From the Selected Works of Raam P Gokhale

December, 2013

Ten Home-Grown Poems

Raam P Gokhale
Ten Home-Grown Poems

Numbered Chronologically but Reordered as: 1,8,9,6,7,2,3,4,5,10

1. The Religion of Tea

The steam, whimsically dancing on the wind
Exhaled above the cup’s rim
As vaporous breath on a cold morning,
Is a comfort before the comfort
Of first slurped sip,
As it too joins the infinite stock of breaths, silliely saved for a rainy day.

Ginger, gingerly added, if I’ve felt like going the extra mile
Or just milk and sugar, if I feel too lazy, having already gone the extra mile.
Cup for you, mug for me; look at my mug: I’m not being greedy.
It’s just that the mug feels solid in my hand
Weighty as I ponder matters serious while you lift your cup lightly, pinky up,
Gingerly with or without any real ginger.

“Tea belongs in a cup” you remonstrate,
“A mug is for coffee.”
“Having tea in a mug, suits me to a tee” I respond,
“Being a philosopher, I mix and match.”
“Suit yourself,” you say simply (or wisely or wiseacre-ly?),
“mugs are deep…harder to clean.”
8. The Cook and the Cleaning Lady
We hired both you see
And we’re in the middle.

The cook piles on pots, pans and plates too freely to suit the cleaning lady.
And the cleaning lady complains to us but the cook is too impressive in her ‘passive aggressive’ to suit us for ordering.

We hired both you see
But yet we’re in the middle.

Perhaps we need the butler from Upstairs Downstairs.
Maybe I’m the butler and the Mrs. Is Rose from the real rose garden.

It might seem a mystery,
Though here the butler didn’t ‘do it’.

You may even ask what the butler actually did.
But me and the Mrs. know,

Because we hired all three you see
And now we’re sitting pretty, pretty much in the middle.
9. The Fridge and the AC

Having never taken the course of Air Conditioning and Refrigeration,
I naturally wondered what the difference was.
I mean I know the fridge keeps my food cold,
And the AC keeps me cold at least in the summer.
So I guess I have to know whether I'm the eater or the eaten.
But the answer is not so simple, since 'the circle of life carries us all'.
Then the light bulb came on in my head: there is no light in the AC!
So ipso facto, I must be the fridge, right?
But what about when the door to my soul is closed,
Because we all wonder whether the light really goes off then or not.
6. The Drapes

My wife seems instinctively to know when it's time to change the drapes.
I mean it's her private language, a mark in a personal diary, not something public like a calendar.
I don't understand but I chip in,
Being a chip off the old block.
She'll be wanting more deck furniture next,
To marshal my help in shuffling that deck too.
But I control the purse-strings, being both benefactee and benefactor,
And today anyway, I don't need more things I can't in principle understand.
7. Single File or Scattered Like the Sands

In wood-shop, there were files and there was sandpaper.

Both rounded corners.

The file was faster but rougher,

The sandpaper slower but smoother.

"The sandpaper for me, thank you," everyone was in a rush to say,

"I'm just at the finishing touches."
2. The Story of Pain

The story of pain is necessarily incomplete.
For part of every story is how it ends.
And the end of pain,
Perhaps its teleological end as well as temporal,
Is not pain but one of the greatest pleasures.
Oh then if life is suffering, how sweet must death be.
And if life is enjoyable…well then life is enjoyable.
3. Being Typecast

‘Gee’, I thought yesterday,

‘I’ve spent an awful lot of time being me.’

‘My whole life in fact!’

‘If I were an actor, I should worry about being typecast’.

But then again I’d be scared if Someone actually offered me a new role,

Just, I would think,

When I’m finally getting comfortable with all the lines, props, cast of characters in the present one.
4. Dinner is Served

The days are slotted spoons from which drips the fattening oil in which I’ve been frying.
The weeks are ladles in which I cradle the mess hall food I’ve prepared for hungry soldiers of fortune.
The months are place mats on which sit the carefully-washed dishes of their last supper.
The years are the guests I’ve invited, each wearing a different face as they face me expecting the Lord’s prayer.

But I exhort everyone, “Let’s eat!”, confidently dismissing the gadfly feeling that I’ve forgotten to invite someone.
5. Night Reflux

Insomnia can be a silver lining to the dark cloud that is the night.

If your thoughts have wandered off during the day like unshepherded sheep,
In the night you can gather the wooly beasts,
Even count them if you so need.
Or if they've been too penned in during the day,
At night you can set them free with paper and pen,
Or as is more likely these days, the cursory cursor,
Because even a random walk reverts to the mean,
The yin yangs and the yang yins.

What I mean is you can take comfort in this if not your jilted lover of a bed:
Too much sleep leaves insomnia in its wake,
And too much wakefulness eventually slips deliciously into sleep.
I just left my soft bed,
And the pillow for my head.
And while writing away the night,
I survey the sofa and the small pillows do invite.

Turning back to the computer I summarily dismiss the invitation,
Contemplating the rhyme-scheme, the philosophy and their ideal integration.
But the small pillows would make a good cushion for my feet, I think
As I yearn for cold water or perhaps saltier drink.
Oh, I can feel Duryodhan at my head,
& Partha unmanly by feet instead.