे पांक में चक्कर आया है।" वह समझते रहे कि कमजोरी हो गई होगी या बल्ले प्रेश घट गया होगा। परन्तु वह यद आ कर पहले की तरह ही काम पर लग पड़ी। शाम की लोहिड़ा खुद जलाई। इसमें छोटी पोती माता ने महीनों की युगल की हुई थी और उस की पहली लोहिड़ी थी। कहीं बहुत रूही अभीष्ट तो मिलने के लिए कुछ दिनों के लिए आई हुई थी। छोटी बहु खिली उसके साथ ले कर लोहिड़ा—ईतना में मदद रही थी। वह इस आग के आस पास बैठे कर लोहिड़ा का आनंद लेंगे थे। साथ ही सभी राम के सूसराल पर जाने के लिए तैयार थे। उसने उसचे खुद ही है कि मैं कपड़े बदल लूं—नये प्रेश किये। मैंने एक बार कहा— जो पहनाए हैं, ठीक ही हैं परन्तु उस का देखा कहाने पर मैंने कपड़े बदल लिये। अब सभी तैयार थे— सर्व उस के। मैंने कहा कि अब वह मेरे कपड़े बदल ले और फिर वह चलते हैं। वह कुछ से उठी... एक तल—तल्दू थाली में से उठाया, उस के दो हिस्से कहे और एक हिस्सा मुझे देने के लिए हाथ मेरे तरफ़ बढ़ाया। मैंने कहा— यह हिस्सा कुछ बढ़ा है, मुझे दूसरा दे दे, छोटा वाला। परन्तु उसने मुस्कराते हुए कहा— खा लो। वस यह उस के आखिरी शब्द थे मेरे लिए, और मुझे दी—

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आखिरी मिटटा... तिल-लड़ू का एक हिस्सा। उस के बाद वह गुस्सालखाने चली गई... कपड़े बदलने परस्तु ईसव की कभी, क्या हुआ और कैसे हुआ वह वहाँ से बाहर नहीं आई। 8-10 मिनट के बाद बृहदः राम उसे आवाज़ देने गया परस्तु अंदर से कोई जवाब नहीं आया। दरवाज़ा खटखटाया। कोई जवाब नहीं। फिर गुस्सालखाने के दूसरे दरवाज़े की तरफ गया जिस की चिटकनी अंदर से खुली थी। ....फिर एक चीख... एक और चीख... राम चीख रहा था— मा... मा... मामा ... मामा ... हम सब अंदर भागे। वह गुस्सालखाने में निद्राल पड़ी थी। बहुत मुश्किल के रात उठा कर उसे बाहर निकाला गया परस्तु वह जैसे खल हो चुकी थी। फिर भी हस्पताल ले गए परस्तु वह क्या कर सकते थे... सिवाए दीर्घ का सत्तिफिकेट देने के। वह रात एक सब से काली रात थी। मेरी आवाज खूब रो—रो कर बेहाल होने के बाद आखिर शांत हो गई।

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मुझे मेरी मां याद आई। मेरी मां ने अपना आखिरी सांस कैसे लिया होगा, मैंने नहीं देखा। मेरे पत्नी ने अपना आखिरी सांस कैसे लिया होगा, मैंने नहीं देखा। जब मां का देहात हुआ मैं घर पर नहीं था, हबेली में था। मैं वहाँ कुछ दोस्तों के साथ रात को पढ़ता था और वहाँ ही सोता था। मैं के चले जाने पर मी भी खूब रोया था। उस समय मेरी उम्र सिर्फ 14-15 साल की थी। मैं बार-बार चीखा था—'मैं अनाथ हो गया हूँ... मैं अनाथ हो गया हूँ।' अब पत्नी के अर्काल चले जाने पर मी भी चीखा था—‘मेरे फिर अनाथ हो गया हूँ।’ परस्तु वह चीख केवल मैंने ही सुनी... अपने अंदर, और किसी ने भी नहीं सुनी।

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हैरान हुए, वह अंकली कैसे चली गई एकदम। सारी उस यह कभी कहीं अंकली नहीं गयी थी... सिवा तीन बार अंकली के। दो बार तो वह बड़ी बड़ी के दोनों पुत्रों के जन्म के समय। विवाह के बाद के लगभग 44 साल वह अपने माता पिता के घर भी अंकली कभी नहीं गयी थी, मुझे साथ ले कर जाती थी। अगर वहाँ रात रहना होता तो हम दोनों ही रहते। इस तरह उसकी बहनों के घर भी। बाजार भी कभी वह अंकली नहीं जाती थी। कोई भी खिची-फरोखत करनी होती मुझे साथ ले कर जाती या फिर मैं अंकली ले आता। गली की कई ओरों एक दूसरी को साथ लेकर बाजार जाती, मंदिर जाती। मैंने उसे बहुत बार कहा कि तू भी इने के साथ चल—फिर आया कर, और नहीं तो मंदिर ही जा आया कर जो घर के नजदीक ही है ... अपने किसी बहन के पास जा आया कर... बेशक वहाँ दो चार दिन रह लिया कर। परस्तु नहीं, उस ने कहा— मैं आपको यहाँ घर में अच्छी नहीं लगती? मुझे घर से बाहर जाने के लिए क्यों कहते हो। परस्तु वह क्या हुआ कि वह अनन्त समय के लिए अंकली ही चली गयी – हमें रोते बिलखते छोड़ कर। कोई बीमारी हो, इलाज चल रहा हो तो समझ आती है परस्तु चलते फिरते ...वस, समझ से बाहर की बात है।

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उस के चले जाने की जुड़वाई असहनीय है। जिन्दगी मुश्किल तो हो दी गई है परस्तु ऐसे जगहाता है जैसे सब कुछ खल हो गया हो... और मी भी खल हो जाओगा। दोष क्रिया, रिस्तेदार कहते हैं — सम्र कर, ईश्वर का आदेश मान। यह कहना आसान है परस्तु जिस...
तन लागे बोही जाने... कोई हल नहीं है। हॉं, मीत का कोई हल नहीं है। मीत का हल सिर्फ मीत ही है।

उससे साथ 44 वर्ष बिताने के बाद जिन्होंने इन आखिरी वर्षों में आ कर वह मेरे लिए सिर्फ एक औरत, एक फली या धर्म पत्नी ही नहीं थी, बल्कि वह और भी बहुत कुछ थी— हॉं, मेरे लिए वह बहुत कुछ थी... बहुत कुछ ... और रहेगी ... ...

वह सिर्फ एक औरत ही नहीं थी
न ही केवल वह एक पत्नी थी
एक धर्म पत्नी।
बल्कि वह इन सब से अधिक
और भी बहुत कुछ थी
हॉं, मेरे लिए वह बहुत कुछ थी।

उस के साथ मेरा 44 वर्षों का
निरंतर साथ ऐसे श्रीता—
जैसे कल की ही बात हो।
भीं तो जैसे सुखद साथ
शुरू हुआ ही था।
मेरी हर सुबह, हर शाम
दिन रात उसको सुनते
या सुनाते कैसे बीत जाती
पता ही न लगता।

आखिरी दिन तक
आखिरी घड़ी तक
जब तक उसे देखा
वह घर का सारा काम करती रही
जैसे हर रोज करती थी।

सब कुछ खुद करना
जैसे किसी और से कुछ भी करवाना
उसे मिल न हो
या उस में उसकी तसली न हो।
सुबह की चाय बनाने से
ले कर रात की रोटी तक
वह मेरे ही लिए
मेरी पसंद के लिए ही
सब कुछ करती थी।

कभी सोचा भी नहीं था
कि इतना तारा सुख
किसी समय पर आचार चिन जायेगा
क्योंकि ऐसा
न तो उसने कभी कहा
और न ही हमने सोचा।

मैं उस शहनशाह
की तरह जी रहा था
जो केवल बाहरी मुशिकलों
के बारे में ही सोचता है
और घर आ कर
ऐसे महसूस करता है
जैसे अब कोई मुशिकल है ही नहीं।

उस से मुझे हर समय
एक माँ जैसा दुलार मिलता
एक बहन जैसा स्नेह
एक महबूब जैसा प्यार
और पत्नी वाला सुख

वह एक मुकम्मल औरत थी
एक मुकम्मल पत्नी
एक मुकम्मल माँ

सब की माँ
मेरी और मेरे बच्चों की माँ
और उनके बच्चों की एक मुकम्मल दादी—मां

और इन सब से अधिक
वह बहुत कुछ और भी थी
हॉं, मेरे लिए वह बहुत कुछ थी...

बहुत कुछ...

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चरणजीत लाल ‘तसकीन’

"क्या मैंने भी उस के साथ इनसफ किया है?” इन्हीं ख्यालों में झूठे हुए मैंने कंप्यूटर खोला और यू–टियूब प्रोग्राम पर जा कर एक पुराना धारावाहिक देखने लगा।

"लाली, सभी लोग कहते हैं कि तू शैखर के साथ कदम से कदम मिला कर और कांधे से कांधा मिला कर चलती है। लोग तेरी बुद्धि प्रशंसा करते हैं।" 

यह शब्द धारावाहिक की एक लड़की पात्र दूसरी पात्र लड़की से कह रही थी। इन बोलों के बाद मैंने यू–टियूब के गहरे सागर में धंकेल दिया। मैं सोचने लगा, कि मेरी वह जीवन साथी, जो मुझे को जिन्दगी के यह आख्यायित प्रकाश में एकला छोड़ गई है, वह भी तो मेरे साथ कदम से कदम मिला कर और कांधे से कांधा मिला कर चलती थी। मैंने अपनी जिन्दगी में उस की इस खूबी की कभी कदम नहीं की। उस के इस महान सहयोग को सराहा नहीं। मैं उस के इस सहयोग को उस का कर्ता समझ कर नजर-अंदाज करता रहा। यह सोचते-सोचते मुझे जीवन की कई घटनाएं याद आ गईं।

एक रात, जब मैं उद्वृि दे के एक सातार्क अखबार में कातिब के तीर पर काम करता था तो रात को अपनी डबुडी से फारा हो कर तकरीबन साढ़े नौ बजे घर वापस पुंढ़ा। उसे तरी, मेरी पत्नी ने मुझे से कहा, “जया जयदी आ जाए तो।”

मैंने कहा, “अखबार का काम कुछ अधिक था इसलिए लेट हो गया। चल, जो भी बनाया है ले आ। फिर थोड़ा आराम करें, थक गया हूँ।”

“आज तो कुछ भी घर में बनाने के लिए नहीं था। इस लिए मैं क्या बनाती?”

“कुछ भी नहीं था?”

घर का सारा राशन वही लाली थी। मुझे तो आठ दाल का भाव भी पता नहीं था। सारा घर तो वही संभाली थी। मेरा काम था कभी कर लाना, उस का काम था घर चलाना। वह बिलकुल अंगूठा छाया था, फिर भी वह समझदारी में मेरी अपेक्षा से कई गुणा अच्छी थी। उस की याददाश्त गजब की थी। पूरानी से पूरानी चीजें भी मांगी तो वह तुरंत मिलकर कर ला देती थी। अनपढ़ होने के बावजूद वह एक बुजुर्ग रीकार्ड-कीपर थी।

मैंने एक बार फिर उस की तरफ हैरानी से देखा और कहा “कु....कु....कुछ भी नहीं था?”

“नहीं।”

“क्या बच्चों ने भी कुछ नहीं खाया?”

उसने ना मैं सिर हिला कर कहा- “कुछ नहीं। मैं क्या करती।” उसने मेरी तरफ लाखारी से देखते हुए कहा।

मैंने अपनी जेब में हाथ डाला, लिफ्र एक रुपए का नोट मिला, जो मैंने साइकिल को पैकिंग लगाने के लिए रखा हुआ था। मैं हड़बड़ा गया। चारपाई पर बैठे अपनी लाखारी की तरफ देखा जो मेरी तरफ अपनी बेबस और लाखारी आंखों से देख रहे थे।

मैं सोचने लगा और बुझुवड़ाया, बच्चे भी भूखे, पैसा भी नहीं, घर में खाने को भी नहीं, मेरा
किसी दुकानदार से उचार भी नहीं चलता? रात का समय, अब क्या किया जाए? इसी उद्धेद—जब में मे उठा, मेरी बोली चंचल, जो नौ समय दस साल की थी, बोली—
“कोई बात नहीं बाउप जी, आप परेशान ना हों, हम भूखे ही सो जाते हैं, कल तो आटा कहीं ना कहीं से आ ही जाएगा।”

यकीन जाने, लड़की के इस हौसला देने वाले शब्दों में मेरे दिल को आपनी मुद्दत में जकड़ लिया। शब्द क्या थे अरुण के बाने थे। अरुण के वह बान जिन्होंने भी शीघ्र पिटारी भाग के सीने और जिन्हा को छलनी करके रख दिया था। मे नैसरक उठाया और सोचते—सोचते 21 सैकंट में अपनी एक गुंडे बोली बहन कृप्ता के घर की तस्न चल पड़ा। घर की घंटी बजायी, दोनों पत्ती—पल्ली बाहर आए।

“भई साहिब आप? इस वक्त?” साध मेरा बाजू पकड़ कर बड़े प्यार से मुझे अन्दर ले गए।

मैंने बगैर हिंन्कचाहत के कहा— “घर में आटा नहीं है और गुंडे पत्ता भी नहीं था, मुझे पचास रुपए की जरूरत है।”

कृप्ता फूरती ने अंदर गई, पचास रुपए और एक बैजी में आटा डाल कर आई। बोली—
“लो भई जी, घर जा कर बच्चों को रोटी बना कर खिलाओ।”

मैंने आटा बागक दिया और पचास रुपए रख दिया। कहने लगी, “आटा क्यों नहीं ले जाते?” मैने जवाब दिया— “किसी,” मैं यार से कृप्ता को किसी कह कर बुलाता था, “मुझे मानून है कि तुम रुपए तो बागक ले लोगी परतु आटा बागक नहीं लोगी। दूसरी बात यह है कि मुझे सनोन की आदत क पता है उस ने मांगे हुए आटे की रोटी नहीं पकनी और ना ही खानी है। मैं जाते जाते शास्त्री मार्कोट से आटा और दूसरा सामान ले जाएगा, वहां दुकाने रात के दस ग्यारह बजे तक खुदी रहती है।”

उस वक्त जब मैं पैसे—पैसे के लिय मुताज था, उस ने कभी भी मुझे यह बोली नहीं मारी कि तुम ने सरकारी नौकरी के लिये छोड़ दिया। क्यों दूसरे की भविष्य के साथ अपने बच्चों के भविष्य को दाव पर लगा दिया? उद्धो मेरा साथ रखी नहीं। उस नृसीबाद के दिन मैंने अपने रूपांतर, अपने माता--पिता, किसी अन्य रिस्टेडार, किसी नजरदारी की दोस्त यार से मदद नहीं मांगी और ना ही अपने हालात, आपनी तंगी के बारे में किसी को बताया, क्यों कि मुझे अपनी अनखीली बीमारी का साथ मिला हुआ था। वह कहा चैन भरे रात पर उठाए हुए मेरे हर कदम के साथ कदम उठाती। मेरा हौसला टूटने नहीं देती थी। वह ही मेरी हिम्मत थी, वह ही मेरा हौसला थी। कहती ही— किसी से मदद ले ली तो वह मुझे सारी उम्र बोलीयां मारेगा। वह लोग कहने गे टुम मुझे खाते थे हम ही दुनिये काम आए है। हम ने ही दुनिया मदद की थी। मेरा सिर उस मर के लिये नीचे हो जाएगा।

माझे की रहने वाली इस अनखीली लड़की की शानी मेरे साथ 1951 में हुई थी। उस वक्त उस की उम्र कोई पंदर—सोलां साल की होगी। जब हमारे घर के छोटे से आंगन में चांदी की पांजेबों को छन्नानाती हुई घूमती थी तो मेरे पिता जी बुहत ही खुश होते थे। राजा दश्य की तरह कहते थे—
लड़कना आपने घर से आई।
राखायों नैन पलक की नियाम।

कहती थी— “हो सके तो रिश्तेदार की मदद तो कर दो, परन्तु मदद लो नहीं, सारी उमर सिर नीचे रहेगा!” उस अनस्भीली की वजह से ही मैं परिवार में हमेशा अपना सिर ऊँचा कर के चलता रहा हूँ।

सरकारी नौकरी छोड़ने के पश्चात मैं प्राइवेट नौकरी के साथ—साथ छोटी री प्रिंटिंग प्रेस भी चलाता था। प्रिंटिंग प्रेस ठीक से चलती नहीं थी। यह एक खास का सोंडा था। पर किर्र भी जब प्रेस लगा रखी थी तो उसे चलाना तो था ही न। संतोष ने 22 सैक्टर से 20 सैक्टर तक, राजभारास मला एंड बर्दज, पेपर नासांच की जुकामन तक पेदल जाना और कागज़ के एक या दो रिम निर तक उठा कर पैदल ही वापस आना। यदि मैंने कहना कि रिक्षा कर लेनी थी तो जवाब देना “क्या जारी है, यह पैसे मेरी लड़कियों की कापिया खरीदने के काम आएँगे!” जब मेरे पास प्रेस में कोड झेलें साइज़ का पोस्टर छपने के लिए आ जाना तो उस ने मेरे साथ मशीन पर खड़े हो कर कागज़ उठवाने लग जाना। कभी कोई कैलेंडर पर सोहरा छपने के लिए आ जाता तो भी वह मेरे साथ मशीन पर खड़ी हो जाती और मेरा हाथ बढ़ाती। कभी-कभी तो मेरे साथ मशीन भी साफ करने लग जाती। घर को संभालना, बच्चों की देख भाल, मेरे सारे काम जैसे कपड़े साफ और सूप से रखना आदि, घर का सारा सामान बाजार से लाना, प्रेस में मेरा साथ देना यह सभी काम वह हंसते हंसते करती थी।

एक दिन मैं अपनी बहन कृष्णा के घर गया तो वह अंदर आपने पती सुरिंदर, जिस के पार से हम छिनी कहते थे, कह रही थी, शामिल माई साहिब आते हैं तो मैं देखती हूँ ते कि वह रोजना एक जैसे ही कपड़े पहन कर आते हैं, शायद उन के पास एक ही पाजामा और कमीज हैं। परन्तु भावी जी उन के कपड़े को कितना साफ और सूचना रखती है। इस बार अगले हफ्ते जब वह ठीक लगवाने आएँगे तो मैं उन को यह बादामी रंग का कुर्ता और पाजामा दूंगी। उन को यह बादामी रंग बड़ा अच्छा लगेगा। उन्होंने मेरी भी मेरे से कुछ नहीं लिया। उन्होंने हर रात रही—ठीके के अवसर पर आपनी तोड़ीक के मुताबक मुझे कुछ ना कुछ देकर ही जाते हैं। मेरा दिल करता है कि इस बार मैं आपने माई को कुछ जरूर दूं। मेरे सिर पर उन का कर्ज है। मैं माई के पार का मोल तो नहीं चुका सकती, पर कुछ ना कुछ तो कर ही सकती हूँ ना? कृष्णा अंदर बोल रही थी और मैं बाहर दरवाजे पर खड़ा सूना रहा था। कह रही थी “छिनी यार का कोई मोल नहीं होता। यह मेरा माई मुझे सभी भाईयों से भी ज्यादा यार करता है।” मैं अंदर गया और आपनी बहन किच्चे से लिपट कर रो पड़ी। मेरी आपनी कोई साही भान नहीं थी। यह सब सन्तोष की वजह से ही था।

घर में एक ही छत वाला बिजली का पंखा था। जो मैं ने सैक्टर 22 के भारत सदर से 1960 में 20 रू महीना की दर से किशोरों पर खरीदा था। हम दोनों ही यह पंखा खरीदने गये थे। आज 58 साल हो गए हैं वह पंखा आज मेरे पास नहीं है और मुझे उन दिनों की याद बिलाता है जब सन्तोष रसोई घर में खाना बनाते बकुल पसीने से तर हो कर अपना पसीना भुकाने के
तिये में पास आ कर बैठ जाती थी। अभी पसीना पूरी तरह से सूखता था नहीं था तो कह देती थी, "रोटी लाओ? गर्म गर्म खा तो फिर टंके खाने का मजा नहीं आता।" मैंने कहा “तू पहले अपनी पसीना तो सुखा ले फिर ले आना।” उसने कहा-- “पसीना तो सूखता रहेगा पहले आप खाना खा लें।”

“अच्छा तेरी मर्जी, चल फिर ले आ और अपनी रोटी भी ले आ, दोनों ही खाते हैं।”

एक बार हालात बहुत ही खराब हो गए। मेरा बड़ा भाई अभूतपूर्व से आ गया। वह मेरे पास सीधा मेरे दफ्तर सिक्कर 21 में पुंछा। महीने की 7 तारीख थी और उस दिन मुझे पंजाब कांग्रेस पत्रिका के दफ्तर से कठोर करने की 202 रु. उजारत मिली थी। मुझे कहने लगा-- “जीत, तेरी भाषी के बच्चा होने वाला है। मुझे 200 रु. की जरूरत है।” मैंने 150 रुपए दे दिये। कहने लगा-- मैंने तो दो सी मांगे थे। मैंने जवाब दिया "मुझे 200 रुपए तो कुछ मिले हैं। मैंने मकन का 50 रुपए कराया भी देना है नहीं तो मालिक मकन में ग्रामन लड़ा कर बाहर फूंक देगा।" कहने लगा-- चल ठीक है और औपचारिक चलन लगा। मैंने कहा चल घर चल, खाना खा कर जाना।

“नहीं मुझे जल्दी है, तेरी भाषी ने कहा था जल्दी आ जाना।” उसके तुल्य।

पर आकर मैंने संस्कृत को जब पत्रिका रुपए दिये तो उसने मेरे गूह की तरफ देखा। मैंने कहा "150 रुपए भाई निर्देशार्थी ले गिया है, भाषी के बच्चा होने वाला है।" उस ने पत्रिका रुपए हाथ में लिए-लिए मेरी तरफ फिर देखा, मुझे से तो कुछ नहीं बोली पर मुझे लगा जैसे कह रही हो – “महीना भर खाना क्या है? रास्ता भी लाता है, बच्चों की पूस भी देनी है, बिजली-पानी का बिल भी भरना है।” उस महीने मैंने, मेरे बच्चों के और संस्कृत के अखबार की रद्दी के ठिकाने बना-बना कर बाजार में दुकानों पर बेचे और गुजारा किया। कभी मैंने एक रोटी सेवाओं और कभी संस्कृत ने। सात-आठ दिन के बाद मेरा दोस्त सिंगदर लाल मुझे मिलने घर आ गया। कहने लगा "चरणजीत, मैंने पिछले हजारे तेरे भाई निर्देशार्थी लाल की लुधियाना में देखा था। यह उस के लो में भड़े ठाठ है। वह तो कविवर की सिंगरिट पी रहा था। नये बूट भी पहन रखे थे। लगता था जैसे-जैसे दो घंटे लगा भी रहती हो।”

मैं सोचने लगा तो यह कह रहा था मैंने सीधे जल्दी घर जाना है, वह लुधियाना कैसे रुक गया। संस्कृत ने मेरी तरफ देखा मानो कह रही हो-- “और करो भाई की मदद। जिस को पैसे दिए वह तो शराबे पी रहा है और हमारे बच्चे लफाफे बना-बना कर रोटी खा रहे हैं।” मूंह से तो मैंने भी कुछ न कहा पर मेरा सिर नीचे ढुक गया।

बुधबार, "घर इस तरह नहीं आए कि बच्चों को एक रुपया देना पड़ा।" मेरी शर्मिन्दगी को देखते हुए बात को पनन गई। चलो छोड़ो, इस बात को। हमारी कर्मी हमारे साथ, उन की उन के साथ। चाय पियो, सकन्दर भाई जी बहुत दिनों के बाद हमारे घर आए है।" एक बार की बात है- मेरी प्रिटिंग प्रेस की बड़ी गर्मी खराब हो गई। गर्मी लुधियाना से ठीक करवानी थी। जिसमें दो दिन लगा जाने जरूरी थे। मैं जाता तो अखबार का काम सुनका था। मैंने कहा-- अब क्या किया जाए। कहने लगी "मुझे बताओ कहाँ से ठीक होनी है, मैं जाती हूँ।" मैंने उसको जगह के बारे में समझाया। फौरन समझ गई, वह लुधियाना की ही
तो रहने वाली थी। मशीन पर 300 रुपए खर्च आना था। उन्हें कहा— मैं ने जालंधर में के पास 400 रुपए की कमेंट खाल रखी है जो 3 महीने हुए पूरी हो चुकी है, मौं से रुपए ले आना और मशीन की बनावट दे देना। कहने लगी मैं विश्वा मित्र भाई साहिब को साथ ले लूंगी, वह वहाँ पर बिजली के महकमे में हैं, उन की वाकफियत भी होगी, हो सकता है कुछ छोटा मिल जाय। मौं बाप और छोटे बहन—भाईयों से भी मिल आई। मैंने बस की छूट पर गरारी रखवा दी और बस के कुली को कहा— सरदार जी, जरा मदद कर देना, आराम से उतार कर किसी रिक्शा वाले को कहना कि दर्सी ग्राउंड के पास लाल फोड़ी वालों के पुहुँचा दे। मला जमाना था और लोग एक दूसरे की मदद भी करते थे।

वह मशीन की गरारी ढीक करवा लाई। बापस आकर कहने लगी—आगे से मुझे जालंधर जाने के लिए मत कहना। आप जाओ ना जाओ, आप के मौं—बाप हैं, भाई—भतीजे हैं। मैं नहीं जाएँगी। मैं बड़ी बेहदज़ुरी है है। मैं अपने पैसे लौने गई थी, मदद मोगने नहीं गई थी। मौं ने पैसे को दे दिये लेकिन विवाह का घर नहीं था। मेरे साथ मेरे मांगों जैसा सालूक किया गिया।

जहाँ तक मुझे याद है, वह किसी गम हो और खुशी में तो जालंधर गयी होगी लेकिन आम पिछलने के लिए सारी विदंगी वहाँ नहीं गई। यह उस की अपमान थी।

मैं सोच रहा था कि जिस बीच ने मेरी भी भूख में भूखे रह कर मेरा साथ दिया, मेरी हर मुफिक में मेरा साथ निभाया, कभी कोई मिला—शिकंदा नहीं किया, वह उस समय जब मुझे कुछ सुख का सांस आया है, छोड़ कर वे छोटे चली गई। कभी कोई शकायत भी ना करने वाली, कोई फ्रायासी भी न करने वाली जिस ने हमेशा मेरा हीतला ही बढ़ाया, हमेशा मुझे दमस ही देती रही। वह मेरी जीवन साथी मेरे जीवन के नाटक का एसा करवार थी जिस ने अपने लिए कभी भी कुछ नहीं माँगा। कहती थी "यह तो पत्नी का फर्ज है। मैंने आपना फर्ज निभाया है। किसी पर कोई अत्यन्त धड़े ही किया है... पत्नी का फर्ज है कि वह अपने पति के हर दुख सुख में उस का साथ दे। कांगे से कांगा मिला कर चले।"

जाना तो सब को है परंतु अफसोस मुझे इस बात का है कि वह मेरा साथ इस तरीके से छोड़ गई जैसे रेल गाड़ी का कोई मुसाफिर अपना स्टेशन आने पर बिन बिताए, चुप चाप ही गाड़ी से उतर जाता है... जैसे एक फूल—माला हाथी के गते से उतर कर गिर जाती है और हाथी को उस के गिरने का पता ही नहीं चलता... ***

**Remembrance**

रोकर फजा, मे कहती सुखनवर चला गया

ये प्यार का ज्ञानी, समंदर चला गया।

The writer of this article and my dearest friend Pandit Charanjit Lal Sharma ‘Taskeen’, penned beautiful thoughts for his deceased wife. Much as he wishes in his poem at page 90, he left to join his wife in heaven. He tragically expired after an accident on 3 Jan 2018. We pray for his soul.
मौ साथ—साथ है
अनुरानी देवी (गुहाटी—असम)

मौ साथ—साथ है। हमेशा साथ रही है। जब से मैं देख दिखाई देगे मैंने मौ को अपने साथ ही महसूस किया है। बचपन में वह मुझे स्कूल छोड़ने जाती और फिर पुकार के समय मुझे चूले आती। जब मैं बड़ी हो गई तो वह मुझे दूर तक जाते देखती रहती और मेरे वापस आने का इंतजार करती। जब मैं पर आती तो मुझे चाहता बना कर देती और दिल की बातें करती। उसने हमेशा मुझे दिल लगा कर पढ़ाई करने के लिए कहा और उसे के उत्साह से ही मैं दसवीं, बी. ए. और एम. ए. कर पाई। और फिर एक कालेज में अध्ययनिका बन गई।

मुझे जीवन भर रिश्ते में वाली औरत मेरी भी ही थी। उस का जन्म असम के नलवाड़ी जिला में सुनकुम्भ गाँव में हुआ था। वह जुयादा पढ़ी सिखी तो नहीं थी परंतु वह हमेशा हमारे चार बहन—भाईयों की पढ़ाई की जिम्मेदारी खुद लेती थी। वह जानती थी कि इस समाज में पढ़ाई के बगल कुछ भी सफलता हासिल नहीं होती।

पहले जानने में लड़कियों की शादी उनकी छोटी उम्र में ही कर दी जाती थी। मेरी मौ की शादी भी सोलह वर्ष की उम्र में हो गई थी। इसी लिए शायद उसे अधिक पढ़ने का मौका न मिला। मेरे पिता जी सरकारी नौकरी में थे। इस लिए घर और बच्चों की देखभाल और पढ़ाई की जिम्मेदारी मौ के रिश्ते पर ही थी। मौ की वजह से ही हम अपने इसान बन रहे। मौ के आशीर्वाद के साथ मैं आए। अपनी परसंद के कालेज (बी. बरवा कालेज, गुहाटी) में अध्ययनिका के तीर पर काम कर रही हूँ।

घर के काम—काज के इलावा मेरी मौ समाज सेवा करने में भी हमेशा रुचि रखती रही। हमारे इलाके की महिला समाज के यह प्रशान थी। वह और भी कई अलग अलग संस्थाओं के साथ जुड़ी हुई थी। उस ने घर और समाज की जिम्मेदारी को हमेशा खदूँ के साथ निम्नाला।

मेरी मौ खुद सब के लिए खाना बनाती थी और घर के सभी सदस्यों को पहले खिला कर फिर बाद में खाना खाती थी। उसे इस तरह करना हमेशा अच्छा लगता था। उस के हाथ के बने स्वादिष्ट खाने को मैं आए भी नहीं भूल सकती। वह इतने अच्छे स्वामवाली थी कि घर में आया किसी भी मेहमान को बिना खाना खिलाये रही मेजर थी थी।

मौत कब, कहाँ और कैसे आती है, इस के बारे में कोई नहीं जान सकता। जो भी जीव पैदा होता है उस की मौत मिलित है। इसी लिए शास्त्रों में मौत को सहज के साथ स्वीकार करने पर जोर दिया गया है। लेकिन हर व्यक्ति को अपने परिवार के किसी व्यक्ति की मौत पर दुख कुछ जुयादा ही होता है। वह तकलीफ के साथ भर जाता है।

दुर्गा पूजा के दिन थे। वह सब कुछ सप्तमी बाले दिन हुआ। उस दिन मेरे पिता बहुत सारी जलवियाँ लेकर आये। उस ने ओर खाने दे मना कर दिया। मैं अपने कमरे में चली गई और रोने लगी। मेरी मौ एक प्लेट में दो जलवियों लेकर आई और
कहा - ले खा ले और मुझे अपना एक बिलाऊज भी दिया जो मुझे पसंद था और मेरे लाइज का था। उस दिन मैं ने गोभी की सब्जी बनाई थी और साथ में दाल-चावल। हम सभी खाना खा कर 11 बजे सो गए। रात साड़े ग्यारह बजे मैं ने दरवाजा खटखटाया और कहा कि उस की छाती में दर्द हो रहा है। हम ने फोरस डॉक्टर को बुलाया जो आधे गटे में आ गया। परन्तु वह तो पहले ही खत्म हो चुकी थी। कोई बीमारी नहीं थी। उससे, फिर पता नहीं क्यों अनानक दिल के दौरे के साथ वह हमेशा के लिए दम तोड़ गई। आखिर कौन सा वह मुझे कितना प्यार दे कर गई, याद करके मन मर जाता है।

मैं के देहांत के बाद अक्सर जब शाम को अकेली होती हूँ तो उस की याद बहुत सताती है। मैं की तस्वीर के आगे खड़ी हो जाती हूँ और अपना हर दुख-सुख उस के साथ साझा करती हूँ।

मेरी मौ मुझे कभी गुस्सा नहीं होती थी। मेरी हर गलती पर मुझे प्यार के साथ समझाती थी। एक घटना याद आ रही है। मैं चौथी विलास में पढ़ती थी। शाम को खेलने चली गई। मुझे वहां डॉक्टर दादा जी और आंटी जी मिल गए। वह मैं फूसते जा रहे थे। मैंने भी उनके साथ जाने की जिद की। उन्होंने कहा- तेरे माला-पिताई तुझे डांटेंगे। लेकिन मैंने कोई परवाह न की और उनके साथ चल पड़ी। जब घर बापस आई तो रात के नीचे बज चुकी थे। मेरी मौं और पिता बहुत परेशान थे। वह सांच रहे थे--- कहीं उन की बच्ची को किसी ने आगवा न कर दिया हो। पिता बहुत गुस्से में थे और मेरी पीटाई करना चाहते थे। परन्तु मेरी मौं ने मुझे एक तरफ कर दिया और अपने कमरे में ले गई। उस की ओँकों से आंसू बह रहे थे। उस ने मुझे बोझों में ले कर खूब प्यार के साथ समझाया कि आगे से इस तरह नहीं करना। मैंने कहा- ठीक है, मैं आगे से ऐसा नहीं करूँगी। उसके बाद जब मैं कहीं जाना होता तो मैं को बता कर जाती। अब मैं जब मौं नहीं है तो मैं पिता जी को बता कर जाती हूँ।

मैं के बारे में जितना भी लिया तो कम ही रहेगा। बहुत कुछ है उस के बारे लिखने के लिए। मैंने मौं को हमेशा अपने साथ महसूस किया है। वचन में जब से होश संभाग मैंने उसे हमेशा अपने साथ-साथ ही महसूस किया। आज वह बेशक शायरिक रूप से मेरे साथ नहीं है परन्तु उस का आशीर्वाद हमेशा मेरे साथ है और आज मैं उसे हर पत्त अपने अंगसंग ही महसूस करती हूँ। मैं जानती हूँ कि दुनिया की हर मौं अपने बच्चों के लिए महान और यारी होती है परन्तु मेरे लिए मौं सब से महान और सब से प्यारी थी... रही है और हमेशा रहेगी... आखिरी सोंस तक।

Ph. 97061-39983
माँ की ममता
हिरामन लांजे ‘रमानंद’ (नागपुर–महाराष्ट्र)

दुनिया में माँ की ममता से बड़कर कोई चीज नहीं है। माँ की ममता की महत्ता विश्व के सभी महान व्यक्तियों ने हमें बताई है। एक मारजी कविता के भाव है, ‘स्वामी तीनी हो जगता आईविना मिकारी’ यानि प्रत्यक्ष भगवान जो तीनों जगत का स्वामी है माँ के बिना अनाथ है।

माँ बड़ों की हो या छोटों की, धनवान की हो या गरीब की, सभी को माँ प्यारी होती है। माँ पुनः के लिए सबसे बड़ी देवी होती है, पूजनिय होती है।

जन्म देने वाली माँ का प्यार हम भूल नहीं पाते। उसी तरह माँ के समान मातृभाव दिखाकर हमें गोद में खिलाने वाली दादी या नानी और रिश्ते में अन्य महिला भी हमारे लिए मातृत्व समान का विषय होती है।

कृष्ण की माता देवकी थी। पर माता यशोदा का कृष्ण के प्रति प्यार दुलार हम सभी जानते हैं। बंदीवास में रही देवकी के स्थान पर यशोदा ने कृष्ण की परवरिश की। जन्म देने वाली माता है पर कर्त्तव्य बुद्धि से माँ की ममता दिखाकर जीवन संवारने वाली स्त्री भी माता से कम नहीं होती।

बचपन में अपनी माँ को पर्याय दुःख न आने पर किसी भी वर्ग की स्त्री का दूध पीकर जिन्होंने दिन गुजारे होंगे वे अच्छी तरह मातृत्व का मतलब समझते होंगे।

हमारा जीवन संवारने वाली गाय को हम गो माता कहते हैं। माँ के बाद गाय का दूध ही तो हमारी मूढ़ मिटाने का साधन होता है।

जिसने हमारे जीवन को सीमा और धरती की सीगात दी वह नदी भी हमारे लिए माता है।

गंगा माँ कहकर हम अभी भी दौड़े चले जाते हैं गंगा मैथुन के दर्शन के लिए।

जिस धरती पर, जिस देश में हमने जन्म लिया वह धरती वह देश को हम धर्ममाता, मातृभूमी कहते हैं। उसकी आज बाना बनाए रखने के लिए अपना जीवन तक नीचनाव कर देते हैं। समूह होने में गर्भ महसूस करते हैं। शायद ही कोई कुपुर अपनी माता से द्रोह करने की बात सोचता होगा। उसका स्वर्ग घिरकर ही होता है।

इन सभी की ममता प्यार दुलार से ही हमारा जीवन सुखमय होता है। वहन, भाषा या जीवनसाथी उन्नी भी माता समान व्यवहार से जीवन की हर कठोरियाँ में साथ निमाते हैं। कहते हैं नदी रूप लेकर माता ने अखिल भ्रमांड को अपनी गोद में समया है।

अनुभवों का खजाना दादी या नानी की याद आते ही हमें हमारा व्यवहार याद आता है।

पिता जी की आदरणीय तथा माता जी को माता समान लगने वाली दादी–परम आदरणीय स्त्री होती है। दादी ने सुख दुःख भरा जीवन यादों में सिमटा होता है। हम चाहे तो दादी से बहुत कुछ सीख सकते हैं।

परिवार में यात्सता के कारण किसी को वक्त न मिलने पर दादी का आसरा होता है।

वह अपने पोता–पोती का पक्ष लेता है। कहते हैं की कृष्ण दादी के चेहरे पर की दुरीयों अग्राध अनुभव छुपाए रहते हैं।
शरद ऋतु में पतझड़ से निर्परंप हुए पेड़ फिर हरे मरे होकर उन पर पत्ती चहकते हैं। यह दादी ने कई बार देखा होता है। सुख के बाद दुख और दुख के बाद सुख आना ही जीवन है। यह दादी जानती है। एक स्थिर होने के नाते अनुभवों से संपन्न दादी ममता का मंडार प्रतीत होती है। इसलिए दूसरों की गलती भी माफ करने की समझ दादी सिखाती है।

माँ का बाप की व्यस्तता, प्रारंभिक झगड़े हो या दुर्भाग्यवश माँ का स्वर्गवास हुआ हो या सोतेली माँ का व्यक्तिकी ठीक नहीं हो। ऐसे में दादी का सहारा अनमोल साबित होता है।

बचपन में मामा के घर जाने पर वहां भी मानी का प्यार दुलार मिलता है। कुछ समय क्यों न मिले, मानी एक बागवान की तरह हमारे बालक को संवरती है। मानी के इस प्यार को जीवन में भूल पाना ना मुमकिन है।

दादी–मानी से बचपन में सुनी कहानियां जीवन भर याद आती रहती है। लोकगीतों और लोक कथाओं के प्रति हमें बचपन में ही रुबूस कर साहित्य के प्रति समझ बढ़ाने में उनका योगदान होता है।

बुद्ध दादा–दादी नाना–मानी को हर घर में समान मिले। जिन्हें कपूरसिंह जी जोलकर अपनी संतोष को काव्यिलित दी उन्हें दलती उमर में बोझ समझकर उनसे दुर्वेद्यव्यर्थता हो या उन्हें बुद्धश्रम में रखा जाए यह बच्चों को कभी बदोलत नहीं करना चाहिए।

माँ का बाप दोनों नौकरी करने वाले परिवारों में बच्चों की देखभाल और सुखा की दूरी से बुद्ध माता–पिता का परिवार में होना बहुत जरूरी है। उनके लिए नहीं पर अपने स्वार्थ के खातिर हम यह देखें कि परिवार में उनको जगह मिले–समान मिले। पैसा देकर प्यार दुलार नहीं खरीदा जा सकता। अपनात्मक–ममत रखने वाले मातृत्ववाद रखने वाले अपनों से बढ़कर कोई सेवानीहीं दे सकता।

गोमाता को कसाई खाने में भेजने वाले और माँ का बाप को घर से निकाल देने वाले में कथा अंतर होगा। जिन्होंने जितना यह हम समझ पाएंगे वहीं अच्छी राशिवात होगी।

जिन्हें परिवार में प्यार मिला वे घर्घ है। जिन्हें यह सन्मान नहीं मिला उन्हें सब कुछ मिलने पर भी कुछ कमी जरूर महसूस होती है। बिना कट्टर से मानों में मिला उसे संजोगकर रखे उसपर गर्व कर। देहात में आज भी संयुक्त परिवार में दादा–दादी, मानी–नानी बच्चों से प्यार करते दिखाई देते हैं।

हम देखते हैं की खेती के काम में लगे परिवारों में समस्याएं उम्मकर आती है। चाहकर भी माँ–बाप बच्चों से प्यार नहीं जता जाते हैं। कभी कभी प्यार की भूरत कहीं जाने वाली माँ बच्चों को मारती है – लाझन करती है। पर यह तात्कालिक प्रक्रिया होती है। कुछ ही क्षणों में बच्चों को गोद में लेकर रोती महिलाएं हमने देखी हैं। फिर दादी प्यार से सहान कर माँ की कभी भी दूर करेंगी। माँ तो फिर काम में लग जाएगी।

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Kafila Intercontinental/2017/87
जीवित रहोगी सदा  
(अपनी मौं की याद में)  
आरती कुमारी (बिहार)

नहीं उसने अंक 
मेरे हिस्से का सूर्ज 
उसकी चमक 
तुम्हारे चेहरे से थी माँ!  

नहीं खिलाने कल 
मेरे लिए पूल 
उसकी गंगा, उसकी खुशाबू 
सब तुम्हारी हींसी से थी माँ!  

थम सी गई है नया 
ढूढ़ रही है 
मेरा दिल.... 
जो तुम्हारे 
धब्बनों के साथ ही 
धड़कता था माँ!

आज से रातें भी 
हो गई हैं सर्द 
तुम्हारी गोद की गरमाहट 
ममता का आंचल 
सब.... 
मुझसे छूट गया है माँ!  

हमे बोलना सिखाया 
लोही सुना 
कई राजमार किए तुमने 
पर खुद आज 
खामाशी की चादर तान 
बर्फ़ू सो गई हो माँ!  

झूंगली पकड़ चलना सिखाया 
और आज 

न जाने किस अंतहीन यात्रा पर 
सवं निकल पड़ी हो माँ!  

जुग रही हूं मैं 
सवं ही.. अकेले 
मेरा साहस, संबल 
सब तुम ही तो थी माँ!  

पर तुम मुझसे 
चाहे कितनी भी दूर 
बर्फू न चली जाओ 
हिस्सा हूं मैं 
तुम्हारे वजूद का 
जीवित रहोगी तुम 
सदेव 
मुझसे...

Ph. 8084505505 
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***

नारी को सम्मान दो  
अनीता ठक्कर (मुंबई)

नारी को सम्मान दो 
जीने का उसे अधिकार दो 
बंद करो यह भ्रूण हत्या 
परिणाम इसका हमें नहीं पता 

बिन नारी यह जग अंधेरा 
नारी बिन कटे न यह जनम का फेरा 
नारी पुरूष की स्त्री है वही नारी माता है 
न जाने यह नारी से हम सबका क्या नाता है 
कई उसे खोता है, कोई उसे पाता है 
वही राम की सीता है, वही कुश्य की राधा है 
वही रांझा की हीर है, वही मजनू की लैला 
नारी के बिन यह पुरूष बिलकुल अकेला
नारी प्रेम की गाथा है, नारी प्रेम का रूप बिन नारी यह संसार, लगे कंसे कि रूप
इसलिए नारी को समान दो
जीने का उसे अधिकार दो।

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यो बांथे हाथ वाली औरत
बालचो बालचय (बुल्गारिया)
अनुवाद: मोना (मोराक्शी कृष्ण)

ट्रेन पर करती है यात्रा अकेले
और खिड़की पर चिल्लाती है नाम तुम्हारा
लुभ पर चोकर में है, कहने हो शतरंज —
अँधेरे में —
अकेले अपने आप से — यानि कि तुम हो

माँ जी . धी सिंह (बिहार)

एक अद्वंत निर्धन विवाह
अपनी झोपड़ी के सामने
एक टूटी खाट पर आँधे लेटी
पास में जमीन पर बैठे अपने
पैंत वर्षीय बेटे को सूखी रोटी
चाली देख आहत थी।
बालक ऊपर लेटी माँ को देख
बोला — ममी, नमक दे दो।
झोपड़ी के अन्दर सारे मिठी के बर्तन
खाली पड़े थे।
माँ बेटे को नमक भी नहीं दे पाई थी।
माँ का दिल दुःखिया में दूरा था,
ओँसुओं के शीताब उमड़ चले थे।
ओँसुओं की बुंदें लगातार नीचे बेटे के
हाथ में पड़ी रोटी पर गिरने लगी थी।
रोटी का दुःखिया मुख में डालते हुए
बेटे ने चहक कर कहा था—
माँ, रहने दो, अब नमक नहीं चाहिए।

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***

तनहाई
बच्ची की लाल ‘तस्कीन’

तन्हा हुए इहसास हुआ
dिन में दिन रात भी होते हैं
और हर एक दिन तनहाई के
चौबूस घटे होते हैं।

तन्हा हुए इहसास हुआ
हम बाकी—ए हयात तो हैं
Mr. Charanjit Lal ‘Taskeen’ is no more with us. He left to his heavenly abode on 3 Jan. 2018. May his soul rest in peace. Kindly also see page 83.
फिर से भाईयों को मिलने का दिल करता है, पिता भी सब को याद कर हिचकिसी भरता है।
मां तू फिर बीमार कब होगी,
लंबी हो उम्र तेरी,
मगर तू फिर से अघोरी सी कब होगी,
यथा तू फिर बीमार कब होगी,
मां तू फिर बीमार कब होगी।

***

को जाता बचपन अगर उसे
ममता की नाव नहीं मिलती
माँ के प्यारे से ऑटल की
जो शीतल छोटा नहीं मिलती
मां से उल्लास है कण–कण में
माँ तो खुफ्नूब की कथरी है
माँ जैसा कोई और नहीं
मां जग में सबसे प्यारी है

***

माँ जैसा कोई और नहीं
देवमणि पाण्डेय (गुजरात)

ममता से रोशन दिल अपना
माँ से दुनिया उजियारी है
सब पूछो तो बस माँ के ही
कदमो में जन्तत सारी है
मीठी मीठी थपकी देकर
माँ जिस पल लोशी गाती है
तब नींद से महकी ऑक्सों में
परियों की दोली आती है

जीवन के सफर में जब दुनिया
कोटों से रह सजाती है
बनकर फूलों की बादर तब
माँ धरती पर बिछ जाती है
कितनी भी धूप कड़ी दुख की
माँ कभी न हिम्मत हारी है
माँ ने अपनी हर एक खुशी
अपने बच्चों पर वारी है

पढ़–लिखकर जब बन गए हैं कुछ
परिचम की हवा में झूल गए
धन–दीलत, शोहरत मिलते ही
अपनी माँ को वो मूल गए।

अक्सर ही
हरदेव चौहान (बंडीगढ़)

अक्सर ही
कहां अंदर, बाहर
जाने से पहले
गुलाबी वाश बेसन में झाकते
बीस में पिक्सल के
कौरे बाला
अक्स दिखता है
साफ, शाफाफ़
और मुंह, हाथ घोने से
इन्कारी हो जाता है मन–
कहाँ वाश बेसन की बचमक
फूली न पड़ जाए
फेस वाश
और पानी–छीटों के साथ–
बिन बनाये
बिन पूछे
और भी जरूरते,
होती रहती पूरी
मसलन
पैंट, कमीज का कम्बीनेशन...

Kafka Intercontinental/2017/91
स्कूटर के मिरर पे
टांगा होता
मेंथिंग हैलमट...
शोलडर बैग में
रखे होते हैं
नित्य सुबह के प्रयोग, व्यवहार वाले
कागज, पत्र
जरूरी पैसे

सुबह की हो
या शाम की
चाक थाली में
हमेशा पड़ी होती है
अपेक्षित मात्रा में

शुरू फ्री
और दो, तीन
चीज विस्कूट—

बड़ा आराम
और सकृतयंगी होता है घर
बीवी की हाजिरी में
जैसे कोई
मटी कलर
ऊं का मखमली गोला
रेपर चढ़ा हुआ

भूल जाना होगा अपना मैका
करना न होगा दुखी मन
ये तेरी माँ समझाती है
मोगती है तुझे चवन।

न रहा साथ जनम्भर
माँ बाप का मान ले
इस रीत को निभाया
सीता जनक ने जान ले।

जीवन साधी का साथ न हो
ऐसा जीवन दुःखार है
पति-पत्नी साथ साथ रहें
तो सोने में सुहागा है।

बेला सुकुमार नाजुक रहे
पेड़ से सिपटकर और
नारी सौभाग्य पाकर रहे
जीवन में सबला बनकर।

इस अखिल ब्रम्हांड की
देख माता बनी है 'माया'
प्रेम से अंगाई गीत गाकर
सारा संसार गोद में खिलाया।

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***

वह औरत
कृती (३०००—४००० ई.)

तनहाई में डूबी औरत
घर आंगन में पुटाती औरत को
काश विशाल समादर मिले
जिसमें मछली—सा तेरे उसका मन
अपनों के द्वारा करने गये परों को
कालसता से निहारती

Kafka Intercontinental/2017/92
बंद कमरे में छटपटाली औरत को
काश उन्मुक्त आकाश मिले
जहाँं पंखी बनकर उड़े उसका मन
अजानन्त का प्राण लगी
सुंदर संसार से अननिःख औरत को
कमं कात की निर्मल गंगा मिले
जिसमें विद्वृती बनकर बहे उसका मन

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माँ

श्री मदहू धवन

माँ ज्योतिष्पत का कलश
माँ ज्योतिष्पत का भरा कलश
खिलखिल हैं खुशको तारे
धन धान्य ऑग्न में बिखरे
उमगर उत्साह बरे हरपल हरमरे
जीवन पावन मंगलमय हो
जब जब माँ हमको मिहारे।

माँ ज्योतिष्पत का भरा कलश
शुभ मंगल मंगल मंगल हो।
प्रति निमिष स्नेह स्वंदन हो,
नव आशा का नेहवंदन हो।
विवाह हदय का संबल हो
ममता का मधुर चुंबन हो
हर बात तुम्हारी अनुभुम हो
पितसी गृहस्थी में अनवत हो

माँ ज्योति पवन का भरा कलश
शुभ मंगलमंगल मंगल हो।
आलोकित होता कान कान
अपराजित होता जीवन रण
संकल्प सदा रहे अक्षण्ण
हे कर्म सफलता का दर्पण

श्रम स्वेद सुखद प्राण त्राण
हर बोल तेरा अमूत रामबाण।
माँ ज्योति पवन का कलश।
शुभ मंगल मंगल मंगल हो।

Note: Dr. Madhu Dhawan is no more with us. She left to her heavenly abode few months back. May her soul rest in peace.

***

गजल

मीर हलीम जैदी 'हलीम'
(बरेली-उ. प्र.)

कैसे गुजरे हमाल तेरे बगैर।
कुछ नहीं मेरी जात तेरे बगैर।
वकत ठहरा हुआ सा लगात है,
कैसे दिन और रात तेरे बगैर।
झानता हूँ कि मिल नहीं सकती,
इन ग्रामो से निजात तेरे बगैर।

दिल से पलकों पे आके ठहरी है,
आंसूओ की बरात तेरे बगैर।

बहरे जलमात्र में असीर कोई,
ऐसे कटती है रात तेरे बगैर।
तेरी तस्वीर आईना मेरा,
तुझ से करता हूँ बात तेरे बगैर।

डर है अब आके बस न जाये 'हलीम'
दिल में लालो-मनाल तेरे बगैर।

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Kafla Intercontinental/2017/93
समझ
निवेदिता जेना (ओडिशा)

वे सब बैठे थे महफिल में
हैंसते हुये और चहकते हुये.
मैं पहुँची तो पता नहीं कैसी चौंक गए सब.
हैसना, ठहाका लगाना... सब बंद.
कैसी एक चुमती हुई निर्मलता.. क्या???
माँ ने कहा था कभी....
इस दुनिया में दो तरह के लोग
एक औरत के प्रबंध से चौंकते हैं.
वाहे वह जीवन में हो या कभी में.
वे जो औरत को समझते हैं —
सिफर एक देख.
या वे जो समझते हैं उसे देखी.
देवी और देह के बीच भी रहती है,
एक औरत— एक इन्सानी मन, उन्हें नहीं है पता.

भी तो औरत के प्रबंध मात्र से
वे चौंक उठते हैं.
वाहे वह जीवन में हो या कभी में.

<nibedita.nibedita.jena0@gmail.com>

***

यह आधी रात बसंत
पदमाशा श्रा (बिहार)

यह आधी रात बसंत
चूँ ही हवा, बुनती रही सन्नाटा
शिंगुर बोलते रहे
लुप्चाप अंधेरे में झरते रहे शिरीष के पाते
सडक सुनसान थी
वह ऐसा वकत नहीं था
कि तुम्हें पुकारा जा सके
महज याद दिलाने के लिये

कि मेरी अनजुरियों
में भरे हुए मांगरे के फूल
गिर चुके थे
गो कि सुगन्ध मेरी
हथेलियों में अब भी तारी थी
न कसमें न यादे न रिश्ते
न होतों पर रुकी हुई
अब नहीं थे मेरे पास
कि तुम्हें सीप सकू
मेरी ओँखों में
टेर सावन ठहर गया था
जिन्हें रोकने की कोशिश में
मेरी पतकों कौंप रही थी
और अलबिदा लिखने से पहले
मेरी कलम थरथराने लगी थी.

Ph. 094309 38008

***

मॉँ, जीवन की सच्चाई तुम हो
झों. पंकज विरमाल (बंदौर–न. प्र.)

मॉँ, जीवन की सच्चाई तुम हो,
सीने से लगाकर खुशियाँ पाती तुम हो।
पलकों में छलकर मन से जागती तुम हो,
देख सुखों हंसता अंदर से रोती तुम हो।
मॉँ जीवन की सच्चाई तुम हो।

खूब खिलाती खुद न खाती तुम हो,
रोते मुझे देख बिलख जाती तुम हो।
मॉँ जीवन की सच्चाई तुम हो।

खुशियाँ मेरी देख जहाँ पाती तुम हो,
मायूसी पर जतन करती तुम हो।
मॉँ जीवन की सच्चाई तुम हो।
मेरी बहना  
प्रवेश धवन (नई दिल्ली)

जाने वाले किधर को चले जाते हैं,  
जाते यू कि न वापस कभी आते हैं।

दिल तड़पता है दिलने को तुझसे मेहरा,  
पर करने क्या जो जीवन तहर है गया,  
तू तो सितारों के दावों से हैं उठ गई,  
मेरे जीवन बिछोह-दरद से भर गया;  
अपने खुद में ही हम तो घुले जाते हैं,  
जाने वाले किधर को जो....

जिनंदगी का सफर जो तेसा तय हुआ,  
मेरा जीवन जुड़ा मुझसे होने लगा,  
इक शहर जो तेरे दम से आबाद था,  
तेरे जाने से यो अब है दहने लगा;  
रात-दिन जिनंदगी के दले जाते हैं,  
जाने वाले किधर को...........

न में पाती तुझे मूल बहना सच्ची,  
मेरी आँखें तुझे हर तरफ दूर्दूरी,  
कैसे समझाऊँ अपने को समझू नहीं,  
इस मरज की दवा तो कहीं भी नहीं!  
मरज 'मरज-खुदाई' साहे जाते हैं,  
जाने वाले किधर को...........

जब भी चाहा तुझे मूल से मूलना,  
तेरी मूरत हटाये न मुझ से हटे,  
अंधियों के जोरों में बैठी हुईं,  
आँखों के खोलों में यूंगे मरे;  
प्याला जीवन—ज़हर का पिये जाते हैं,  
जाने वाले किधर को...........

राहे—जीवन में हम को अगरचे कोई,  
मिल गया जो मेरे जख्म को कुछ भरे,  
जख्म—निशानी फिर भी रहेगी अमर,  
ता—उम्र टीस उसकी जायेंगे साहे;  
अब तो जो तेरे को यूं ही लिये जाते हैं,  
जाने वाले किधर को...........

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औरत

शनू चनियाल (नखनऊ-उ. प्र.)

मैं बो शोला नहीं  
जो जला के राख कर दे  
मैं बो आधी भी नहीं  
जो तवाही का मंजर दिखलाये  
मैं बो बादल भी नहीं  
जो बरस के नाश कर दे  
मैं हूं इक औरत  
जो इक नजर से इतनखाब कर दे  
मुंह में जुबां है पर चुप है  
बोले तो इनकलाब कर दे  
उसके भी हाथों में है बो ताकत  
और दिल में इतनी हिम्मत  
गर बो चाहे तो बदनीयती को खाक कर दे  
पर है बो इतनी खुदा के नजदीक  
कि खुदी को ताक पर रख  
हर बार आदमी को माफ कर दे...  

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Kafla Intercontinental/2017/95
मौं तुम हो तो रानू जनियाल (सन्तोष–उ. प्र.)

मौं तुम हो तो घरों में ताले आज भी नहीं लगते
खुदे हाथों से सवागत करती हैं घर की खिड़कियाँ
खलता नहीं है आज भी
उस दालान में घूमना
गमलें, फूलें, करी पत्ते की खुशबू सब कुछ हो वही है
वही तपकत, वही कसमन, वही ताज़े नीबूओं की खुशबू
बीतें अभी भी वैसा ही है हरा भरा मौं तुम हो तो सब कुछ वैसा है
भला सा अपना सा, मासूम, चुरत
बिलकुल तुम्हारी तरह हर कंठ सजग, सहज आंगन की तुलसी सा
पूजा के दिने सा चालीसा की चाँपाई सा
आम के गलके सा।
खड़ा मीठा, हों मेरे बचपन सा।

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राहें
बृज़ संगीता सिंह (राजस्थान)

विदिया क्या चुनना चाहगी?
क्या हो आजीविका पथ?
क्या पाना चाहगी बस नाम?
क्या आँखों में भरे हैं दाम?
कुछ आविष्कारों के मिलें ईनाम?

खो जायें फूसीत के पल,
क्या हो तेरा ऐसा काम?

बेठा पाओगी घर और बाहर में साम?
पाना चाहगी हो गुठली के दाम और आम?
नहीं होगी समबंध समाज से विशकाम!
यशवंतास तो नहीं घरेगी? फूटेगा राम!

अनवरत चलना भी नहीं सही,
चाहिए कुछ तो विश्वाम

चुनना कुछ ऐसा, जो दे सके कभी विराम
ऐसा न हो कि दिन ढलने पर भी
न के पाए शाम
मिल भी ना राको परिजनों से कर भी न पाओ अदृश्य भी आराम!

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मैं खड़ा ही रह गया
सतीश कुमार सिंह (जंगीर–छत्तीसगढ़)

तुम लिए मुखन अघरों पर हींसे फिर चल दिए
अँसूओं की देहरी पर मैं खड़ा ही रह गया।
समय के प्रतिघात को मैं नमन करता ही रहा
स्थिता की अभिन में
खूद का हवन करता रहा
किंतु मेरी साधना में ही रही कुछ कभी शायद
सिंह बनना चाहता था पर घड़ा ही रह गया।

खुबना चाहा कभी जब
हदय की गहराइयों में
मन उलझकर रह गया तब
देह की परछाईयों में
इसलिए ही आत्मा का विम्ब
टूटा जन्मानकर
संशयों के मेघ में जब मैं अढ़ा ही रह गया।
गजल

डा. शमुकेन्द्र गजल (बरेली-उ. प्र.)

फलक के चींड सितारों ने साथ छोड़ दिया।
जमी की महक विहारों ने साथ छोड़ दिया।
हमारी बजरम से क्या रठ कर गया कोई,
गुंडों की बात क्या, खारों ने साथ छोड़ दिया।
गम्भीर फिर धर था खाक हो जाना,
लगी जो आग शरारों ने साथ छोड़ दिया।

यह जिस के दम से थी रैंक हमारी महफिल में,
चला गया तो नजरों ने साथ छोड़ दिया।
अजीब मोड पे ले आई जिन्होंने मुझ को,
कि मेरे अपने सहारों ने साथ छोड़ दिया।
अजब न था कि मंगर से हम बच के आ जाते,
मगर हमारा किनारों ने साथ छोड़ दिया।

जिन्हें हम अपना समझ कर ‘गजल’ सुगम रहे सहर के होते ही तारों ने साथ छोड़ दिया।

Ph. 98376-47221

शेषी माँ

डा. शरणप्रीत कौर (चंडीगढ़)

तीखी तेज धूप में तपी
सर्द हवाओं के साथ जो पीटी
वह एक शेषी माँ

माँ कि जिसका पुत्र
पुत्र ना बनाना चाहे
माँ कि ममता मारी
ले गहरे गहरे सांस
मन ही मन पिघल जाये
वह एक शेषी माँ।

माँ ने एक पाप था किया
तभी तो बार बार वह कहती
क्या करूँ? में क्या करूँ?
ठीले से क्या कूद मरूँ?

Ph. 98376-47221

***

कण्या गांधी

डा. आतिरे कण्या गांधी (ब्रज-उ. प्र.)

यादों से एक शाम सजाईं तेरे बगैर।
सूनी पड़ी हुईं थी खुदाईं तेरे बगैर।

बे नूर कायनात की हर शय लगी मुझे,
जिस सितार भी निगम उठाईं तेरे बगैर।

यह भी हुआ कि शाम ढाली बजम भी सजी,
महफिल ही मुझको रास न आईं तेरे बगैर।

तेरे बगैर उसती रही मुझको जिंदगी,
मत पूछ कौन उस बिताईं तेरे बगैर।

पलकों पे दीप जलते रहे रात भर ‘कण्या’
इक पल भी मुझको नींद न आईं तेरे बगैर।

Ph. 98376-47221

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Kafka Intercontinental/2017/97
मैं न बनी थी सीता
न बनी थी अहल्या
इस एक श्रापी माँ
बार बार वह पुत्र कहे
मैं तो होती है माँ! बस!!
खुले बाल सफेद गुंंह
सहमी सहमी डरी डरी
इस एक श्रापी माँ
अज का पुत्र कैसे माने?
बात समय की कौन सी जानें
गूंंगी बोली माँ कहतां
पति, पिता और पुत्र तीनों 'प'
बने शरीक, बोले माँ
इस एक श्रापी माँ
मैं तो जैसे खारा दूध
दीवार में उगा बेडअर वृक्षः
पीले हुए फूलों का दुःख
गूंंगी बोली रहे तो माँ
नहीं तो वह एक श्रापी माँ।

Ph. 98556-06432

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नारी शक्ति का चित्रण
विजय राठौर (आंजनी-छत्तिसगढ़)

बो सतीकें से घर चलाती है
नौकरी भी बो करके आती है
हजार गम हो झेलती है बो
फिर भी अपना घरम निम्बारी है
जिस तरह हो निबाह करती है
कुछ भी हो, नहीं आह करती है
जब बला कोई हम पे आती है
अपने आँचल की छोह करती है

टोट को भी वो मूल जाती है
दुखी हो फिर भी मुस्कुराती है
अपने परिवार की खुशी के लिए
अपनी खुशियाँ सदा लुटाती है

वो पहली है, उसे बूढ़ाना है
उसे सब झांटों से जुझाना है
घर के भीतर वो लक्ष्मी है मानो
उसे देवी की तरह पूजना है

उसका पल भर न तिस्कर करें
हम खुले दिल से उसे प्यार करें
एक स्तंभ है वो घर के लिए
उसकी हर बात को सवीकार करें

उसका व्यवहार सीधा सादा है
कभी सीता है, कभी राधा है
हम भी पूरे नहीं हैं उसके बिन
वो हमारे बिना भी आधा है

हम जहाँ चाहें वहाँ जाती है
हम जिसे गाये,वो भी गाती है
वो अगर बात में अड़ जाये तो
उसे दिखाये हमें ले आती है

वो नहीं हमारे अदावत करती
प्राण प्राण से ही मुहब्बत करती
हम भी उसकी दुराई कर दें
वो हमारी ही वकालत करती

दिन में चिड़ियों सी वो चहकती है
रात में फूल सी महंकती है
स्वतं उसका जो चोट खाये तो
वही अंगार सी दहकती है

उसकी आँचल में सुख का सोता है
उसका ही पुष्प, पाप घोटा है
वो न हो तो मकान है समझो
उसके होने से ही घर होता है

Kafka Intercontinental/2017/98
उसके हाथों में दुनिया पतली है
उससे ही कायानात चलती है
उसके होने से वर्फ की ठंडक
जिंदगी उसके बिना जलती है
फूल है, आग है, नदी है वो
चौं है, सुख है, जिंदगी है वो
दिन में हे घूप, गुनगुनी, मीठी
रात में सिंधु चोंदीनी है वो

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माँ का कातिल
ढीं विजय विश्वेश (राजस्थान)

बो मेरी माँ
और आप भी थी
भगवान का वो
एकसात भी थी,
उसने तो दिया ही दिया
कभी कुछ माँगा
न कुछ लिया।
मेरे जीवन के आँकुर को
अपने खून में उसने सीचा,
आँखों में बसाया सीने में भींचा।
मेरी चाहतों के परिचय को
परवाज कराने के लिए
उसने मुझे अपने ही
पेख काट कर दिया,
फिर चाहे उसके लिए उसे
घर-घर मे बर्तन घिसने पड़े
या चक्की में पिस जाना पड़ा।
बो मेरी माँ
और आप भी थी।
पर हाय!

एक दिन
खूबसूरती से भी खूबसूरत
एक हसीना की खूबसूरती का
मैं शिकार हो गया,
मसीह-ए-इश्क में
बहत बीमार हो गया,
उसकी दिलकश अदाएं
उसका बेमिसाल ऊसन
मेरी रातों की नीद
और दिन का चौं
बुरा ले गया।
फिर आई
एक सुरमई शाम
पिलाया उसने
इन लफजों का जाम :-
"मुझ से ज्यादा
तुम माँ से प्यार करते हो,
तभी तो
माँ ही की बात करते हो,
जाओ! जाओ!
पहले माँ का दिल ले आओ,
फिर मुझे ले जाओ।"

महबुब की माँंग
और माँ का प्यार,
हुआ इनसे
मैं दूः दू-चार
'एक तरफ माँ का दिल
dूसरी तरफ तेरा प्यार
न मैं इस पार
न उस पार।'
फिर! मुझ मसीह-ए-इश्क ने
कर डाला वो कमाम
जिसे कहते है हराम,
सोई माँ का सीना चाक किया
और

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Kafla Intercontinental/2017/99
दिल का तोहफा साथ लिया।
अंजेरे कर
अंजेरे में भागा
तोहफा—ए—दिल दिखाना को,
ठोकर जो लगी
दिल गिर ही पड़ा;
मैंने इक जख्मी आवाज सुनी —
"बेटा!
कहीं घोट तो नहीं लगी?"
पर सुनी, अनसुनी करनी ही पड़ी
दिल दबोचा फासला तमाम किया।
रखा जो मैंने
मैं का दिल
महबूब के नाजुक कदमों में,
दिल मेरा भी चाक हुआ
शून्य उपके सूनी खंजर से :
"मैं ने तुझे
बो सब था दिया
जो भगवान
किसी को देता है,
तिस पर भी तू,
उस देवी मैं
की लाज पे
चलके आया है...।
जा!
लौट जा तू
मैं के कालिल
यह महबूब नहीं
महबूब का साया है!
जो अपनी मैं का
हो न सका
बो मेरे लिए भी पराया है!
बो मेरे लिए भी पराया है!!।"

देवदासी
विपन गिल्ल (पंजाब)

पावों में
घुमरू हों भांज
नाचती हूँ,
मीरा की तरह।
किसी शान के ठर से
उठती है पीड़ा
मन में
पर में मीरा नहीं,
देवदासी हूँ
हे देव!
में तुम्हारे ढार आई
एक मंडू हूँ
तुम्हारे दरबार पर चढ़ा
एक प्रसाद हूँ
तेरे भक्तों
और पुजारियों के लिए
हूँ एक भोग की वस्तु।
हे देव!
में तुम्हारी देवदासी
प्रतिदिन हो जाती हूँ
पवित्र
जैसे हर सुबह
tum पावन होते हो,
दूध, दीपक और कंसर से
सुगंधित परोसर में
मेरी कलाई पर खुदवाई गई
तेरे नाम की मुहरछाप
मुझे दिलाती है याद
कि में तुम्हारी दास हूँ उम्र भर
tum्हारी देवदासी।

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Kafla Intercontinental/2017/100
कहाँ हो माँ?
विरभद्र कार्तिकेयली (सिकिम)

इस वक्त तुम, कहाँ हो माँ?
कहाँ हो, कहाँ हो कहाँ हो....?

याद, करूणा, प्रेम और
आत्मीयता से परे
इस उजाड़ बंजर गुल्म में
अकेला छोड़ कर मुझे
मेरे माँ! तुम कहाँ हो?
कहाँ हो तुम?

मेरा जनन, अपनी ही भूल नहीं
मेरे जीना,
पाप ए अधर्म से जुड़ना भी नहीं
इस बंजर जमीन पर
इस मोड पर रुकवाकर
tum कहाँ हो?
tum कहाँ हो माँ? माँ! कहाँ हो?

उस शाम,
बहुत थकी हुई थी तुम
hोट सूखे थे, सूखे
याद है, मुझे
tum बेचौन थी, कलांत थी
उस अहलत में भी tum
मुरकराना चाहती थी...

उस शाम
गरम हवाएँ चल रही थी
काफी दिनों से
आसमान पर जलता सूर्य!
पूरी तरह अर्हत हो चुका था
उस शाम
आदमी! फक्त आदमी को
tलाश रही थी, tum

कुछ ज्यादा ही याद कर रही थी! तुम
अब वह शाम नहीं
muझे tumहारी याद आती है, हद!
इस वक्त तुम, कहाँ हो, माँ?

हर सुबह, हर शाम
बहने वाली हवा जब जब
छूकर गुजरती है, जीवन में
माँ! tumहारी याद आती है.
tumहारे यादगार, पलबेचौन कर देते हैं! मुझे

पता नहीं
अब किस ऋतू को वसंत कहें?
किस ऋतू को मने श्रृंगार?
Jीवन रू खिलती है, निकलती है
स्वतून मर्ती है, मर्ती जब
माँ! tumहारी याद आती है.
tumहारा सप्त चाहता हूँ
tumहारी ईश्वरीय दुनिया में
जीने को जिंदगी!
कुछ अलग है मेरे
nहीं कहेंगा किसी से
kभी तो मेरी याद
आती होगी tumहे भी

इस स्थिति, अवस्था में
मेरा मन, अंतराला, अंतर करण
सिर्फ tumहारा ही समरण करता है
यह क्षण, यह पल, tum कहाँ हो माँ?
tum कहाँ हो?.... tum कहाँ हो?...कहाँ हो?

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Kafla Intercontinental/2017/101
Nirmala’s memories

Nirmala with Dev, 1973 & 1976

Dev, Raman, Kumar and Nirmala at Jhiri (Jammu) Mata Bua Daati Darbar (Early 1980s)
Kavita, Alice, Nirmala and Surinder Kaur (Jagdeep’s mother) - 2011

Nirmala, Kavita, Kumar, Alice and I. K. Malhotra (Alice’s husband) - 1992

Kavla Intercontinental/2017/103
Jagdeep’s parents - Paramjit Singh, Surinder Kaur with Nirmala and Dev (2001)

(1) Nirmala, Arvaan, Aver, Dev and Riva - 2010  (2) Raman, Riva and Nirmala - 2012