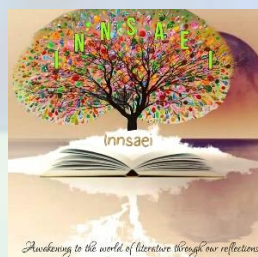


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VISION

An honest voice having the vision to provide a vibrant literary culture with the creative writers with the literary commune to promote peace and humanity in the society.

MISSION

1. To provide a vibrant literary culture among the creative writers.
2. To encourage the development of poets and writers in society.
3. An initiative to promote peace and humanity in society.
4. To provide an ambience among the literary communities to work together for a common cause.
5. To provide a platform for human expression for the deep inner expression of suppressed thoughts.
6. To encourage hidden voice from the grass-root contributors allowing them to express human values.

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Eve's Special Edition...

FOUNDERS' VOICE

Founders' Voice

Dear Readers,
Greetings!!!

The Journey Takes a Step Towards Beautiful Destinations...

The literary journey is a journey into a fantasy land... We are getting pleasant surprises through the submissions received. It is a truly mesmerizing experience for all of us on this side of the shore where there are tides after tides coming with a plethora of literary pearls. The February Issue was full of wonderful expressions Love... 💖

And this time, we announced the March Issue to be Eve's Special...

An issue devoted to Women... on the occasion of International Women's Day...

And again, to pacify our thirst, our contributors showered the submissions... We are happy that through Poetry, Short Stories, Essays, Memoir and Fiction, we could present almost all the facets of Women's lives.

Women's lives are full of unexpected turns that give jerks to their psyche. From frustrations of inequality, hopelessness to strength, the experience of cosmic Creativity, the inbuilt unrecognized power, and to the solace to be found in her inner self... everything has been portrayed in the oeuvres. After reading this issue, every reader will get the satisfaction of peeping into the hearts of Women. And because of the powerful desire to make such verses immortal, we are announcing "An Anthology of Poetry on Women's issues" to be published in a book form in October 2021.

Through this Journal, our attempt to light the lamps of Humanity and Peace in the hearts of our readers is moving towards fulfilment.

It's a great pleasure to reach different corners of the world with the hope to sow the seeds of LOVE.

The world is still under the silhouettes of the Pandemic. What is in our hands is to spread Love, Compassion and Humanity.

We hope, more and more travellers to join the journey.

INNSÆI... is in the continuous process to light the path of the readers.

In the first quarter of the New Year, we are having aspirations to march farther with more enthusiasm.

Again, we pray...

Let all the strings of human hearts be joined to create Harmony in the world...

Let all the music orchestrate itself for Peace in the world...

Let the world be a beautiful and heavenly abode forever...

Adieu...

Kind Regards,

Mr Orbindu Ganga and Dr Tejaswini Dange Patil

Founders and Literary Editorial Directors

INNSÆI

International Journal of Creative

Literature for Peace and Humanity (IJCLPH)

COVER STORY



Kamala Das (Madhavikutty or Kamala Surayya) - 31 March 1934–31 May 2009

The Contribution of Fearless and Confessional Poetry of Kamala Das in Modern Indian Poetry in English

By Ms Shristy Sinha (India)

Editorial Board Member, INNSÆI

International Journal of Creative Literature for Peace and Humanity

'A woman had to prove herself to be a good wife, a good mother, before she could become anything else. And that meant years and years of waiting. That meant waiting till the greying years. I didn't have the time to wait. I was impatient. So I started writing quite early in my life. And perhaps I was lucky. My husband appreciated the fact that I was trying to supplement the family income. So, he allowed me to write at night. After all the chores were done, after I had fed the children, fed him, cleaned up the kitchen, I was allowed to sit awake and write till morning. And that affected my health'.

Fearless forthright, and unrepressed Kamala Das took the literary world by storm with her individualistic and unapologetic voice. Popularly known as '*The Mother of Modern English Poetry*' she was a popular Indian author who wrote freely about female sexuality, love, lust and loneliness in a realistic fashion without any hint of guilt or culpability.

Kamala Das, also known as Kamala Surayya, (Madhavi Kutty, her maiden name) the new Indian poetess was born on March 31st, 1934. She is a distinguished Indian writer who composed in English as well as in Malayalam (her native language). She looks at as one of the exceptional Indian poetess writing in English even though she earned herself a name through her short stories and autobiographies which were written in the local language in Kerala (birthplace). '*I am Indian, very brown, born in Malabar*', she was very proud to exclaim that she was 'very brown'. She went on to articulate that she used to speak in three languages, wrote in two and dreamt in one.

Her writing style was different from her contemporary writers as she preferred writing personal stories and moreover did not romanticized love or any of its aspects. She was a confessional poet who fearlessly penned her experiences into her poetries. Many of Das' literary works were autobiographical where she talked about her desires, grief and

depression in a complete honesty. Her poems were eloquent and often melancholic reflecting the inner piece of a woman as an individual. A notable feature included in Kamala Das' character analysis is that she was perhaps the first Hindu woman who candidly but bluntly talked about sexual desires of Indian women making her an iconoclast of her generation.

The language that she speaks is essentially hers; the primary ideas are not a reflection but a personal impression. It is the distortions and queerness that makes it individual, in keeping with Chomsky's notion of 'performance.' And it is these imperfections that make it human. It is the language of her expression and emotion as it voices her joys, sorrows and hopes. Her style of writing has often been compared Sylvia Plath.

Married at the early age of sixteen, her husband confined her to a single room. She was ashamed of her feminist that came before time, and brought her to this predicament. This explains her claim that she was crushed by the weight of her breast and womb. She tries to overcome it by seeming tomboyish. So she cuts her hair short and adorns boyish clothes. People criticize her and tell her to 'conform' to the various womanly roles. Her first book of poetry **Summer in Calcutta** contained poems related to love lost, betrayal and loneliness- such as **The Dance of the Eunuchs**. Her second book **The Descendants** was also centered around similar themes. Love and Sex form the main theme in Kamala Das' poetry. She believes, 'love is the central emotion in woman's heart'. She craves for union with man for the fulfillment of love but she is disillusioned and frustrated. When it degenerates into sheer lustfulness and bodily pleasures, her poetry is a record of her own unfulfilled love and her own sexual exploitative world which is conspicuous by the sheer absence of love and predominance of sexual exploitation of a woman by a man. In poem after poem she is preoccupied with love, sex frustration. *'They danced, oh! They danced till they bled'*. The poetess uses the funeral imagery to portray the decrepit figure of the eunuchs: *'They were thin in limbs and dry; like half burnt logs from Funeral pyres, a drought rottenness were in each of them'*. The image creates the visual impression of the eunuchs who survive and suffer endlessly like *'half-burnt logs from funeral pyres'*. Unable to find fulfilment as a woman or to give satisfaction as one, the poetess sees in the eunuchs *'writling in vacant ecstasy'* a devastating image of her own sterility.

In the poem '**In Love**' the drama of sterile love which brings no emotional fulfilment is enacted against the background of scorching heat of the summer scene, a symbol of the poet's own scorching frustration as a woman. The title is ironic because poetess is not at all in love, but disgusted with the man who had her body.

Her autobiography **Ente Katha** similarly depicted Das' views about many subjects like her feelings towards her children, her failed marriage, experimentation of her sexuality and her extramarital affairs. The book caused many problems within her family with many of her relatives opposing the release of the book. Despite facing so many backlashes throughout her career, Kamala Das stood tall in the face of adversity and never backed down from telling her story.

She says, *'I am what I am'*. Back then, people of the society weren't ready for a woman to upfront the personal and intimate topics in public. Women were objectified and not treated or recognized them as an independent individual. They weren't allowed to even pitch up their voice leave alone presenting their own deep barrowed identity.

Being an unapologetic confessional poet, Kamala Das became a highly controversial author with many critics who did not appreciate her brutal honesty and recurring themes of sexuality in the works. Her attention towards eroticism is again a fanatical kind of unconditional honesty which was criticized during her own time.

Das presents herself as being able to use writing as a way to communicate her own confessional need. The personal need that inspires her own work is to convey 'certain weaknesses' and her own exploration of these are able to connect with both audience and her own sense of identity. It is here where I think that Das can be seen as a confessional poet. In doing so, one realizes why her work was so widely accepted and understood in that it spoke of an authenticity and transparency in construction that resonated with many. She was a typical fearless and confessional poet who poured her heart into her poetry which is largely subjective and autobiographical anguished and tortured, letting us peep into her suffering and tortured psyche. She was one if the pioneering post-independence Indian-

English poets to have contributed immensely to the growth and development of modern Indian-English poetry. She was one of the modernist writers to assert her femininity as a human in Indian literature. She has been a source of great inspiration and emulation for women with literary aspiration. Her life has been long drawn battle against a religious and cultural orthodox that frowns upon the somewhat uninhabited life style of his apparently forthright persons.

Kamala Das was a feminist ahead of her times. Her unwillingness to bow down to societal pressure and courage to speak about subjects considered taboo made her an iconoclast of her generation and an inspiration for women for many more generations. Her contribution of fearless and confessional poetry brought a revolutionary modernity in the Indian poetry in English.

About the Author



Shristy Sinha (India)

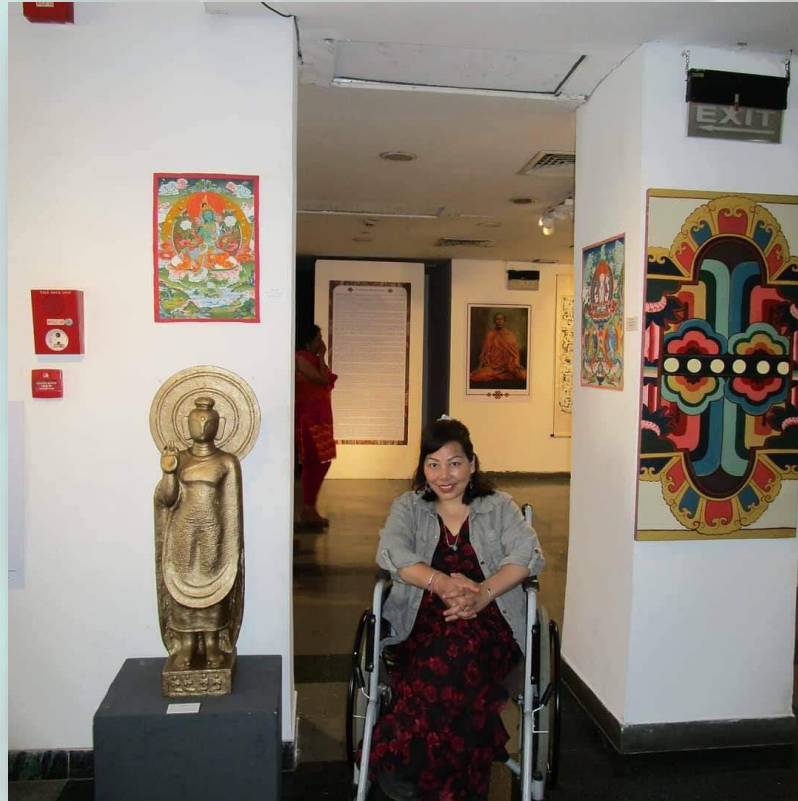
Shristy Sinha, a teacher of English Literature by profession, is also a poet, writer, and well-doing mom-blogger, who is creating an impactful online class for pre-schoolers by imparting value-based knowledge through creativity and innovations. She has a title published under her name "From All the Directions", which is an anthology of poetry depicting her varied experiences.

Despite being a graduate student in commerce and working for a US-based mortgaging firm for a few years, her love for literature kept calling her to have a double Master's degree in English Literature. She had also taken up many short-term courses in creative writing, editing and publishing, which shows her deep interest in the world of books and literature.

Apart from writing, Shristy also holds an interest in many other art forms like vocal music, sketching, painting, cooking, etc. But that is not all, her interest in some very different subjects like science, travel, and sports goes into making her a composite personality.

INTERVIEW

An Erudite Conversation with an Eximious Creator



An Erudite Conversation with Hon. Krishna Tashi Palmo

Krishna Tashi Palmo is a Thangka Painter from Manali, Kullu (Himachal Pradesh), India. Krishna on Canvas is her first Solo Exhibition in Kullu, India. She has also done exhibitions solo as well with international artists. Some of her prominent exhibitions include the ones done in Delhi Haat, Keylong Art Aesidency, Jaipur International Art Summit, Shimla National Art Fair, Delhi International Buddhist Art Exhibition and Hong Kong Kalyani Festival.

An Erudite Conversation with an Eximious Creator

Hon. Krishna Tashi Palmo (India)

by Dr Sanjeev Kumari Paul (India)

Sanju Paul: Welcome to the interview chambers of Innsaei Journal, Krishna ji.

Krishna Tashi Palmo: Thank you very much for inviting me.

Sanju P: Let me take you back to your childhood days. What was your childhood like?

Krishna: I was born in a tiny village called 'Shipting' in Lahaul as fourth daughter among five sisters in farmer family.

Sanju P: May I ask something on how did you use to see and imagine colours during your childhood? How did you relate the life around your childhood to your artworks?

Krishna: I had no colours and brushes during my childhood. I used flowers to colour paintings and drew on ground sometimes. Art was the only connection I had. I lived far from my parents who were in Lahaul because after birth I got infected with Polio Virus and I was unable to walk. My grandmother decided to bring me here to Manali, she thought it would be better to keep me in a warmer place than Lahaul.

I spent my childhood in a very lonely place in village Sajla in Manali. There were no neighbours but apple trees around. My siblings went to school, I lived alone and in that loneliness, I found my one and only friend my imagination, my paintings and reason to live and smile... my art.

Sanju P.: What is Thangka and how is this art different from regular painting? Please describe in detail.

Krishna: Thangka painting is about Buddha, Buddha's life and Buddha's philosophy...A way to enlightenment a source of peace, wisdom, compassion and meditation. Other one is based on regular human emotions happiness, sadness and freedom. Thangka demands control on skills and on emotions that lead to balanced path while my other painting needs freedom to express right or wrong; demands to just say it out any way.

Sanju P.: You belong to the tough, cold Himalayas, I mean born in Lahaul and raised in Kullu.

Krishna: I remember isolation for six months during winters in Lahaul while I was a kid. No electricity, no friends. All I had was sketch and drawing book, the only option to entertain in isolated place for me was myself, same as I had in Sajla, Manali. I couldn't go to school again. I studied up to fifth as a regular student and after that I did matriculation from open school.

Sanju P.: Do you think the altitude has something to do with the art you practice? If yes how and how much?

Krishna: I think yes...! Altitude made me live that way and that way of living made me choose the art so I didn't feel alone.

Sanju P.: Thangka, Buddha and Krishna ! How do your paintings keep three of them in centre and then weave the world around? Or is it the other way round?

Krishna: Thangka is meditation, Buddha is aim and Krishna is one who seeks peace. Three of them are dependent on each other. I make Thangka and Buddha has been created on canvas. That way, I feel myself as a creator and in the process I feel Buddha is creating me and he becomes creator and I the canvas.

Sanju P.: Something on the technique and technicality of your painting?

Krishna: Thangka painting from the beginning is like making handmade canvas and drawing in measures and coloring. It takes months to complete one Thangka. Sometimes, a whole year is taken for one Thangka. It really tests one's patience level and dedication.

Sanju P.: What about colours that you use to paint? regular ones or some special ones?

Krishna: Mostly I use natural colours on handmade cotton canvas for Thangka and Acrylic on canvas for other paintings.

Sanju P.: What I can observe in your paintings is that you have intertwined your experiences and struggles of your life into the colours and then poured them onto the canvas in the form of paintings. Is it so or do you have a different take on it. Kindly open it up a bit for our readers.

Krishna: Not only my life, not only my struggles but, I try to speak up and highlight all the difficulties I faced as women as physically challenged and as one who dreams hope in unfair situations... social stigmas how they affect me and not only me, many others like me. I try to make no wall decor. I try to speak through my art.

Sanju P.: While you do art exhibitions at different places, people carry your art in their hearts and into homes. Do you also carry or plan to carry the viewers of your art into your paintings?

Krishna: Oh yes, I carry their views, blessings, motivations and strength they reward me.

Sanju P.: Many of the art, literary, creative personalities though are appreciated by crowds, yet they have a lonely corner in their hearts. Do you also have one?

Krishna: Yes, I do have it and that loneliness keeps me creating. It works as fuel for my thoughts and imagination.

Sanju P.: How difficult or easy had been your journey as an artist, as a girl and as a human being? Some salient things that you would like convey to our readers through this interview.

Krishna: As a challenged girl from tough mountains and that too artist is deadly combination to fit in life. Places become more difficult to reach. Things become more complicated. It's difficult to mingle. Opportunities are like puzzles.

But I think I am blessed and fortunate that I got parents who never stopped me trying myself. I met great art Guru who gave his best teachings and believed in me, helped me every way possible and my sponsor parents from Paris, they supported me financially, emotionally, morally and made me complete my dream to be Thangka artist. My friends who loved me as I am and stood by me and my love, my husband who held me and improved me in every way. He is a great artist and with him I grew as artist, as human and life got easier.

Sanju P.: Had the themes or techniques of your painting been different, if the life had treated you differently?

Krishna: Yes, I think I might be part time artist and full time government servant.

Sanju P.: Do you ever or always find or try to find clarity over ambiguities through your art or is it just an expression or catharsis for your inner and outer 'self'?

Krishna: Yes, art helped me find confidence and changed my thinking process in a positive way.

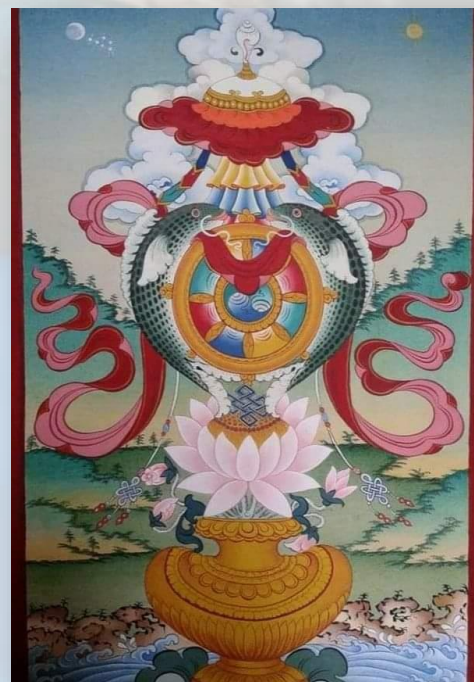
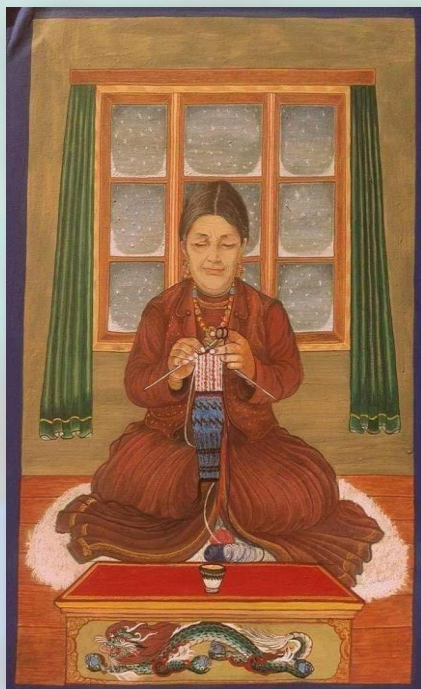
Sanju P.: Message to art enthusiasts, art lovers, literary community, as well all kinds of readers from around the world.

Krishna: Art is a great opportunity to be reborn... better again in same birth, I feel. Art life might not be very easy for everyone but artist never regrets being artist. So, my message to art lovers or artists is 'keep doing good work and stay happy and creative'.

Sanju P.: Thank You So Much, Dear Krishna for the insights you have provided to our readers.

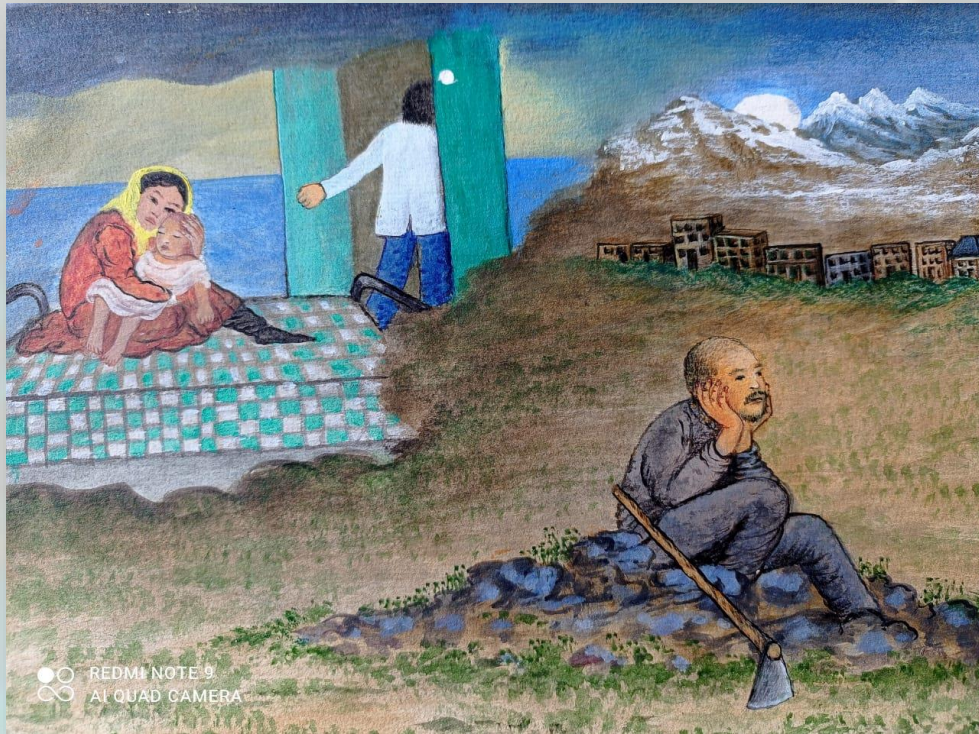
Krishna: Pleasure mine.

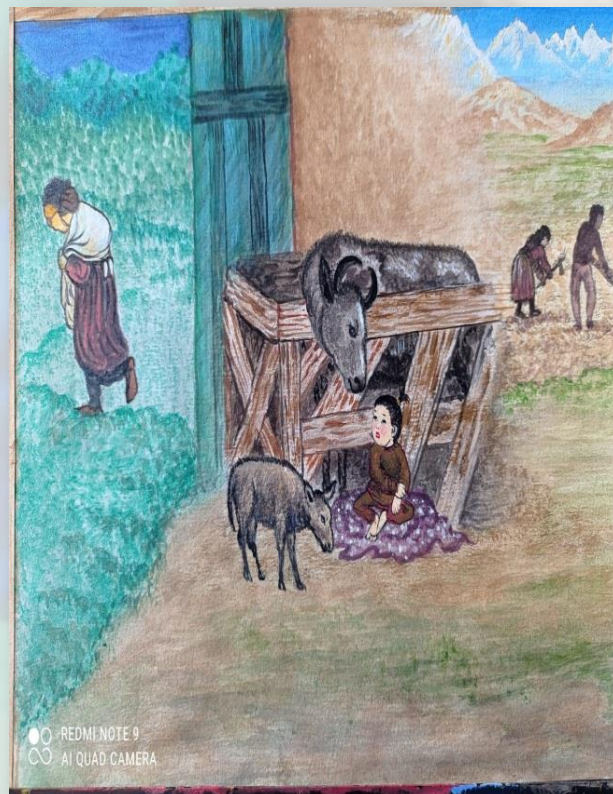
Hon. Krishna Tashi Palmo's Paintings

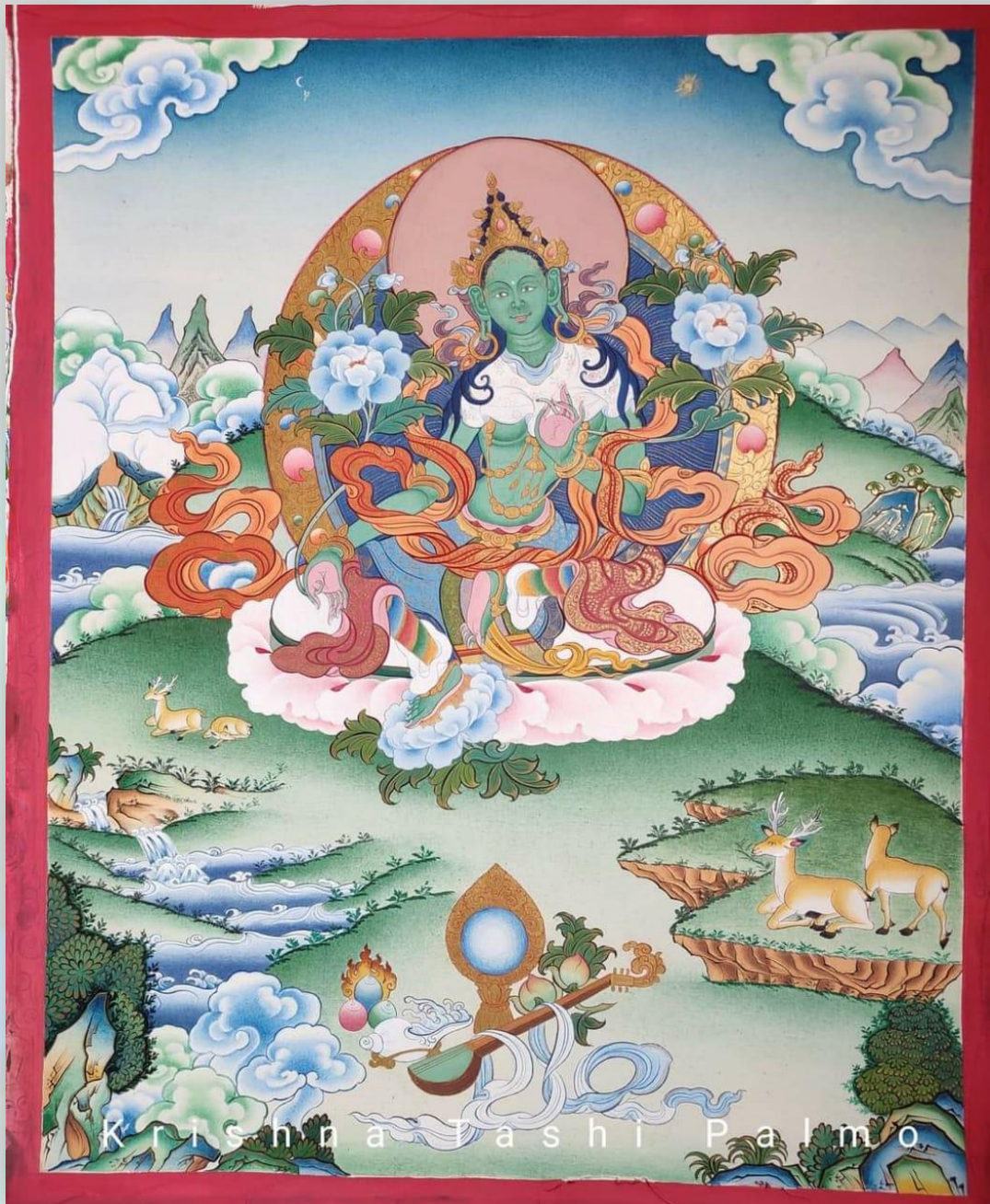












About the Interviewer



Dr Sanjeev Kumari Paul

Sanju Paul is her pen name, original being Sanjeev Kumari Paul. She is a veterinarian by profession and a poet and an artist by passion. She belongs to Himachal Pradesh (India) and has been involved in multiple projects of artistic as well as scientific temperaments ranging from very local to global ones. She has also developed an artistic technique of carved and washed paintings using discard PVC sheets as the canvas. Pen sketching is another art form she uses to express herself. Besides, she also has a short film named “*Catharsis*” to her credit.

FEATURED WRITER



Daisy Bala (The United States of America)

Daisy writes poetry and stories with embellishments of thoughts and emotions. She pours her thoughts on paper scribbling about anything and everything under the sun. She is a homemaker living in Chicago with her husband and 2 kids. She has published her nature poetry in eBook, Blossoms and Foliages, Kindle, in 2020. She has published her work in a few anthologies and loves to participate in Writing Competitions. She has been writing continuously in English and Hindi.

A WOMAN EXTRAORDINAIRE

by Ms Daisy Bala

You're pre-possessingly fatal
In your alpha-ness, in bold demeanor
Feminism in Prada is formidably lethal
Your high heels and ambitions
Rake in the glitterati
Your curvaceous aura
Fuller hips, ripe bosom
Your killing coquettish charm
Marks your phenomenal presence
And burns the world scarlet.
Your muse and contemplation
Stays ferocious and bewildering
The world is your stage, take your walk
With your usual elan!
Brandished in your quintessence,
Your nub glows in redemptive resurgence
Your wings are laden with aspirations brazen
The sky awaits your flight with earnest desires.
The world stares astoundingly
Intimidated at your savage
Your vixen temperaments, your luscious vanities
You've given up on herds, you're fiercely independent
In your spirited repartee
An embodiment of energies,
You're sensational, a goddess, a warrior
With instinctive wild spirits.
You're indulgent, you're decadent
You're impeccably attractive
A hunting seductress

You're a woman extraordinaire!!



POETRY

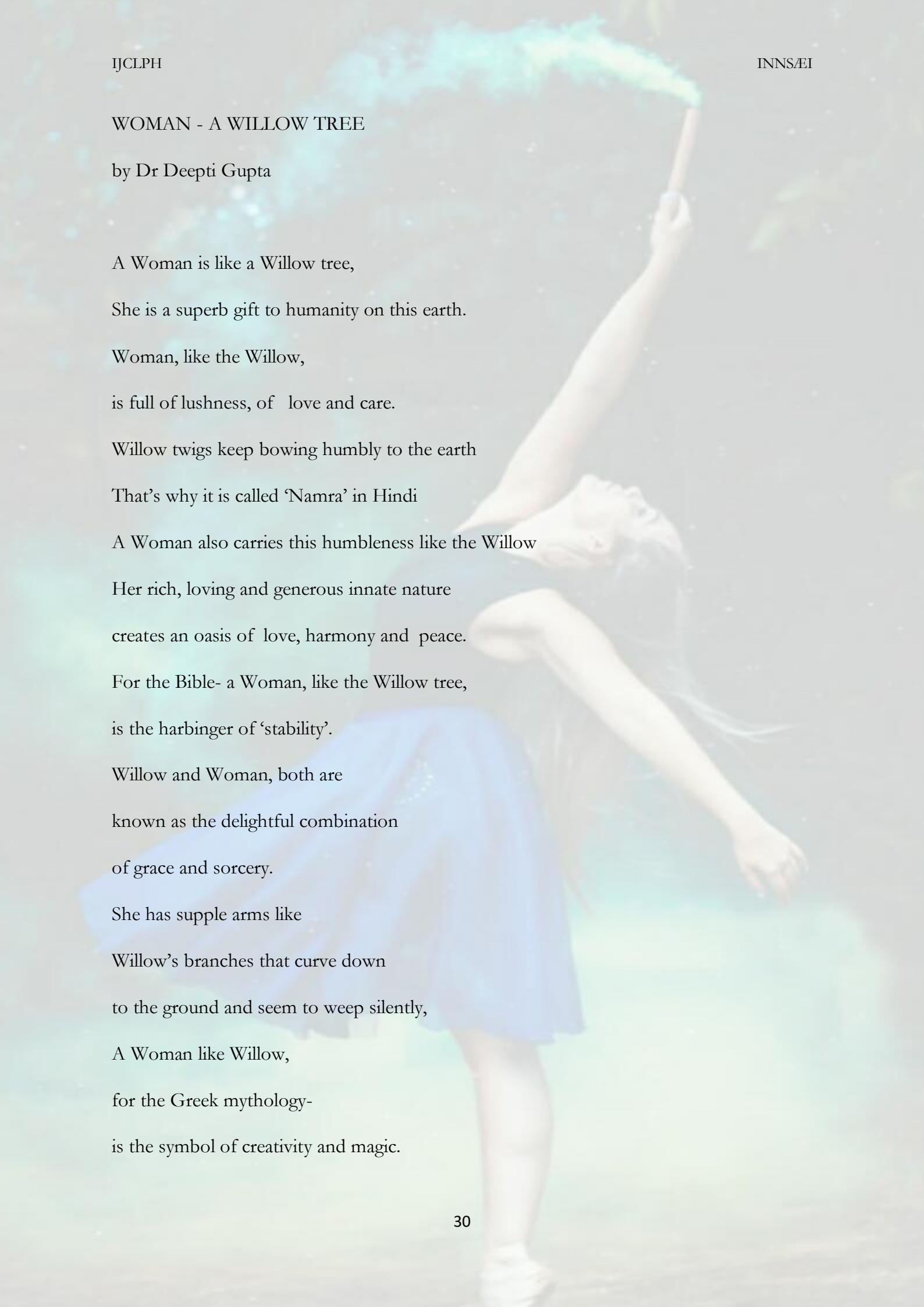


Dr Deepti Gupta (India)

Deepti Gupta is Ph.D. and an academician. She has written 16 books of Poetry, Fiction, Reference books and edited books. She is a versatile author from Pune, Maharashtra and has been honoured by various Government positions as well as by accepting her works for University syllabi. She has been honoured with various prestigious National and International Awards like TOP 'Ratnawali Shikar Award , 2020' for Poetry, 'Nobel Laureate Kabi Guru Rabiendra Nath Tagore Award 2019', 'Sarswati Shri Award 2019' from Women Organisation, 'Sahitya Bhushan Award, 'Premchand Katha Samman, 'Kadambari Award, 2017', 'Ravindranath Tagore Sarswat Award, 2016', 'Sahitya Shiromani Award, 2015', 'Gyanodaya Literary Gaurav Award, 2013', 'Literary Gem Award, 2006' and International Winner of the Poetry Contest, held by the 'League of Poets' (2020), Chinese Award 'First Prize' for poetry, Intercontinental Award for Poetry by Union Hispanomumldial De Escritores.

WOMAN - A WILLOW TREE

by Dr Deepti Gupta

A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a blue dress, is holding a glowing green wand high in the air. She is standing in front of a large, leafy willow tree. The scene is set outdoors with a grassy area and a blurred background.

A Woman is like a Willow tree,
She is a superb gift to humanity on this earth.
Woman, like the Willow,
is full of lushness, of love and care.
Willow twigs keep bowing humbly to the earth
That's why it is called 'Namra' in Hindi
A Woman also carries this humbleness like the Willow
Her rich, loving and generous innate nature
creates an oasis of love, harmony and peace.
For the Bible- a Woman, like the Willow tree,
is the harbinger of 'stability'.
Willow and Woman, both are
known as the delightful combination
of grace and sorcery.
She has supple arms like
Willow's branches that curve down
to the ground and seem to weep silently,
A Woman like Willow,
for the Greek mythology-
is the symbol of creativity and magic.

A Woman, like the Willow, evokes

a sense of amazement, emotions and feelings.

Both are the 'gamut' and 'grand journey' from frailty to empowerment.

Both delight the senses by their beauty and grace;

inspire the morose hearts; surge the desolate spirit.

How intensely a Woman is a 'Willow' tree.....

Woman is very adaptive, exactly as a Willow is

Although, they both need moist and cool conditions to survive

But can bear the scorching sun and even drought

A woman's roots like a Willow are very deep 'n Strong

They radiate far afield.

Woman, just like a Willow is

the 'First' to get delighted & chirpy at the festive occasions

and the last to lose her sheen

when the happy occasion is over.

Willows are among the first trees

to grow leaves in the spring

and among the last to lose their leaves in the fall.

A Woman gives birth to male-female like Willow tree

Willow produces male or female flowers

With their adorable shape,

Woman like Willow creates a rich landscape of Life.

To some Native Americans, Willow signifies protection.

A woman like Willow makes people feel protected around her

Both are pious like a prayer

Like the Willow, she removes emotional and mental clogging

of whomsoever that comes to her refuge

and helps release the stuck emotions

A woman becomes a flute in love for its beloved

She becomes a colour and brush and a dream-catcher

as per the demand of her 'Love'- he.

A Willow tree is considered pious by the

woman who is also pious like a deity.

Our society, we people, bore Willow and a woman,

emotionally and mentally, still both of them hosts them

Chinese honour the Willow as a symbol of immortality and renewal.....

Womanhood also goes hand in hand with renewal and immortality

Woman and Willow both are superb sheltering refuge

Of shade and comfort

So, never prune her emotions and spray cold attitude on her.

A Woman and Willow both have an established

place in literature and culture, all over the world.

Woman & Willow are ONE

With separate identities.....!





Nikita Goel (India)

Nikita Goel has written and published 25 books. She has worked as a Teacher, Counselor, Editor, Columnist, Writer and Social Media Manager for various organizations in India & U.S.A. She is also a Co-Founder of "*Desi Writers of Houston*" a literary group for Indian writers living in and around Houston. As the Managing Editor for "Purple Hues" series by Aagaman Literary & Cultural Society, She has won with the "*Best Editor of the Year*" award. Her blog- **The Enchantress** has made it to Top Blogs of India consistently for a decade now. She writes for various online portals and magazines such as Readomania, Aagaman, Womanly, Sniffers, Speaking Tree, Writers e-Zine, Writing Geeks, Kick scoop, Career & Recovery Resources.

SOMEDAY THE PAIN YOU ARE FEELING WILL MAKE SENSE...

by Ms Nikita Goel

It might appear to be unjust, but one day, it will all make sense.

The all-consuming, overwhelming, and unbearable pain
you are going through could be a blessing in disguise.

When everything seems to fall apart,
it might actually be falling into the right place.

Hold on, my brave heart.

We are almost there.

Do not try to numb your pain by having that glass of wine,
or pretending as if nothing is breaking inside of you every minute.
Learn to sit with your painful emotions without advertising it to the entire world.
The more you talk about it, the bigger it grows.

Rather, just listen.

Take notes.

Write it down.

Learn.

Grow.

Your life will not always teach you the easy lessons.

Some days, you will be dragged half asleep
and thrown into uncomfortable situations.

There will be times when reality will hit you like a hurricane.

It might feel unfair that our lives have to fall apart for that one lesson,
but it will all make sense...

You are the only person
who gets to decide how to cope with your pain.

Do not let the world tell you to get over it.

They do not know who you are or what you went through.

They will not understand the struggle, constant battles, uncontrollable tears,
shattered hopes, broken dreams, the sorrow and the heartbreak
you had to walk over to be where you are today...

Do not solve your whole life tonight...

Just survive tonight and the next, and the next.

One day, it will all make sense.



Amita Sanghvi (India)

Amita Sanghavi teaches English at Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat. She did M.A. English, M.Phil, and B.Ed. from Mumbai University. She is a recipient of Hornby Scholar Award with MA from Lancaster University, UK. She has presented papers in Germany, Italy, Turkey, USA, Malaysia, Oman, Egypt, UK, India and Japan. Her first book of poems is **LAVENDER MEMORIES 2018**. She is honored with World Poetry, Canada and is the Representative of Poetry by The Art Movement *Imagine & Poesia*, Italy. She has won the International Poetry Contest, Savona, Italy. Her poetry is taught at B.A., M.A. English courses, at Akaki Tsereteli State University, Georgia

MOMENT BY MOMENT

by Ms Amita Sanghvi

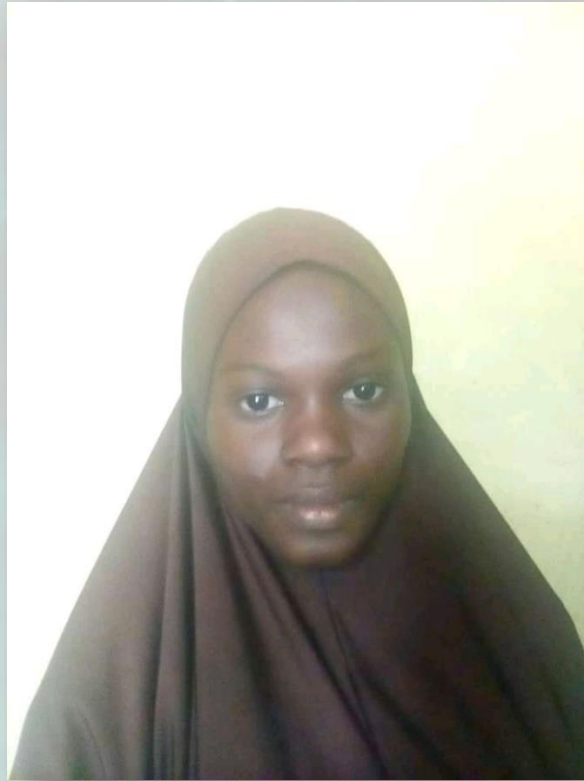
Moment by moment,
I marvel at her as I wonder,
Will I ever stop staring?
Being in love, besotted
By this one soul
Cuddled, wrapped in all pink?

Moment by moment,
We have journeyed together
Nine months with her in me,
I did give her birth,
And I too,
As a mother was born-
This truth I unearth!

Moment by moment,
How ecstatic motherhood seems,
My child is like a book
Unputdownable,
And my heart skids

As I read her dreams.





Lawal Atiyatullah (Nigeria)

Lawal Atiyatullah is a Nigerian poet and story teller. She lives in Abeokuta the capital of Ogun state. Currently, she is studying Mathematics education in the University of Ibadan. She is passionate in writing and loves reading poetry collection.

THE PRIDE OF WOMANHOOD

by Ms Lawal Atiyatullah

Women are gems

Women are jewels

Women are precious

They are those weak vessels

Which never get broken easily

Despite all hardships and emotions.

Even though as weak as she is

She is stronger than the strongest vessel

That feminine character

Who goes through pain

To bring forth

What is in her fortè

She is proud to bring out in her

The dexterity of a woman

The joy in her heart

Is nothing less when compared to the glowing of the star

The smile on her lips

Is nothing less when compared to the shining face of the sun

The tears on her face
Is nothing less when compared to the glistening of a diamond
Her happiness radiates through
And gives others happiness.

In her pride,
She bears and endures; all form of pains and assault
Just to bring out the dignity and honour in her.

NEVER UNDERESTIMATE HER!!!



Anoucheka Gangabissoon (Mauritius)

Anoucheka Gangabissoon is a Primary School Educator in Mauritius. She writes poetry and short stories as hobby. She has been published poems and short stories all over the world .Her poems are often placed as winners in free international contests. She considers writing to be the meaning of her life, and wishes to be immortalized through her words.

WE ARE LIGHTHOUSES!

by Ms Anoucheka Gangabissoon

How harsh is the wind that blows upon my face?

Each time I see a woman dare stand up

And voice out her opinions in the face

Of the blindly raging society!

The blowing wind gets so harsh

That it pricks my senses as fiercely as would

Seething demons, gripped with the hatred

They harbor for themselves!

Ethics and rules, outdated,

Still stipulate that the woman

Deserves loud claps when she makes of herself

A store product, stocked upon shelves,

And fully replaceable and disposable even!

But as soon as one spawns,

Having the fire of revolution burning in her heart,

Fully apt to stand up and say,

That she can think and that she does not agree,

Why, the society itself wakes from its slumber

And demolishes her as easily as would a dog

Do with a toy that it needs not!

But then,

Since the world belongs to none,

Since the Gods remain silent,

Leaving us to juggle with our choices,

It becomes the duty of every woman

To care for what happens all around them

And to dare stand up

And face the society as even if it

Realizes not,

We are, unlike them, not made of ego

And greed, but inhabited by peace and

Wisdom, which makes of us,

Lighthouses to help them steer their boats

To the safety of the anchorage that

They cannot even see!



Misna Chanu (India)

Misna Chanu is postgraduate in Botany. She is a bilingual poet from Assam (India), who writes in English and her mother tongue (Manipuri). She loves art and literature, especially poetry. Her works have been published in international and national Anthologies and journals. She published her first poetry book, **A Little Piece Of Melancholic Sky**. Her poems have been translated in to **Manipuri, Greek, Serbian, Italian, Turkish, Spanish and Chinese**. Two of her international anthologies **May Love Heal the World** and **Under the Azure Sky**, (bilingual) and a poetry book of her own named **Many Shades of Love** are under publication.

SHE IS ORDINARY, YET EXTRAORDINARY

by Ms Misna Chanu

(This poem is dedicated to all the women who are homemaker)

While, everyone is trying
to be something extraordinary,
she simply tries to be herself!

When everyone is talking about
their knowledge,
she simply talks about her heart!

When everyone is busy in their act
on the theatre of life,
she is busy in helping the children
to build their sandcastles!

When everyone is working so hard
to fly in the sky,
she walks barefoot on the land of her heart!

When everyone is trying to speak of
something valuable,

she speaks of how to make a boat
using a piece of paper,
as she already knows a secret of life!

Sometimes, she cries in the rain
yet she wears smile as a veil,
and politeness as her jewels!
Her heart, as deep as ocean!
So many untold stories,
maybe sleeping on the bottom!

But what she doesn't know is
she has become the most extraordinary one
simply by being ordinary!

She is an ordinary woman yet extraordinary!
And she is the most misunderstood
version of a woman!



Neera Kashyap (India)

Neera Kashyap has had a career in Environmental & Health Journalism and Communication. She lives in Delhi and has authored a book of short stories *Daring to Dream* for young adults and contributed to Children's Book Trust a five prize-winning anthologies of children's literature .As a writer of short fiction, poetry, essays and book reviews, her work has been appeared in literary journals (including INNSÆI) and poetry anthologies published in the USA, UK, Singapore, Pakistan and India.

SENRYU

by Ms Neera Kashyap

[8 Senryu a 3-line Japanese poetic form reflecting with humour/cynicism on the human situation, in this case on women/girls.]

burnt roti* –

she grins through hole

at moon scars

*Indian flatbread roasted on a griddle

--

open book –

she sits on mother's lap

to teach her alphabets

--

her meditation -

sunbeam through lattice screen

diamonds everywhere

she reaches for

sunbeam glinting off spray -

wish fountain

dirt track—

in queue at hand pump she gazes

as brother runs to school

bath water –

girls skip past hand pump

to a rushing river

teen betrothal -

she dreams of

medical college

blackbird's shrill cry

my morning alarm -

mother's instructions



Anandavalli Chandran (India)

Anandavalli Chandran is a bilingual writer as she writes poems, stories, articles and travelogues in English and Malayalam. She writes in English under the penname medhini. She has a great passion for reading and writing and also likes to travel and explore. medhini's English poem is published in an Anthology. Her another anthology with poems is in process. Her two Malayalam Poetry books, a Malayalam story book and an English poetry book have been published. She has also published some poems in collective groups.

TRUE, I AM ENGULFED

by Ms Anandavalli Chandran

Crushing the walls of my heart
you have gushed in
like smooth fluid or breeze
before giving me time to snoop.
Neither you sought
my permission
Nor gave a gentle knock
before venturing into my heart.
I cannot send you out
either, don't have the audacity
to tear the fine web,
you have woven, gently
on the string of my heart.

Couldn't ask you why and what
for the questions don't
bring out any answers.

Didn't try to find out
your age, religion, caste or state
as I am blind and deaf

smitten by love bug;

True, I am engulfed by the ocean of love.





Renata Pavrey (India)

Renata Pavrey is a nutritionist by profession, specializing in clinical and sports nutrition. She is a trained classical dancer in the Odissi style. In addition to Indian classical dance, she is also trained and has performed in various Western dance forms. She is a marathon runner, and bibliophile. Her writings cover a broad spectrum of subjects including dance, books, running and other sports, health and fitness, languages and music.

JEEPERS CREEPERS - LESSONS FROM A VINE

by Ms Renata Pavrey

Whorly and twirly

The snake gourd rises

A sapling from a seed

Nature's surprises

Finding a footing

Coiling above and beside

Reaching for the light

Perceiving where to glide

Curled in the day

And unfurled at night

A delicate lattice of a

Climbing vine's flight

Faith in the elements

Determination of its own

Insights from a creeper

As it seeks its throne

Staying rooted

But aiming high

Hold on to what matters

They who strength supply

Encouragement and support

The pillars of relationships

The ones who crush your dreams

Can be let go with some snips

Those who turn away

When you're down and out of luck

Not the best version of yourself

When disaster has struck

You need your people

Who know all your sides

And still stick around

At the turning of tides

Like the snake gourd

Threading its way around

Be judicious in your choices

Of the people that surround.





Nitusmita Saikia (India)

Nitusmita Saikia is an instructor in National Cadet Core, India. She is a keen worshiper of literature and working presently in Jorhat Assam, India. She has been adored by the World society of poetry. She writes in both English and own regional language (Assamese). Being active in various online Poetry groups and blogs, she has been writing for E-Magazines like Tuck Magazine (USA), FM-Online(USA) poetry magazine, GloMag (poetry magazine) and blog Sparking.biz . Besides her poems have been published in various poetry anthologies National and International, www.realisticpoetry.com (USA), Ardus Publication (Germany), etc.

TWO HEELS...!

by Ms Nitusmita Saikia

Piercing the sky, flickering lights of the eclipsed sun,

Escaped the gloomy pool of clouds,

A smile of her like....!

Often escapes through the cleavage of lips,

Sprouting from the heart wounded for decades.

In defining a woman, an epoch gone

Who is she is a whole mystery,

In the tale of finding the origin,

There was a she with a he

There's the belief,

Only then a woman was born.

Time had been rolling on and on

Heels bled to feed and moving on

Treading all terrains

Now the two heels on the top of six inches platform,

And piercing the globe like a lightning storm,

The two heels conquer the space above this finite world.

Lovely in alta or henna they are..!,
The two heels dare to enter the darkness too,
Slapping all,
She trades herself for entire hypocrisy
And get clad in clay play forever
Despite her reluctance.

Roaming forest to forest in search of food,
Gathering fruits and roots,
Shackled desire and chopped off wings,
Her birth a burden,
She wrote a tale of bitter truth.

Woman has nothing to possess
Everything has been worn by these Roses,
No one could imagine
A world without women,
Heels are high now after a long battle,
No more cracks nor bleeding,
All the time she was a warrior
No one has seen her valor
No more begging nor weeping,
Ode to her beauty; Anklets will sing,

When she wears shoes to run all fields.



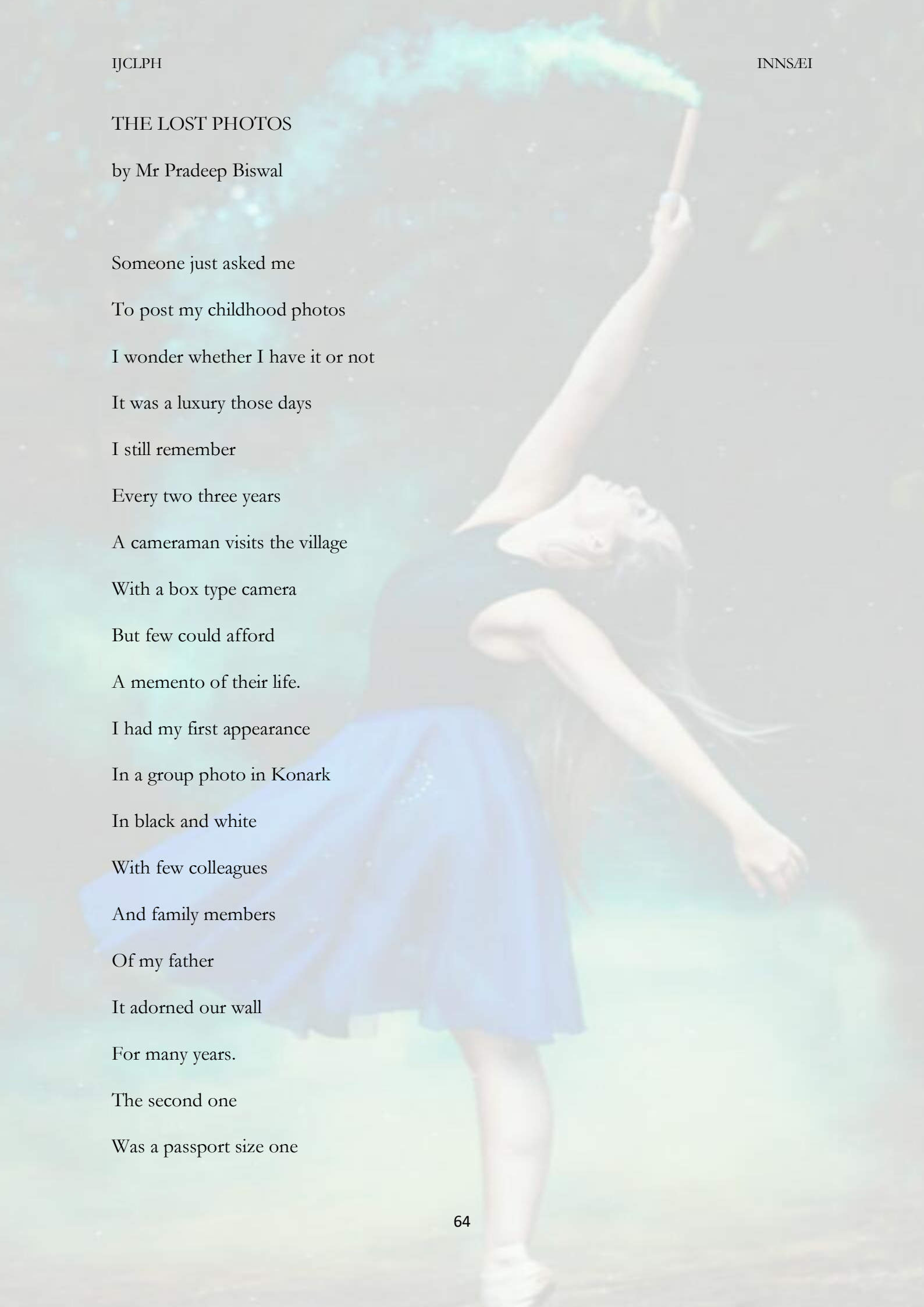


Pradeep Biswal (India)

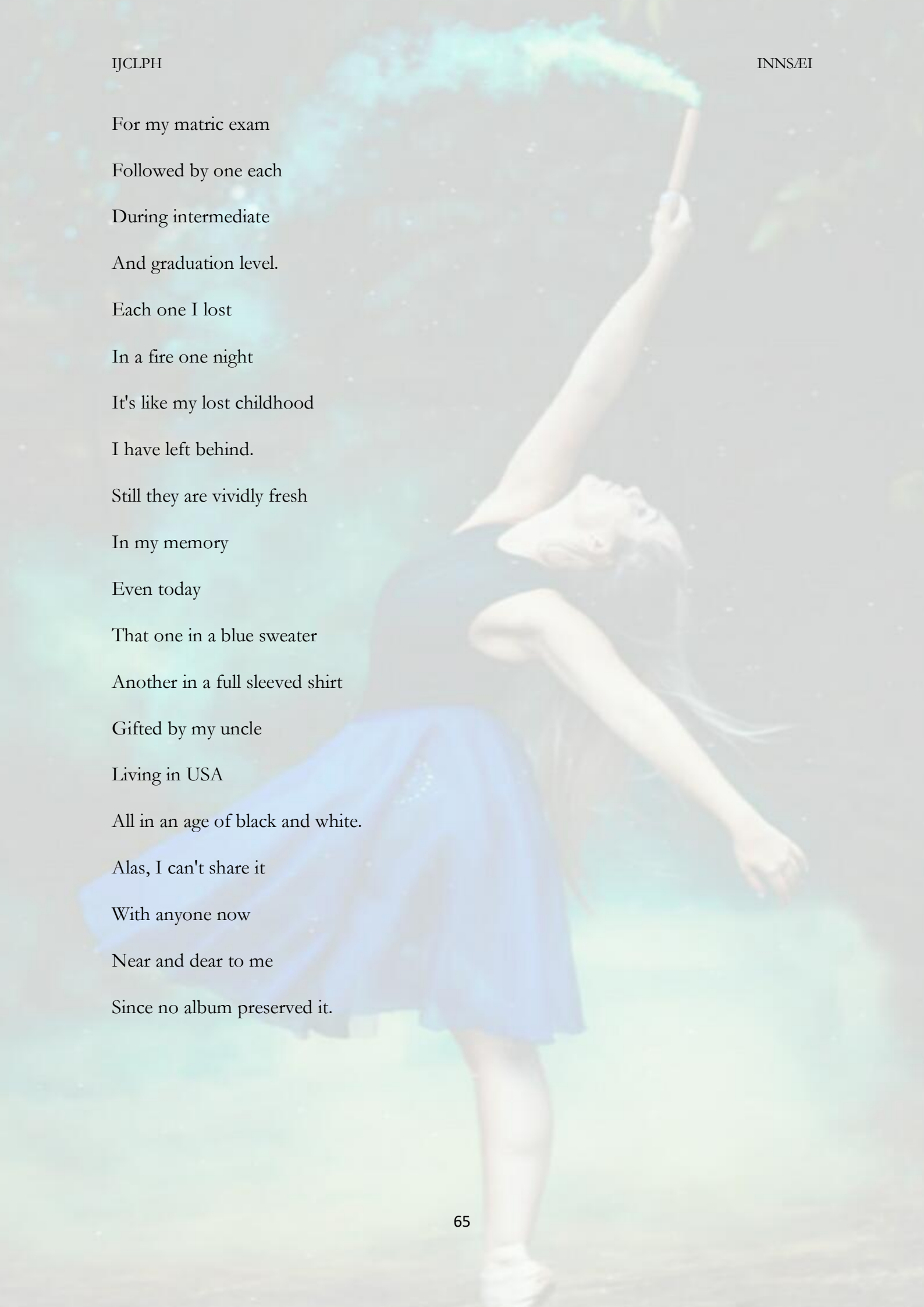
Pradeep Biswal is a bilingual poet writing in English and Odia for almost four decades. He has two poetry collections in English and six in Odia. Two poetry collections in Hindi have been published carrying his poems translated into Hindi. His poems have been translated and published in many Indian languages and included in many prestigious anthologies. After retirement from IAS, he is staying with his family in Bhubaneswar.

THE LOST PHOTOS

by Mr Pradeep Biswal



Someone just asked me
To post my childhood photos
I wonder whether I have it or not
It was a luxury those days
I still remember
Every two three years
A cameraman visits the village
With a box type camera
But few could afford
A memento of their life.
I had my first appearance
In a group photo in Konark
In black and white
With few colleagues
And family members
Of my father
It adorned our wall
For many years.
The second one
Was a passport size one

A young woman with long blonde hair, wearing a blue dress, is captured in a dynamic pose, holding a glowing wand high above her head. The background is a soft, ethereal mix of green and blue, with a subtle, dreamlike atmosphere. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

For my matric exam
Followed by one each
During intermediate
And graduation level.
Each one I lost
In a fire one night
It's like my lost childhood
I have left behind.
Still they are vividly fresh
In my memory
Even today
That one in a blue sweater
Another in a full sleeved shirt
Gifted by my uncle
Living in USA
All in an age of black and white.
Alas, I can't share it
With anyone now
Near and dear to me
Since no album preserved it.

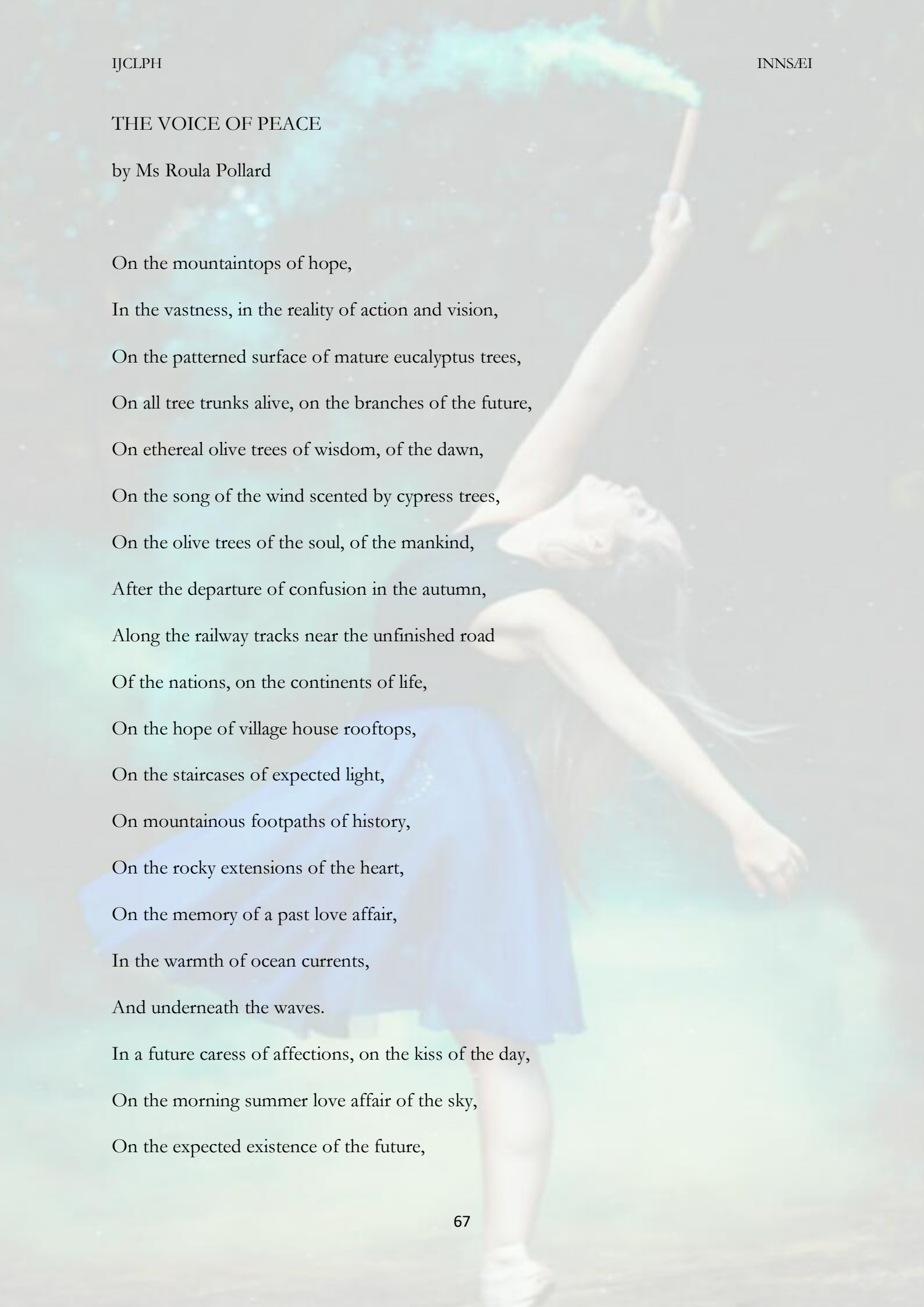


Roula Pollard (Greece)

Roula Pollard, is a Greek poet, writer, essayist, playwright, translator, literary promoter, environmental and peace activist. Roula studied Archaeology at Athens University and obtained an M.A. in Classics, at Leeds. She lived in England for 25 years; and was a former teacher of Modern Greek language at Wakefield District College. She has published three poetry collections in Greek and one in English that is translated into Telugu by Dr. L. Sr. Prasad. She also writes short stories and essays and some of them have been translated into eight languages. She has won International Poetry Awards and participated in international festivals and has included in more than 90 international Poetry anthologies.

THE VOICE OF PEACE

by Ms Roula Pollard

A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a blue dress, is shown from the waist up. She is holding a glowing, ethereal staff or wand in her right hand, which is raised high. The staff emits a bright, multi-colored light (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple) that forms a large, glowing sphere above her head. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape with green grass and trees. The overall mood is peaceful and magical.

On the mountaintops of hope,
In the vastness, in the reality of action and vision,
On the patterned surface of mature eucalyptus trees,
On all tree trunks alive, on the branches of the future,
On ethereal olive trees of wisdom, of the dawn,
On the song of the wind scented by cypress trees,
On the olive trees of the soul, of the mankind,
After the departure of confusion in the autumn,
Along the railway tracks near the unfinished road
Of the nations, on the continents of life,
On the hope of village house rooftops,
On the staircases of expected light,
On mountainous footpaths of history,
On the rocky extensions of the heart,
On the memory of a past love affair,
In the warmth of ocean currents,
And underneath the waves.
In a future caress of affections, on the kiss of the day,
On the morning summer love affair of the sky,
On the expected existence of the future,

On yet unexplored ancient sites,
True, definite upon the earth,
On the water of the future,
At the spring of the truth,
On the earth of the body,
At the center of balance,
Precise upon the earth,

I find you powerful,
I discover your body,
In the deep ocean
Of my heart
Peace.



Hema Ravi (India)

Hema Ravi is a poet, reviewer, independent researcher, event organizer and editor of Efflorescence (published by the Chennai Poets' Circle). She has published her work in International Writers Journal, Amaravati Poetic Prism, The Hindu, The New Indian Express., Science Shore Magazine and has won the ninth place in the 7th Bharat Award for Literature International Short Story Contest. Her short story has won the first prize in the Pratilipi competition in 2020. She is the author of *'Everyday English, Write Right Handwriting Series 1, 2, 3, and a co-author of Sing Along Indian Rhymes and Everyday Hindi*. She is a freelancer for IELTS and Communicative English.

VARIED HUES

by Ms Hema Ravi

Woman, your name is *beauty*.

Is that loveliness merely to satisfy lust?

Woman, your name is *empathy*.

Is your compassion to be perceived as ignorance?

Woman, your name is *shrewdness*.

Is that smartness to be misconstrued as conniving?

Woman, your name is *pragmatism*.

Is your thrifty nature to be labeled tightfisted?

Woman, your name is *resentment*.

Is that exasperation to protest discrimination?

Woman, your name is *daring*.

Is your spirit to be seen as overconfidence?

Woman, your name is *fear*.

Is that terror to restrict your adventurous spirit?

Woman, your name is *mirth*.

Is your merriment to be scoffed at?

Woman, your name is *creativity*.

Is your ingenuity to be curbed for others' upliftment?

Woman, be true to your name

Be empowered to galvanize womanhood.



Pankhuri Sinha (India)

Pankhuri Sinha is a bilingual young poet and story writer from India. After doing her BA from Delhi University, and PG diploma in Journalism, from Symbiosis Pune, she did her Master's in history from SUNY Buffalo, and has an unfinished Ph.D from the University of Calgary, Canada. She has worked in various positions as a journalist, lecturer and a content editor. Her two books of poems published in English and two collections of stories and five collections of poetries published in Hindi. Her literary work has been published in many journals, anthologies home and abroad and also won many prestigious, national-international awards. Some of them have been translated in over twenty one languages. Her writing is dominated by themes of exile, immigration, gender equality and environmental concerns.

EVE'S CALL-THE WOMAN'S STORY IN HER LIFETIME

by Ms Pankhuri Sinha

He bangs the door late at night
Is given the best portion of the food
Calls it unpalatable, belittles her culinary skills
Beats her up, complains to the gods
Devours her like snake does its victims
She focuses on not screaming
To prevent the kid's attention!

In the morning, she sweeps
The partitioned shack
To keep it clean!
Goes to the nearby bungalows
Sweeps some more
Cleans the utensils, collects the money
Prepares again for the evening!
Her children too are hungriest at night!

She studied high tech stuff
Fine arts, does the home
Plans vacation, packs their clothes, buys the tickets

Navigates the taxi!

She is the pilot of the plane, the commander of the ship,

The helping hand in the labour room

Women as we know them

Are all wonder creatures!

Yet, Eve's daughter's

They are held responsible

For all things ever going wrong!

Wasn't Eve the one to tempt Adam

To pluck and taste

The juicy, the red,

The tangy, and crispy

Forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge!

We all got doomed

For she mated with Adam the man!

And produced his children!

The curse continues

The tree of wisdom shook its branches

Shed its leaves, apples glistened, orchard smiled

Heavens cried, Adam and Eve were sent to earth and here they stayed!

The Pundits of the Hindu scriptures called the woman doorways to hell!

She argued, critiqued
Sang and studied
They somewhat relented and agreed, motherhood
Was a holy office!

The fight continues
Said the beloved
Its love, no shame
And look my friends
We finally got a day to honour, love's sweet face!



Kashish Arora (India)

Kashish Arora is an aspiring writer with passion for poetry. Currently, she is pursuing a Bachelor's in Law degree and a distance course in Psychology. Besides writing and poetry, she has deep interest in art and human relations.

SHE IS ART

by Ms Kashish Arora

She is a metaphor
Living through her art
Breathing in quiet air
Drifting apart.

For if she were honest with you,
You would've died under the veil of blue
Uncovering scars of red hue
Before she bid adieu.

Her heart is wrecked
Hiding glances, covering lies
Oh! But the reckoning deeds
Is no longer what her heart pleads.

Is there someone willing to hear the other side?
As you never believed her to be right.
And for one last time that night,
She learnt to stay with love alone.
The love, that stays and dies unknown.

She's an artist

Playing different roles

An amalgamation of fiction and reality.

She lives through her verses

Pain and curses,

She is art herself.

An expression,

The reason for your existence.



Sonali Ray (India)

Sonali Ray is a lover of nature who admires the wonders of nature and tries to pen the beauty through her words. As an avid reader she sees beauty in the smallest beings of nature.

WOMAN: THE GUIDING STAR

by Ms Sonali Ray

Her heart is like an ocean wherein dwell countless emotions
Her touch like the soft petals that leaves behind a sweet fragrance,
With stars in her eyes and a fire raging in her bosom
She strives to prove her existence in this male-dominated realm.

She fancies a life that is filled with love and laughter
Her inaudible whims sometimes don't even reach others' ears
Ignoring the world's criticism, she steps to fulfill her dreams
Seeing a woman competitor, the male ego screams.

They belittle her, try to pull her down
And they fail for the umpteenth time, 'cause she still beholds the crown
The ember of anguish smouldering inside her tender heart
Like the phoenix, she rises from her ashes draping her hurt.

A daughter, a wife, a mother, she plays infinite roles
Despite her undying affection the world just points at her loopholes
They worship the Goddess and her power
But can never accept when a woman strives to establish her stature.

Durga, Kali, Parvati or Lakshmi

Educated, encouraged women is the epitome of a healthy society

Strengthen her, respect her, let her flutter her wings

Don't forget, she possesses a bubbly heart filled with aspirations, dreams.

Women when spelt sounds quite like men

Then why this inequality, why derogate them?

They are the pillars of not just the house but of the society

Care for them, honour them, their shoulders are saddled with responsibility.



Dr Tangirala SreeLatha (India)

Dr Tangirala SreeLatha, is an Associate Professor of English in NRI Institute of Technology. She has been an educator for 26 years, a bilingual poet, short story writer and translator. Her poems are anthologized widely in various National and International collections and other e-journals. She regularly contributes to Innerchildpress, Muse India, The Criterion, Literoma, Guntur International Poetry Fest, Guntur and Amaravati Poetic Prism – An International Multilingual Poetry Festival conducted by CCVA, Vijayawada. She has to her credit, an anthology VOICED THOUGHTS and more than 57 published research papers. Her interest in modern fiction is inclined especially to Indian women writers which enabled her research in the same area.

UNAFFECTED ROUTINE

by Dr Tangirala SreeLatha

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a blue dress, is captured in a dynamic pose, holding a glowing wand high above her head. The background is a soft, ethereal mix of green and blue, suggesting a magical or dreamlike setting. The overall mood is serene and graceful.

Getting up devotedly with the rising Sun
Pitching caringly with the day's chores
She commences her usual incessant run
Meeting everyone's needs in the course.
Sets the house in order, keeps things in place
Clothes, books and files with little neglect
Matching with the respective time and pace
Always serves nourishing food so perfect.
Proceeds promptly to execute her formal duty
Assists the family in intellectual mission
Radiates the house with her glowing beauty;
With growing commitment as ideal commission.
A woman's untiring routine is ever unaffected
COVID lockdown too left her vulnerably unaltered.



Padmaja Iyengar-Paddy (India)

Padmaja Iyengar-Paddy is currently a Cultural and Literary Coordinator (India), ISISAR, Kolkata, and the Editorial Counselor-India, International Writers' Journal, USA. Her collection of maiden poetry *P-En-Chants* has recognized as a Unique Record of Excellence by the India Book of Records. A recipient of several awards and prizes, Paddy has compiled and edited 6 international multilingual poetry anthologies of which 'Amaravati Poetic Prism' 2016 to 2019 has been recognized by the Limca Book of Records as *Poetry Anthology in Most Languages*.

FUTILE

by Ms Padmaja Iyengar-Paddy

She is told

Not to act bold

Nor report the case

Else they have ways

To silence her

Sooner than later

With miseries untold.

The rape victim

and her parents

return home

after a session

at the police station

with the local politician

and her tormentor.

The battered victim

Lives on ...

(Or does she really?)

In the life imprisonment

Pronounced by the rapist.





Dr Neerja Chandna Peters (India)

Dr Neerja Chandna Peters writes poetry since her childhood. She is a specialist in Family Medicine. She discovered her passion for art when she decided to pursue art full time. She found her language in spiritual expression through abstract geometry. Her work has been recognised through awards at national and international level. .

Besides she has won the third prize in First International Biennale by International Association of Visual, Performing and Other Arts. She also writes on art. Her works have been recently published in Bluebee magazine, London, Flora Fiction Literary Magazine and Quarantine Zine, New York, Art-hole UK and Indian Creative Minds magazine.

LOVE YOUR WOUNDS

by Dr Neerja Chandna Peters

Love your wounds

For you will find inspiration there

Hold on to that pain

'Cause you feel most deeply there

Feed on it, savour it,

Churn it, and whisk it.

Raise it like cream

Search and screen the darkness

Till you see that beam

Yeah, right... it is only

Through the dark that it is seen.

Let your being be bathed in it,

Till it chisels and gives you sheen.

Cherish all that hurts.

Treasure all those days...

The cloudy days when sun rays hide

Days with no one by your side,

Days that hurt,

Days when no one cares,
Days when feelings are bare,
Days longer than years,
Days when smiles hide tears.
Paint those days with care
Leave no minute to spare
Go plant flowers here and there
Heal where it most hurts
and you heal everywhere.



Chandra Sundeep (India)

Chandra Sundeep discovered the passion for writing on one of those days when everything seemed to go wrong. In the complex puzzle that life words came as a breath of fresh air and rescued her. She is a social worker across cultures and classes. Her stories reflect her understanding of society and issues faced by people. In a brief span of time, her thoughts have found a place in a few anthologies and various online forums.

THE FIRE WITHIN ME

by Ms Chandra Sundeeep

Crimson on my lips

a luscious sight.

Bright vermillion dot

a pious sight.

Scarlet bangles tingling

A musical delight.

Memories of a distant past.

Dwindling thoughts,

Rousing fears.

A surge of warmth

Spills from my eyes

Wrong colour, wrong choice?

Why doesn't it feel so?

Am I floating in the past or dwelling in the present?

Different chapters,

Different phases,

And yet it is all just me.

Underneath

The myriad labels

A woman.

Crimson, not just desire

But hope

Vermilion, not just piety

But strength

Scarlet, not a fiery rush

But a beacon of light

The lucid white strangles all delight.

Don't place me on a pedestal

Don't crush me under your feet

All I want is to live.

Live the life I dream of

Have the freedom

to choose, and

to refuse.

I wish to celebrate

By choosing myself

Not the serene white

But I choose the fiery red

For the fire is within me

Burning bright, radiating all around

Forever and beyond.





Chandrika R Krishnan

Chandrika R Krishnan is a Bengaluru-based writer and educationist. She likes talking, teaching. Her 200-odd published articles, poems and stories are eclectic and mostly experiential and are published both in print and online media. She is a published author and her work features in many anthologies. She is also a volunteer whenever in need at a local hospital and Seva- Centre that feeds the poor.

WHO AM I?

by Ms Chandrika R Krishnan

That question never troubled my grandmother, a mother of six
Caught between children and chores;
Her time in between
Was to breathe!

My mother, a mother of three
Found time to garden, embroider, knit and sew
Caught a movie or a gossip session
But she was never more than a wife and mother.

Who am I?
A teacher, a friend, a wife, a mother, a counselor
Success and failures strike a perfect balance
Have come a long way from my grandmother, for I
Did try and grab the world by its horns.

Who am I..? asks my daughter
You are the princess on the way to queen
Reach for the stars as you soar
Wife or mother, up to you

You are all and more, as you grow.





Dr Kalpana Girish Gangatirkar (India)

Dr Kalpana Girish Gangatirkar works in the Mahavir Mahavidyalaya Kolhapur, Maharashtra from 1992. Her areas of interest are Indian English Literature, New Literatures, Translation Studies, Feminist Literature, etc. She writes poetry in both English and Marathi. She is a short story writer and there is a collection of short stories entitled *Reflection* to her credit. She has participated in various International and national seminars and conferences and presented papers. Her more than 30 papers are published in International and national journals. She has worked as a Coordinator of International conferences and symposium and edited journals.

SPACE

by Dr Kalpana Girish Gangatirkar

Why do you need a space Mamma?

My daughter asked.

You said we all are your world!

Then why is this strange wish of 'my world'?

You love to sip coffee, slowly

Enjoying the whirling wind alone in the balcony, I know,

But don't you love us more?

Books are your soul-mates,

True, but we are a part of your being!

Aren't we?

You long to walk alone

Listening to the music of the waves

In the bright blazing night.

But dear, shopping with you

In flooded crowds is real fun.

Don't ever say

Our meaningless twitter disturbs you,

Don't ever say,

Our love laden embraces

Sometimes suffocate you.

Don't ever say,

Leave me alone!

Don't ever say

I want my ' space '.

Because from years

We are your world, desires, dreams and

Space!



Johanna Devadayavu (Switzerland)

Johanna Devadayavu, alias Johanna DS Chittranjan, hails from Switzerland. At her young age, she spent five years at an Ashram in South India. Now, she is married to an Indian citizen and is residing in India since 40 years contributing to humanity through her charitable venture.

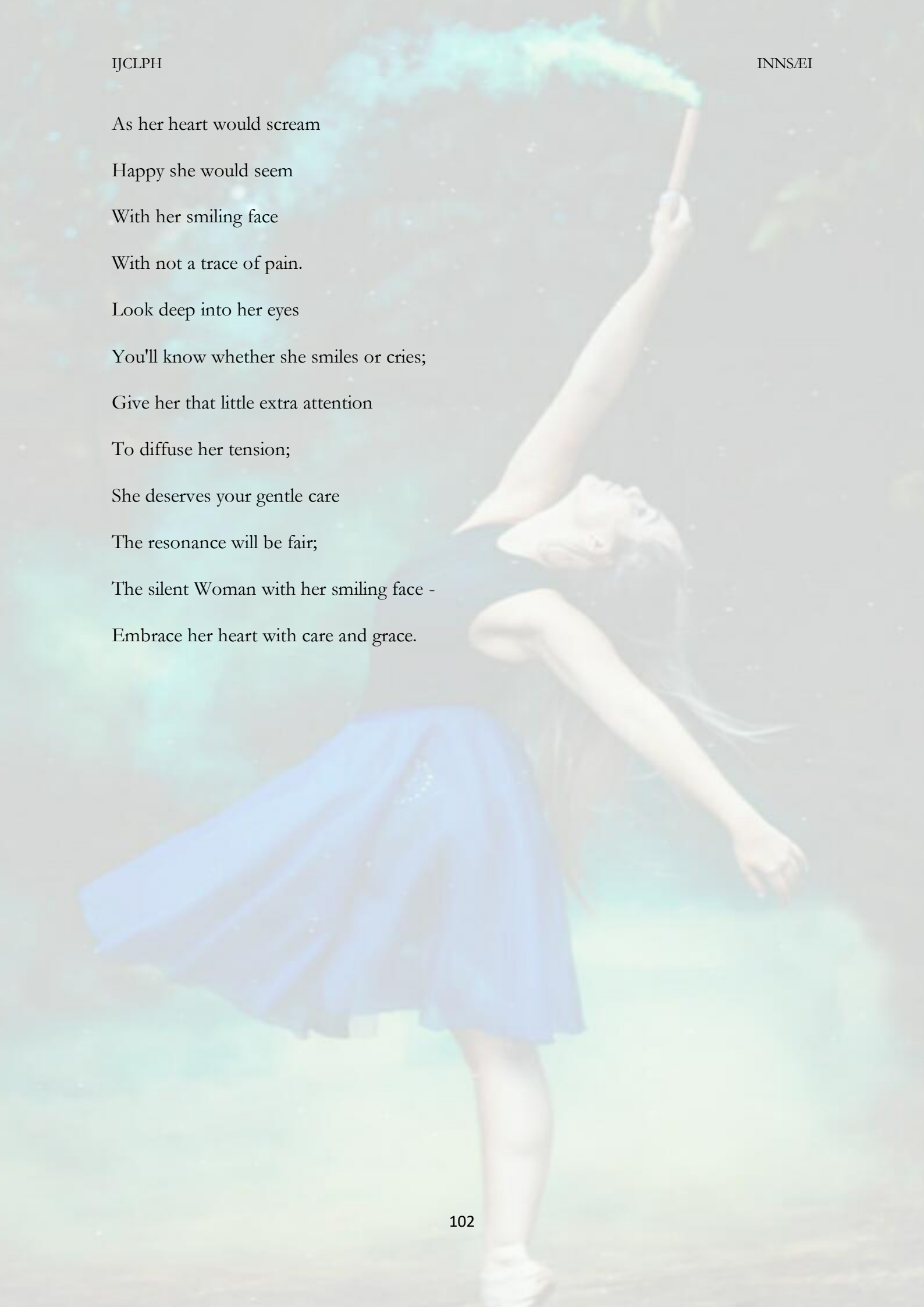
In 2014, Johanna published an anthology of poems titled 'The Call of the Turtledove for Universal Peace'. Since then, she has penned a number of poems. Listening to her inner voice, she continues her journey, spreading the light of wisdom through her poems, adding beauty to those lives around her with her boundless love.

THE SILENT WOMAN

by Ms Johanna Devadayavu

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a blue dress, is captured in a dynamic pose. She is holding a glowing green umbrella over her head with her right arm raised high. Her left arm is extended downwards. She appears to be dancing or moving gracefully. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green and blue, suggesting an outdoor setting with foliage. The overall mood is ethereal and artistic.

After that auspicious day,
After all the ceremonious display,
She becomes someone's possession.
She finds herself within a new dimension
Slowly adjusting - observing.
She gives her best to be pleasing
Serving everyone in the new surrounding;
Her efforts are astounding.
Her lips ever smiling - silent
In a climate ambivalent,
She starts her new life
As someone's wife
With great expectation -
Loving with pure dedication,
Her feelings soft and tender,
She cares in total surrender.
Days, weeks, years pass – alas..!
Her pain and sorrows amass;
Often she'd cry with a smile
Or sitting in silence for a while;

A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a blue dress, is captured in a dynamic pose. She is holding a glowing green umbrella in her right hand, which is raised high. Her left arm is extended downwards. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green and blue, suggesting a forest or a magical setting. The overall mood is ethereal and graceful.

As her heart would scream
Happy she would seem
With her smiling face
With not a trace of pain.
Look deep into her eyes
You'll know whether she smiles or cries;
Give her that little extra attention
To diffuse her tension;
She deserves your gentle care
The resonance will be fair;
The silent Woman with her smiling face -
Embrace her heart with care and grace.



Mitra Samal (India)

Mitra mostly writes poems and occasionally pens down stories or memoirs. She is a software professional with a passion for both technology and literature. She has published a book of poetry called, *Beginning* and participates in poetry open mics. Her works have been published in various online and print media as well. She is also an avid reader and a Toastmaster who loves to speak her heart out.

GRANDMA'S SMILE

by Ms Mitra Samal

My grandma used to smile,
a smile like the crescent moon
shining in the darkness of life,
In the lonely summer afternoons,
sitting leisurely in her armchair,
after dropping the newspaper,
looking at the flowers in the garden
but as if gazing into the oblivion,
My grandma used to smile.

I was a child then and didn't
quite decipher that smile
Now I think ,she must have smiled
a sad smile, hiding the pain of
not being acknowledged for all
that she had done for grandpa,
Not getting a place in the cheers and
applause that he received, despite
having contributed significantly to
his life, which was just ordinary from

where she had picked it up.

My grandma must have smiled
the sad smile of an Indian mother
who does everything for her children
but then loses them as they grow up
and get caught in the messy tangles
of life. She must have definitely been
proud of their success but also grieved
over the growing distance, in some
unformed curve of that smile.

My grandma doesn't smile anymore,
Nor does she recognize me,
The armchair is empty, she lies on the bed
whole day staring at the roof
but as if gazing into the oblivion.
She never wanted anything in return,
at least that's what she always made me
believe but it saddens me often.
I strongly feel that if she would have
had it all, maybe she would have still
smiled and this time, a happy smile.



Nisha Raviprasad (India)

Nisha is an avid reader and a deep lover of poetry. Of late, she has found fascination for haiku as well. Many of her poems have been published in various anthologies and journals. A postgraduate in electrical engineering, Nisha lives in Kochi with her children and Ollie (their puppy).

REVIVAL

by Ms Nisha Raviprasad

The earth beneath my feet crumbles
that I stumble on the jagged edges of my pitiful soul
I lose those weary feet
and dwell in the autumn breeze
like a withered petal
teased by the gusty wind.

I move with the mist of
a forgotten December morn,
quietly cuddled in the
palms of the mountain fog,
Alight me here..... On the naked shore of this icy river,
I shall lay trembling with hope,
here I might find those feet I had lost
to once again stand upright
with a stronger core.



Pratibha Chauhan (India)

Pratibha Chauhan, from India is a bilingual writer. She writes stories, poems, articles and literature for children. Her Poetry has been published in National and International Hindi Literary Magazines including legendary magazines: - Hans, Wagarth, Samkaleen Bhartiya Sahitya, Indraprastha Bharti, India Today and Outlook and articles in NHRC journals. At present, she is serving in Indian Judiciary as a Judge. Translation of her poems has been done in different languages of the country. She has participated in national and international seminars and presented papers. Her published works :- 'Pedon Par Hain Machhaliyan' (Anthology of Poems) "Mother"(Poetry Collection for children) and Chhuppiyon ke Hajar Kambal'. Her Anthologies under publication- Life Thy Name Is Victory (Anthology), Dunia, Indradhanush Ka Athwan Rang..)

FOETICIDE

by Ms Pratibha Chauhan

(dedicated to all unborn mothers)

They disappeared

From the cosmic sky

They were not clay and wax mannequins

Not lifeless without heart,

Having palms,

Having lines

And future of colorful shadows.

Man worships them

In human civilization.

But,

The things ensue.

Difference is the choice.

Enormous burden

Turns them soft to hard voice.

They could be citizens of any country of the world.

Any miraculous beauty could be made

In this entire universe.

If they could be safe,

They had their shares

In laughter, shade

Earth and sky

Trees, mountains,

Rivers and waterfalls

And all natural wealth of thy.

They didn't come themselves

Man brought them to the womb

Cradles, toys

Courtyard, house walls

Half past midnight

Have essence of life

Laughing like a sin

In the sky

O! Dear

Future mothers,

Moon will float,

Sun will glow,

You would never be seen in home

Never on the map of the globe!





Dr Davison (The United States of America)

Dr Davison is teaching at two all-male prison facilities in Northern Ohio. He has been deeply moved by his interactions with incarcerated students and has been motivated to create poems and short stories about these experiences. Thomas has started a non-profit dedicated to providing free one-on-one support services for felons.

THE FIRST

by Dr Davison

(An ekphrastic poem.)

I dreamed that God crafted a man- in His own image
He toiled with earthly clay- an informal, undemanding material
His first endeavor appeared to be- a mighty creation indeed
So.... He breathed life into the earthen Gollum
With His life-giving breath- he bestowed an additional endowment
The greatest gift of all- the freedom to choose- free will
After some time had passed- He stretched down
Raised up His construction to the heavens- for a stricter judgment
Curious to discern- how His creation had applied His gifts
What He perceived- displeased Him greatly
He spread His great hand- to permit His handiwork to plunge to the world below
Where it shattered into countless pieces
God sighed- a weary, worn, sigh
Then He stooped- to attempt once again!

INNSÆIANS' VOICE**Mousumi Kalita Sachdeva (India)**

Mousumi Kalita Sachdeva is the Director of GRIFFIN publication, India. She is an award-winning author of seven books, contributing author to more than 25 International Anthologies and an internationally acclaimed poet. She is an Author Coach, Skill Development Trainer, a columnist, an internationally published poet, motivational speaker and Editor of two publishing houses and a content writer. She is a ghost writer too and has contributed richly to writing many books. She is also serving as the Editor in Chief of yoursnews.in a media portal. She is a revolutionary writer who voices for the rights of the people, and projects the truth of the society through her literary works.

A WOMAN – THE COMPLETE SELF

by Ms Mousumi Kalita Sachdeva

Public Relation Manager, INNSÆI

International Journal of Creative Literature for Peace and Humanity

Dear woman,

You do not need a man to complete you

Nor do you need your heir to make you complete

You are a complete being in yourself.

Cherish your existence

Never accept the feeling of resistance

Your identity is defined by your persistence.

Celebrate your being on this universe

You are unique in diverse

For all to read you as a beautiful verse.

The embodiment of strength you are

A woman, a deity in avatar

And to the modern world, a Rockstar.

Dear woman,

You do not need any artist to complete you

You are a painting in whole

Not to be framed, but fly within your own control.



Dr Sanju Paul (India)

Sanju Paul is her pen name, original being Sanjeev Kumari Paul. She is a veterinarian by profession and a poet and an artist by passion. She belongs to Himachal Pradesh (India) and has been involved in multiple projects of artistic as well as scientific temperaments ranging from very local to global ones. She has also developed an artistic technique of carved and washed paintings using discard PVC sheets as the canvas. Pen sketching is another art form she uses to express herself. Besides, she also has a short film named "*Catharsis*" to her credit.

THE FEMININE WAR CRY

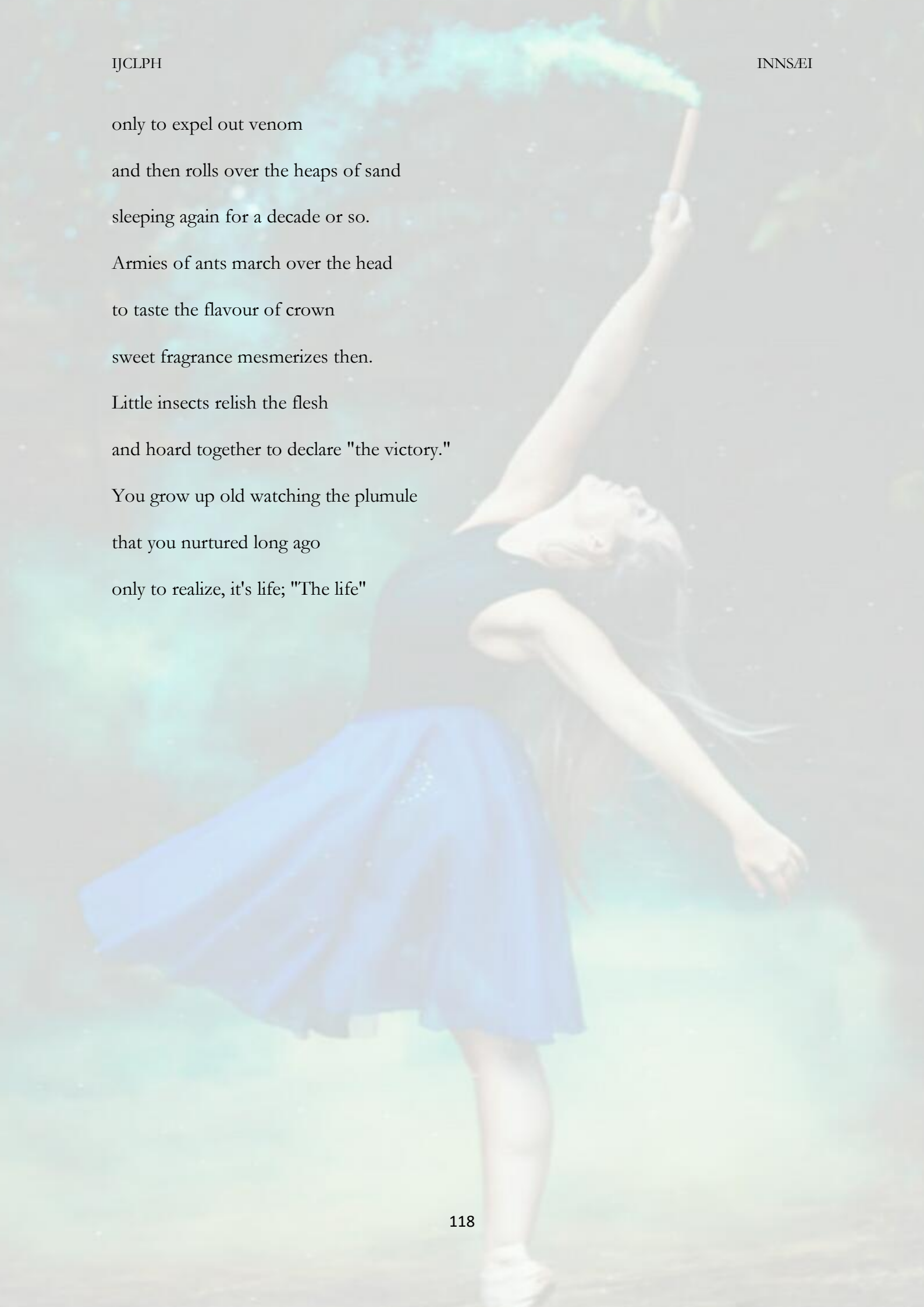
by Dr Sanju Paul

Editorial Board Member, INNSÆI

International Journal of Creative Literature for Peace and Humanity

Deep inside, you cry alone since times unknown
silently, you die bit by bit
embracing the agony called life. In the barren grazing lands,
a dying plumule longs for a drop of dew,
clenched in between awns and blades.
Until the evening pushes it into the lap of dark ,
you nurture the poor plumule with saline of tears
and weep along the sailing night
only to witness the conspiring dawn.
Rising sun howls and growls
to wake the sleeping serpent up. It isn't easy to shatter the comfort of hibernation,
but the coming summer
behaves aggressive to the tunes of clouds.
It shrivels and finally shatters the shrouds
only to announce "the victory"!

No matter what the birds chirp when
serpent swallows their glistening eggs

A young girl with long blonde hair, wearing a blue dress, is captured in a dynamic pose as if spinning or dancing. She holds a glowing, ethereal wand in her right hand, which emits a bright, shimmering light. Her left arm is extended downwards. The background is a soft, dreamlike landscape with a green field and a blue sky filled with soft, glowing clouds. The overall atmosphere is magical and ethereal.

only to expel out venom
and then rolls over the heaps of sand
sleeping again for a decade or so.
Armies of ants march over the head
to taste the flavour of crown
sweet fragrance mesmerizes then.
Little insects relish the flesh
and hoard together to declare "the victory."
You grow up old watching the plumule
that you nurtured long ago
only to realize, it's life; "The life"



Tejaswini Patil, Ph.D. (India)

Tejaswini Patil, Ph.D., is Founder Director of Innsæi International Journal of Creative Literature for Peace and Humanity, academician, poet and social worker; she writes on Nature, social issues, feminist sensibilities and her experiences. Her publications include 'Talons and Nets', 'Verses of Silence', 'A Glass of Time', 'Kaainat' (Hindi) and 'Relations and Relationship'. Editor of 'Tunisian Asian Anthology, Mystical Voices' Thrice selected for prestigious Rio Grande Valley International Poetry Festival, Texas, USA. Part of the famous Coffee Table Book, 25 Women of Virtue. Awards- State Level Mahila Samajratna Lifetime Achievement Award and 'Master of Creative Impulse' by World Poetry Conference, Bathinda, Punjab.

I'M A CANDLE

by Tejaswini Patil, Ph.D.

Founder Director, INNSÆI

International Journal of Creative Literature for Peace and Humanity

I have earned

This body wax

From five elements...

But my life began

With the flame.

I live when I burn.

The Sun has given me

This magical life.

I am the sun

When I'm the flame.

His particle has given me the entity

On this earth to survive.

The truth is-

He's me... and I'm Him.



Orbindu Ganga (India)

Orbindu Ganga is the Founder Director of Innsæi, International Journal of Creative Literature for Peace and Humanity. He is a post-graduate in science and the first recipient of Dr Mitra Augustine gold medal for academic excellence. He worked in financial, banking and publishing domains. He proved his finesse as a Soft Skills Trainer and Client Relationship Manager. He is a multilingual poet, author, critic, content writer, sketch artist, researcher, and spiritual healer. His poems have been published in many international publications and anthologies. He has published nine articles, two short stories, two research papers on poetry and one science article. His short story, prose, painting, and photography have been published.

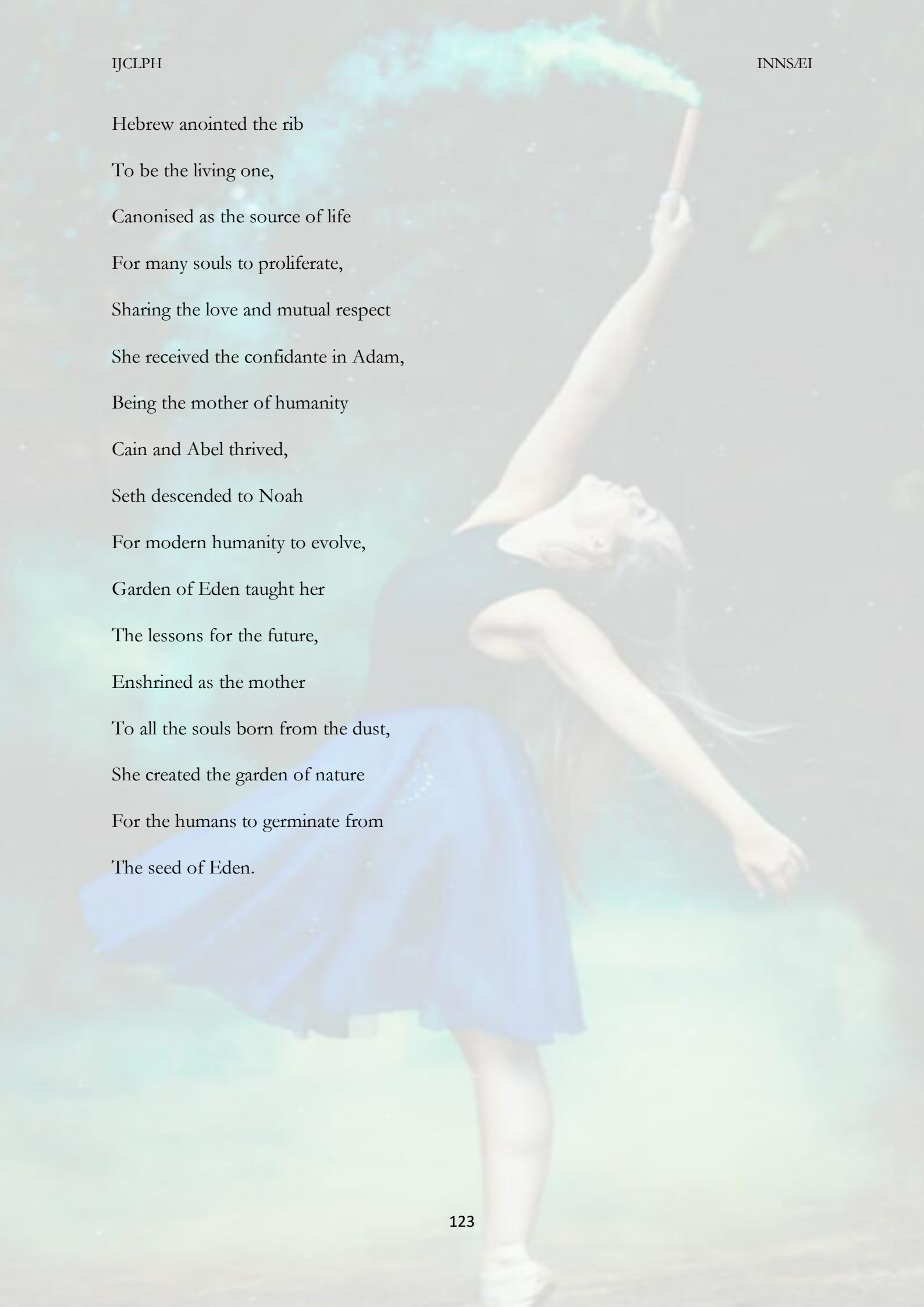
EVE'S GARDEN

by Mr Orbindu Ganga

Founder Director, INNSÆI

International Journal of Creative Literature for Peace and Humanity

Adam's solitude
Resonated far away,
Garden of Eden never
Looked bemused,
The silence was in silence
Searching for the notes,
Never to play a note
Bewildered in her absence,
Lilith drafted her ways
To be decisive in her thoughts,
God wanted the tears
To smile in the garden,
To be smelled
Listening to the whispers,
He created from Adam's rib
The beatitude of gratitude,
Sprouted in the garden
Eve flowered to be forever,

A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a blue dress, is captured in a dynamic pose, holding a glowing wand aloft. The background is a soft, ethereal mix of green and blue, suggesting a magical or celestial setting. The overall mood is dreamlike and ethereal.

Hebrew anointed the rib
To be the living one,
Canonised as the source of life
For many souls to proliferate,
Sharing the love and mutual respect
She received the confidante in Adam,
Being the mother of humanity
Cain and Abel thrived,
Seth descended to Noah
For modern humanity to evolve,
Garden of Eden taught her
The lessons for the future,
Enshrined as the mother
To all the souls born from the dust,
She created the garden of nature
For the humans to germinate from
The seed of Eden.

SHORT STORIES



Dr Shaista Irshad (India)

Dr Shaista Irshad is an Assistant Professor in English in Iswar Saran P G College, Prayagraj. She is a bilingual writer, writing in Urdu/Hindi and English. Her stories and poems have been published in many anthologies and literary magazines of high repute. She has recently published her first book of Hindi Poetry 'Ék Qatra Sukkon' and is currently working on her collections of short stories both in Hindi and English. She has also recently won **7th BHARAT AWARD FOR LITERATURE - SHORT STORY CONTEST 2021.**

The Silhouette Deconstructed

by Dr Shaista Irshad

The plates of pink frock of 8-year-old Amina puffed up as she allowed the dusky smoke pluming from the smoldering brazier accumulate inside its fringes, the tattered fringes. She felt like a queen wafting amongst clouds under the same smoke that burnt like chilies in the eyes of her mother. In those days, the smile was cheap; the happiness unasked for. She also knew that corner of her small room, where the ceiling fan hushed maximum air, the air that was so euphorically welcomed by Amina in the plates of her frock and she swayed her tiny hips, like Cinderella must have dreamt of. The carelessness was the real possession that her childhood days owned. In a way she treated herself lucky for being born as a girl since she could wear frock and flaunt the smoke and air that puffed up her attire and made her feel like a princess. She pitied her uncle who was just a year older to her and could not do so since his narrow half pants couldn't accommodate any amount of air. This was the first and the last time she was ever thankful for being a girl, for other times she prayed to get her sex changed overnight through some miracle, for the advantages of being a girl were almost negligible as compared to the disadvantages.

As she grew older, she developed the obsession for looking like heroines in the TV. But her father was very strict regarding girls putting makeup until they were married. There was only one mirror in the home and that too was kept in her father's shaving kit. The day her mother made beet root at home, she would rub its peel on her lips to make it pink and then squeeze her head in the clay water pot to look and dote upon her reflection. This was the first instance of her falling in love with her image, an image that was made acceptable by others on TV.

Amma told her, "Do not to wear makeup *Ladki*, for your beauty is the property of your would-be life-partner. Use powder, lipstick and *kohl* once you get married."

Amina responded in ignorance, "As if he too would be preserving his beauty for his life partner."

Amma pitied her understanding and fretted, “And what for men need beauty? Their specialty lies in being male only, that’s it! They can be of any shape and size, it’s the money that they earn, matters.”

Amina shrugged her shoulder, “And money can smell the gender?”

“Would it come only to males? It has repulsion from females?”

“I will be using men’s perfume then.”

And she laughed aloud saying this and looked mockingly at Amma. Amma banged her head with platter that she had just finished cleaning.

Amina felt a kind of discomfort when it came to what girls couldn’t do and what boys could do. She never felt short of anything- neither the courage nor the stamina- for doing anything which her uncle could do; in fact, she did better whenever they both did the same thing. But it was her uncle only who got the approval and she was consoled that she would learn slowly.

Amina fretted, “Amma, why is it that though we both have learnt riding bicycle, still my uncle is getting a new bicycle and I am told by father to go to school with him?”

“Amma, why can’t he go with me and I ride the bicycle?”

Amma couldn’t answer. How could she tell her that, this is how the world is constructed; this is how she would be controlled and commanded; this is how she has to survive.

She just uttered a few lines despite knowing that Amina really was expert in riding the bicycle, “The men know better *Ladki*. Women are not so mature and understanding so as to take decisions themselves.”

That day Amina decided to call herself *Ladka*, since *Ladki* sounded like a name that was handicapped itself. She was tampering with language, the language that held separate stereotypes and roles for both genders. She had to trespass language and then transcend gender. It was a battle where she will have to fight with her mother’s perception too.

Though Amina couldn’t deny going to school with uncle, for studies were more important than owning a bicycle but she tried deconstructing the accepted role for her gender in every small possible way.

Her days in school too weren't easy for her. For everyone and everything seemed to be obsessed with masculinity. Amina wanted to be heard and seen in a world where women were seen and known with reference to men. She started defying her body while in the company of males and behaved feminine while amongst her own kind. This was indeed difficult to say then, who her own kinds were! Somewhere in France **Simone De Beauvoir** was penning her thoughts down after profound research that, "*One is not born woman, rather becomes one*" in her book **The Second Sex**, and here Amina was transcending her identity every moment to become what one needed from her. The fluidity of gender was being written by Beauvoir and performed by Amina.

But despite all her efforts and expertise, she was invariably being reduced to her body, stuck in her body; a feminine body. She wanted her bulging breasts to stop growing, and held them tight under her undergarments, to refuse to grow at those points and places which made her feminine.

Her identity was her performance, the identity presented, as and when it was required; a demand to be met on the requirement of the society. She never realized when she exactly learnt the art of manipulation. She was feminine enough to adorn herself with floral tiara when amongst the girls, and was brave enough to meet boys' challenge in any sports exclusively labelled as for boys only! Sometimes, when alone she brooded how she existed twice in herself, lived two thoughts, adorned two feelings. She was both gender-wise! And she felt that she has stripped the concept of normal, and lo! People started calling her lesbian. And there were gays too! Did she really need to control her body to prove to others, her strengths and weaknesses? Couldn't she spend her strength in being what she really was? Why she needed to deviate from herself to become what she wasn't. The society had labels for all kinds and categories, and moving away from herself she wouldn't be able to accept what she was being stereotyped as. She undid the buttons of her tight briefs that were to restrict the growth of her puberty and let her body embrace her for what she was.

She didn't need a man's body to be strong, assertive, confident and persevering. Her gender identity need not be dependent on her sexual identity. *The Second Sex* was translated and Butler had given her statement in *Gender Trouble*. These books conveyed what she had already lived.

It's been two years since she got married with a businessman, after completing her Master in Business Management. Meraj was a man who claimed to love her more than anything else in this world. She worked in a multinational firm and earned a handsome amount. But after two years, the colours of his emotions and passions started fading. Amina had fought with the entire world for her rights, her subordination, denials and marginalization, but she grew helplessness in the name of love, love with her lifeline- her soul partner.

When she'd got married, she felt, she hasn't got a typical husband, rather a friend, who was a world to her, her lifeline- Meraj. But as time passed, she slowly discovered the hood of patriarchy eventually spread over her, in the name of culture, traditions and stereotypes. She felt it was just a passing phase, but it proved to be far more stagnant than anything she had ever encountered or faced. She was a connoisseur of beauty, a girl who found beauty in solitude, beauty in her love, her relationship with her partner, her kids and their childhood; but now everything unfolded itself before her eyes in its ugliest form. She craved for her childhood, the white fog, the black curls of smoke, the flowers in the field, the smell of her mother's clothes. She lived in the past more than the present and was oblivious of the future. Her life became a smudge, a big dark grayish black smudge that existed on the edges of walls due to years of ignorance, with no painting and washing and still its ugliness ignored, for nobody expected that wall to be beautiful.

She wanted things to be shared at home equitably by Meraj. She started getting tired by being pulled from all the sides and in an effort to make everyone happy, drained herself. Meraj, who had never complained about anything, now started criticizing for food, clothes and other petty requirements. Amina didn't know how to strike a balance between him, kids and job.

After months of deep agony, struggle and suffering she decided to retreat to herself. To grope within and find out what she wanted, and not what others wanted. She cried for her love that made the domination by Meraj look appealing and beautiful. She cried for her mistrust that this man was different from everyone else in this world. She cried for his rigid understanding that her work was insignificant and easy as compared to his own. She cried for many things but still couldn't bring herself to reconcile with any extreme decision. For beyond all gender distinction and discrimination, love stood still, firm and invincible. But with the passage of time, it left her more embarrassed and lonelier than ever.

After another two years of suffering, she could think beyond love, towards herself, her self-respect and Meraj's love for her. She slowly moved towards herself, her inner self and then towards God. The light that then dawned upon her was the most beautiful thing that she'd ever seen and felt. It was the light, within the light of truth, the truth of 'own' existence. The ugliness -that had crawled over her -like a fungus engulfs stale food- was shredding and falling and she could see the beauty in herself, in the almighty where she least expected it before. The belief that none can exploit and defeat her unless she allowed, was the biggest belief ever. The realization made her look at everything and find it beautiful from the point of view of divinity. Her peaceful aura, her silent and confident demeanor, her refusal to stoop to love in the guise of irrational expectations and demands, made her emerge stronger than ever. She disempowered those around her simply by having faith in herself and control over her words.

Now Amina only shows the liability of those things that are important and easily managed by her, rest she leaves without bothering about how it will be done. She has stopped fretting and howling over her femininity that she can't manage her house and kids. She has stopped squeezing herself into the silhouette of the expectations imposed by her life partner and by others. Now the world appears beautiful in the way it was never before.



Sudha Viswanath (India)

Sudha Viswanath, a teacher by profession took to writing as a hobby. Many of her short stories have been published in the Woman's Era. Her drabbles, short fiction and stories have found place in the Wordweavers' Anthology. She has many articles published on soul curry section by TOI. She is active in many writing forums.

The New horizon

by Ms Sudha Viswanath

The crepuscular rays danced on the horizon early morning, engulfing everything under the sky in its tangerine arms. It heralded the arrival of yet another joyful day. However, it failed to vanquish the gloom in the otherwise chirpy household of Veluchamy.

Located in a not so upscale town in the district of Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu, his humble 230 Sq. Ft house could boast of nothing much than a few basic amenities, but the family of three, Veluchamy, his wife, Ambili and daughter, Selvi lead a contented life.

Veluchamy's modest income that he earned as a helper in a hospital may not have been sufficient to run the house, if not for Ambili's hard work and thriftiness. She ran a food joint from home that helped draw a supplementary income which enabled the couple to educate their only daughter.

Today, Selvi had a higher secondary school certificate with a teacher's training diploma.

She was soon going to join as a Kindergarten teacher in the government school.

"We could not provide you with further education." Ambili had wiped her eyes that had turned misty with tears of happiness on receiving the news of her daughter's appointment in the school.

"If we had the capacity, you could have done your graduation and degree in teacher's training and ended up teaching higher classes with an enhanced income." Veluchamy had chided himself for not having been able to fund her education.

Selvi was aware of her parents' hardships to make her achieve this milestone. She revered them wholeheartedly. She genuinely had no complaints about what life had to offer her.

Unfortunately, Selvi belonged to a community that still believed men to be superior to women. A woman was always expected to play second fiddle.

A girl can stay not for long in her parents' home. She had to be married off and sent to her husband's house as per their custom.

Selvi, a girl who nurtured modern ideas often wondered when people would come out of such age-old notions.

Veluchamy and Ambili had fixed their daughter's wedding, and with their humble savings, they had accumulated whatever gold and other things needed for the wedding.

However, it was only the previous day that the groom's father had come up with an extravagant demand.

"My son has planned to buy a house. We would appreciate it if you could arrange for the down payment of 10L. It is after all for your daughter. They both will be living in the new house. Your daughter is lucky to have got a soul-mate with a secure government job." Tactfully he had put forth the demand.

His son worked in the postal department, no doubt, but then Selvi had also secured a teaching job at the government school and was to join in the new academic year.

Calling off a wedding after an engagement ceremony was considered blasphemy in the small town and would set tongues wagging ruthlessly. It might be a severe deterrent for any other proposal to materialize for Selvi.

The family found themselves in a tight spot.

Selvi's heart twisted in anguish as she saw her parents' forlorn expressions. How would they arrange for such a considerable amount?

"Let me go and find out how much our land would fetch." Veluchamy took out the land documents from a trunk box.

Selvi's vision blurred with tears.

"The small land at the outskirts of the town is the only asset my parents have to help them tide over their old age." She sighed.

"Amma, the school headmistress has called me today for a training session. I will return in the evening." She blatantly lied to her mother and left the house with some iron determination.

It was nearing lunch hours when Selvi reached the town post office.

She was ushered into a cubicle with four employees when she asked for Mr Santhanam.

He was her prospective groom, and she had taken this bold step of confronting him to discuss his father's demands.

Santhanam was more than surprised to see Selvi in his office.

Sitting face to face with him in the office canteen, Selvi spoke to Santhanam about his father's demand.

"Please understand, my parents cannot arrange for 10 lakh rupees, now or ever."

"Oh, come on," said Santhanam, "Don't give me all that story. I know that your father owns a four-cent plot and I'm sure that it will fetch him a good amount even if it is sold at a minimum rate of three lakh rupees per cent. It is fertile land and might fetch more."

Selvi was thoroughly shaken when she heard this.

'How deplorable!!', the father-son duo had done shrewd spadework on this property of her father and planned concrete steps to usurp it.'

"What are you thinking?" Santhanam gave out an evil smirk.

"Everything that your parents own will eventually be yours someday since you are their only progeny. If your father cannot sell the land immediately, he can give it to you right away. I will take care of the sale. Believe me. If I get a good deal, I will keep only 10L and give your father anything that comes out of the sale over the amount."

'What a well-planned subterfuge!' Selvi's blood boiled at the greed of this man sitting in front of her.

Without giving much thought about the consequences, she angrily addressed Santhanam.

"Will you allow me to give my full salary to my parents after marriage because you expect them to give away their property to you?"

Santhanam felt a shudder as if someone had given him an electric shock.

"How on Earth can that happen? You are my wife, and so the money goes to our house kitty." He said, his eyes wide, exhibiting a blend of anger and shock.

"Is that so? But then that may happen only if I'm your wife." There was newly found confidence in Selvi's face.

"Your family will become an object of mockery if you plan to call off the wedding. Near kith and kin would disown you. But you know, for a man it cannot pose any issue. I can always find another girl. It won't take me much effort to tarnish your character, and people will believe it too. It has been a man's world, you see." Santhanam's intonation reeked of arrogance.

Selvi tried hard to maintain her composure.

"Well, Mr Santhanam, let me tell you that a lot of transformation has happened outside the malicious world you belong to. It is no more a 'man's world'; women have carved their niche in many fields and have proved their versatility. It looks like you were thrown into some deep slumber for ages and are still backdated about the progress that women have made like most people belonging to our community." She fearlessly confronted Santhanam.

"You are welcome to tarnish my name, and you are most welcome to spread rumours about my parents. Please do, whatever you want, my father is not giving away his hard-earned property to anyone. I do not wish to carry on with this farce of a wedding."

Then raising her decibel levels intentionally to enable all present in the canteen to hear, she said, "By tomorrow evening I want you to return the golden ring that you are wearing, the one which my parents gifted you for the engagement and also the amount your father took as 'dowry.' I also implore you to reimburse the amount that we spent on the engagement, and if all that is not done, I'm sorry Mr Santhanam, I may have to go to the court." Selvi took out the engagement ring from her finger and put it on the table even as everyone in the canteen looked aghast.

Santhanam stared at the retreating figure as Selvi walked away with her head held high.

'So what if marriage is called off? It doesn't necessarily mean the end of the world.'

She will convince her parents that life always gives women golden opportunities. It had long ceased to be only a man's world!!!

She knew that her parents would only be too pleased to support her decision.

Selvi looked forward to a new horizon.





Chandrika R Krishnan (India)

Chandrika R Krishnan is a Bengaluru-based writer and educationist. She likes talking, teaching. Her 200-odd published articles, poems and stories are eclectic and mostly experiential and are published both in print and online media. She is a published author and her work features in many anthologies. She is also a volunteer whenever in need at a local hospital and Seva- Centre that feeds the poor.

Shades of Grey

by Ms Chandrika R Krishnan

“Good morning ladies! It is International women’s day tomorrow and we have come a long way.”

Thus, Nita started amidst thunderous applause. The auditorium was packed with dignitaries, press and each successful woman, a name to reckon with in their chosen field.

“I remember my grandmother who knew nothing besides keeping the home fires burning. We now have an independent career unrelated to the men in our lives.” She thundered. “We have successfully forayed our way into what could once be considered a pure man’s domain. We are the example of shining India.”

Nita was the brand ambassador for showcasing how far an Indian woman has come. She, despite her very middle-class upbringing was a star model in the international arena. She was the “face” for the new Indian woman.

“We are now liberated from shackles. The need to be at the beck and call of men is passé. We are no longer inferior.....”

Nita was interrupted by a flurry of activity at the far end of the auditorium. All heads turned to take in a bedraggled woman obviously badly hurt by the amount of blood that was seeping through the rough bandage she had around her head. She could not have gained entry if not for her companions who were well-known activists for women’s rights.

“What liberation are we talking about ladies and gentlemen? Let’s hear the story of this young woman of twenty two and already a mother of three children”.

One of them thundered. Despite not having a mike to speak into, her voice carried far and wide into the auditorium for there was a hushed silence.

“She was hit by her inebriated husband by a pressure cooker’s lid just because the food was not to his liking. She is a maid working in various households cleaning dirty dishes and clothes just to keep the home fires burning. And what does she get in return, beating and scolding. That’s behind the scenes for you!” The other activist had her share of attention

of the media as she managed to get herself a mike to be heard. The organizers of this meet were clearly not happy. This was not what they wanted to showcase to the world on a woman's day.

The poor woman was totally bemused and looked completely disoriented among all the glitters. Moreover, her head was hurt and she wanted to go home to her children. They would be waiting for food. She had been screaming at her husband after the fight, as was her wont, when she found herself being bundled by these women into a car and taken to some doctor who gave her some medicine and sutured the wound for her. She likened these women to the big machine that often leveled their huts to the ground after giving them suitable time to salvage their paltry possession. She was a worried woman. All hell would break loose if her husband came back to find that the food was not ready or she wasn't available for her wifely duties.

A camera was thrust onto her face and was bombarded by questions from all sides.

"How often does your husband beat you?"

"How much do you earn each month?"

"Does your husband bring another woman every day?"

"Please take me back to my house." She begged, "My man would get very upset if he knew all this. Please I am all right."

"Don't you have any shame? Why should a woman put up with all this nonsense? Leave your husband immediately!" screamed the woman who had accompanied her.

The poor woman was totally perplexed. "Where will I go if I leave him?"



Dr Hippu Salk Kristle Nathan (India)

Dr Hippu Salk Kristle Nathan is an engineer-turned development researcher. He writes short fiction and drama in both English and Oria language. He currently teaches and researches at the Institute of Rural Management Anand, India.

The Cracked Pane

by Dr Hippu Salk Kristle Nathan

This would be the last report that she would proofread for the Drafting Department of the international NGO. She read the statement, once more.

Naturally, women live longer than men, on average, by about five years'.

Each time she had read this during her job life, her throat chocked and ears tingled. Today was no exception.

The first time she came to know about this, she paid no heed to it. Memories of that uneventful day flashed in front of her eyes.

* * *

It was late evening. He was glued to his favorite lawn-tennis finals on TV, which he always fantasized to play, but never got an opportunity to learn. She was by his side, writing her diary, a childhood habit she grew old with.

To draw her attention, he asked out of the blue, “Nee, can you tell me why score zero is called Love in tennis?”

“Well, one can arise from nothing for the love of the game.” she quipped.

“Wow! You are right on the dot. In all my student days, I thought that it is because of one’s love for the opponent, one wouldn’t even score one point against him or her.” He giggled.

“Only you can come up with such weird reasons.” She said while continuing her writing.

“Is it? Had there been ‘mixed singles’, it would be an everyday possibility.” He winked.

“Mixed singles would be unfair; a stronger sex vs. a weaker one.” She reasoned keeping aside her diary.

“Stronger? Who? Men!” he came close to her as if he was about to reveal a secret of the Eureka moment.

“Do you have any doubts? Of course, it is men.”

“Confident? Should I lock your answer, Nee?”

“I’m already in your lock-up.” She answered locking her palms around his neck.

“But tell me, Nee, why do you think so?” He asked her as he held her close.

“Look at your favorite game of lawn-tennis. Why do otherwise the women's' match only have three-sets, while the men's have five?”

“You are mistaken, Nee. That is only an illusion about man’s outwardly physical strength. Females are stronger, much stronger both inside-out. They are more resistant to death and disease.”

“What do you mean? We don’t die easily?” She smiled.

“Yes, women don’t die as quickly as men do. Statistically speaking, they outlive men by roughly five years, across all regions and races.”

* * *

Then she had not taken him seriously. Those were the days when she could not even imagine a moment without him. But fifteen years have passed since she lost him and she had been fighting the battles of life all alone.

Today was her last day at the office; perhaps it's more accurate to say his office.

At first, she had known this place as ‘his office’. She had accompanied him there many times, some for special occasion and others for occasional visits on ordinary days. She knew that he occupied the cubicle to the left of the girl, who was also known as the walking garden, for the flowers tucked in her hair. She knew that he used to have long debates with Manmeet and Raj, during lunch hours, when he savored the egg puffs and ginger tea from the canteen. She also knew who his well-wishers were and who envied him. Unofficially, she was a part of every aspect of his professional life.

After his untimely demise, his office offered her a job in their drafting department. She had been hesitant at first. How could she ever face this office without him? What would it be like to walk in its corridors, without him? Or how would it feel to sip coffee at the canteen, alone? Or how would it be to work with his colleagues to whom she had always been known as his better half?

“She is my better half, and I’m her worse.” That’s how he always introduced her, and everyone would have a heartily laugh in agreement.

Memories are inescapable, indeed.

She was initially very apprehensive; reluctant to take up the job in the same office. But remembering the *cracked pane* in their reading room, she gathered the courage to live on, march forward. Hesitation and doubt were her constant companions till she accepted the job.

Once she joined, the thought of leaving the job never occurred to her. Rather she developed a unique attachment to it. It gave her a new sense of self-worth and she felt as though she was living his dreams, which were always ridiculously ambitious and societally relevant.

With every passing day, the office seemed to her more like home. At home, she was rather lonely. Pearl, her only child, had just returned home with his wife, after their long stint out of the country. Both her son and daughter-in-law were always busy with their laptops. When enquired, they mentioned that they do everything through it. Internet had virtually substituted for real, intimate connections. Moreover, since his school days, Pearl had not spent much time with his parents. Videogames, sci-fi movies, and coding had consumed most of his time. Then he had left to pursue higher studies.

There was a gentle hustle-bustle in the office; after all, it was tea time. She stifled a yawn; and spoke to herself,

‘Sarat uncle will not come today. Tea would be served again, in the farewell meeting in half an hour. I cannot skip it. After all, it is my farewell.’

She tried to concentrate on the last paragraph in front of her. She finished her assignment, as always, well in time. A full twenty minutes at her disposal before the farewell meeting. He was a huge fan of her timely execution of things. She clearly remembered one of their conversations, before their marriage.

* * *

“Why do you need to complete the presentation tonight?” He asked.

“Why not; what’s the problem?”

“But... today is Wednesday. And you said your talk is on Saturday!”

“My presentation is not on this Saturday, it’s on next Saturday.”

“How could you do these? You are real mystery to be discovered.” He hung up out of shock.

* * *

The wall clock chimed four. She cleared her personal belongings from the top drawer. All she had was a stapler, some sheets of paper, and the diary. She picked up her diary and left the rest of it for the next occupant of the cubicle. She fingered through its pages. The diary has been her constant companion since she lost him. She scribbled all that she can remember of their bittersweet moments. The very first page was titled *‘The Cracked Pane’*.

* * *

She had to attend a friend’s pre-wedding function and had asked him to pick up Pearl after school. She had even reminded him by calling his office in the morning.

When she returned home, to her utter shock, she could not find Pearl. He was in the reading room, engrossed in his book, but Pearl was nowhere to be seen.

“Where is Pearl?” She demanded. Her voice cracked out of nervousness.

“Oh my goodness; Nee, I am sorry. I forgot...”

“What!!!” She was stunned. She was witnessing what she feared most.

He behaved so irresponsibly at times and then blamed it all on his forgetfulness.

Her reminder calls had gone unanswered and she had known that as usual, he would have forgotten to change his phone back from the silent mode after his morning meetings.

This kind of thing has happened so many times. The price they had to pay for his carefree behavior was sometimes small and other times humongous. But to forget picking up their son from school crossed all limits.

She could not control herself. In a fit of rage, she rushed towards him, pulled his glasses out, and flung them away. His glasses hit the windowpane and shattered into pieces leaving a large and visible crack.

* * *

She heard footsteps and saw her colleagues coming towards her; some were with authentic, and some with plastic smiles. It was about time. She clutched her diary and purse. Her colleagues walked beside her as if she was a new bride walking towards her marriage ceremony.

She entered the room to the sound of chairs moving and people rising. Everyone was applauding her.

The Director came forward and received her and offered her the chair by his side. The receptionist appeared from nowhere and pushed a bouquet of flowers into her hands. Almost everyone in the department was there. She even spotted a few of their Public Relations Executives. “Must be here for the high-tea”, she thought. It was common in the office; the high-tea was attractive enough to pull in some uninvited guests from other departments.

The director adjusted the microphone to start his speech. He spoke of how the office has been generous enough to give her the job after his untimely demise.

“Such misplaced emphasis!!!”

Nee wished she could sear him with her gaze. She was more than qualified for the job. She would have got it without any sympathy or special consideration. She held a Master’s degree in English literature and had been the college topper. She always had a penchant for creative writing. She had a natural appetite for languages, right from her childhood. During her school years, she won the essay competition in all three languages—a record that was still unbroken to date. Books of fiction were her constant companion.

With her marriage and having him around, she had taken a break from books. Why not? He was her living book. After all, books are meant to inform, inspire, and entertain. He did all three. Her reading became limited to skimming newspaper headlines and going through Pearl’s lessons.

She had gone back to his books, after his demise. They say that one is known by the books one keeps. But he was known by the books he bought. He got many more than he could read. She had found many books that he had not even opened. Of late, she went through some of his choicest books. It made her feel close to him, gave her a chance to like the liking of a person she was missing dearly.

She was his biggest critique of all his unusual habits. One of these was his practice of giving books as gifts on birthdays and marriages. It seemed so out-of-place. But her perception changed after his death. Now she enjoyed gifting books for all occasions. She also wrote their wishes on the inner cover of the book as he used to do: "With love from Nivedita and Suraj". Just that she changed the order of their names.

* * *

A big round of applause brought her back. The Director had just ended his speech. Now it was the deputy director's turn. The man was a leech. Many times she had seen how he stuck up to people who were in power. He had also felt the same way towards him. She did not feel like listening to him. With her head bowed down she thumbed the diary under the table and went on...

* * *

"How can you forget your son?" She burst into tears.

"I did not forget him; I just forgot to bring him home from school". He had his usual person-activity-differentiation argument.

"I don't want to listen to you anymore. Get my Pearl back; right now."

She was on the verge of screaming. The sound of the doorbell made her rush to the front door, wiping her tears. Pearl was at the door.

"School ended late Maa, we had an extra class. I came home with Rashmi aunty."

"I tried to call on the mobile, but could not reach", said Rashmi, who lived one floor above. She was his colleague, and her daughter was Pearl's classmate.

"Oh thanks, Madam. Please come inside. The phone was with me and I must have missed it."

She volunteered a lie. All her life she covered up for him. He heard her while he picked up the broken shreds of his spectacles. He later replaced his spectacles, but never the window pane. Year after year, the crack remained. His usual answer, when enquired about the crack, was,

“The pane is still serving its purpose. Its ability to protect from dust, sun, and rain has not been compromised. The outward appearance hardly matters.”

* * *

Now it was Pramod Sir speaking; a good friend of his. He spoke about how he was a firebrand writer, a mind-boggling speaker, and an inspiring presenter. Her eyes overflowed when Pramod recalled,

“Suraj’s only possession was passion, and we could see plenty of that in his wife.”

During his speech, Pramod Sir had shortened her name to Nee. She felt troubled but was relieved when she realized that Pramod Sir used it only in indirect sense while quoting her husband’s remarks. No one should call her by that name, except him.

On the very first night of their wedding, he had proposed to call her ‘Nee’.

“Look,” he had justified, “In this way, I will have to speak two and half millions fewer syllables, assuming I call you fifty times a day for fifty years.” He had laughed.

She too had smiled then. But now, a terrible pang shot through her. He was only with her for fifteen years, and not fifty. She could hardly prevent the tears from rolling down her face.

* * *

He did not want to die in the hospital. When the cancer was detected, it was already in the third stage, and his health deteriorated at a rate faster than what doctors predicted. As per his wish, he spent his last hours in their reading room bed, with books all around him, and Nee by his side. Pearl could not make it to the final moment.

“Suraj, I will also take my life.”

“I wouldn't do that if I was in your place.”

“But, this is not fair Suraj. You promised to be with me all my life. How can I live without you? I would be so incomplete.”

“See this cracked pane, Nee”. He turned his flailing eyelids to the pane. “No human being is complete. Everybody has cracks. Like the pane. How you are perceived by the outside world is not important. Life will serve its purpose if one goes along. March ahead Nee; march ahead.” Those were his last words.

* * *

She was so engrossed in her thoughts that she did not realize that the Director had invited her to speak. She could not think of anything to say. She started with his last few words and soon ended it by thanking her colleagues.

During the high-tea, as she was bidding her farewell, she overheard some of her colleagues, “What an eccentric speech! All of us have cracks it seems! And we are like cracked panes? Is she even in her senses?”

Back home, as usual, she confined herself to the reading room. This was her room now. It has been so since she made the bedroom available to her son and daughter-in-law. She sat there, staring at the window pane.

“Maa, what are you thinking about so deeply? Why are you worried? Everyone has to retire someday.” Pearl said.

“But what will I do now? It is like retiring from life.”

“Your grandchild will keep you busy.”

She said nothing. She felt uncertain about raising a child again. Could she bear their insensitivity! But on second thoughts, she felt that her grandchild might grow up like him, full of life and empathy.

"Maa, you are still looking at the pane. I understand that this has become old and is cracked. I will replace it tomorrow."

"You better not touch it. Certain things in life cannot be replaced. This is my lifeline."

Pearl left the room and she took a deep breath along with the room. With only her own thoughts for company, she heard her son speak to her daughter-in-law.

“I think we should take Maa to the doctor. She is saying that the cracked window pane is her lifeline. Rashmi aunty was also saying that she spoke something about a cracked pane in her farewell speech. I am afraid she might be going insane.”

She turned her face to his photo on the opposite wall. His eyes were beaming at her.

INNSÆIAN'S VOICE**Rini Valentina (Indonesia)**

Rini Valentina is a trilingual writer; Indonesian, English and Spanish. Since writing at the end of 2017, she has published 16 poetry collection books and 2 short story books, a story translation from Serbia and 7 international multilingual anthology books published on Amazon Kindle (Amazon.com) where she is the chief editor and compiler.

It is an honor for her because France and Switzerland appointed her as the peace ambassador for Indonesia. UHE, a Spanish-language international literature institute based in Peru, also appointed her as national president for Indonesia. An international electronic magazine based in India, GRIHASWAMINI appointed her as an ambassador for Indonesia. INNSÆI International journal gives confidence to her as an editor for short stories. Writer Capital International Foundation nominated her as a recipient of the 2020 GLOBAL ICON AWARDS.

My Husband

by Ms Rini Valentina

Editorial Board Member, INNSÆI

International Journal of Creative Literature for Peace and Humanity

Her name is Sandra, unfortunately I didn't know her full name. Maybe Sandra Mayasari, Sandra Larasati or Sandra bla...bla... I really didn't know. Even my husband always dodged all the slurred questions when I started interrogating him, he was also confused. It was very weird. Sandra is his newest ideal woman. Why didn't he know his full name? Did he find the woman at the garbage dump?

This has happened for the fifth time. But only with the fifth woman of his dreams, my husband didn't know her full name. Or maybe he didn't know also where she came from? Huufffhhh !

I'm used to reading intimate message from several women from my husband's whatsapp. At first I felt the world would end when the first time he was caught cheating. I got angry and threw his favourite cell phone into the closet. Not even that, I also tore his blue shirt that smelled of female perfume. I was so angry and roar like a baboon in the African wilderness. I want to scratch his face, then pull his moustache. But I did the opposite, I just fell silent after shouting in front of his innocent face. Oh my God ... My husband was just as quiet as me. Lowered his face without a single letter coming out of between his lips. Like it's locked tight. There was no refutation or reply to all my accusations. But I was pretty sure he didn't regret it. Because after several months passed in the cold war, my husband was caught cheating again! At that time with a widow with two children. I just thought, why only two children, why not seven or ten children. Isn't it only a child who is always looking for in his affair? But if a woman has ten children, the widow must be older than his age. Such a woman wasn't my husband's taste. A man who has married me for fifteen years ago has a great taste in woman, must be beautiful, smart, smooth brown skin, and young.

I realized, fifteen years had turned me into old fast married to him. How can I not get old quickly from my real age if during my marriage with him ? I always suffered and was depressed. Maybe I'm a stupid woman like my siblings often saying. Or an airhead who defends ancient principles. That the wife must accept and accompany her husband whatever happens. That the wife from the rib of the man must obey what the husband says. That the wife should serve like a servant. Oh my husband, if all this time all you have been looking for is the child of your mistress, why didn't none of them give that child to you? Actually, who is barren? All his accusations against me are just an excuse to justify cheating on him and collecting other women. But this time, I won't get angry anymore. I won't ask you not to leave me again. I also won't look up Sandra's full name, it doesn't matter to me anymore. I am tired. I'm tired of hearing all your reasons why you chose Sandra like the other women. I am tired...

I closed the screen shot of the conversation between Sandra and my husband that I saved on my cell phone. If I was cruel then Sandra would have been in jail for a few years because that woman had violated the marriage law. But for what. After all, my husband will still be my husband who likes to play with other women behind me.

This time, I have prepared my heart and mentally prepared if I have to end this all. I want to give him the freedom to find another woman who can give him a child, because I'm not young anymore. I'm thirty eight years old, it's enough to give birth. Or maybe even, I was barren like his accusation.

I put my cell phone and started tidying my clothes. I have to leave early tomorrow morning before my husband wakes up. But first, I have to talk to him that I am not strong enough to continue to survive in this household. Our relationship is untenable. I'm really tired. And indeed lately, I often feel very tired. Sometimes even sudden nausea and dizziness. Especially for this morning, the feeling of nausea is getting bigger. Maybe all that I felt was due to the burden of my heavy heart for years. But I don't know, my emotions are not as strong as hurricanes. Whoever is barren among us, it doesn't matter anymore. I also gave up, my husband will never change. My hope is in vain. Five times I know about the affair. The rest I don't know. Hopefully, he is always careful to choose a woman who will become a mother to his child.

Slowly I wiped the tears that just flowed. Fifteen years is not a short time living in a painful marriage. Even my sister once said, my face is ten years older. And now I realize, I no longer want to be a servant for my husband. I don't want anymore... twenty years older than my age!

I let the phone sound repeatedly on the TV table with the ringing tone of Didi Kempot's song "Sewu Kutho". The song was deliberately used as a ringtone on the cell phone by my husband. He said the song was good for the reason that time. And it just makes it easier for me to mark that if the song sounds it must be from my husband who says he can't come home tonight. The reason is that new items have entered the warehouse and the boss has him supervise the workers. Cliché excuse. Because every time my husband wants to meet the woman he loves, he will always give reasons like that. And what makes me really hurt is when he arrives home tomorrow afternoon, my husband smiled sweetly while bringing a basket of apples and oranges. He thought I would be happy with the souvenirs then he hugged me and said he missed as if nothing had happened. And as usual too, I just dodged it and told him to take a shower immediately. I pretended not to know what he had done. Even though I really wanted to grind from the stone I threw it into his thick moustache. Or throw a basket of dirty clothes on his also dirty body!

But as usual I just kept quiet. I'm tired of fighting. I also realized that I couldn't give him the child he dreamed of during our marriage. And until now I also don't know who is infertile. Even though the doctor said from the fertility test results, there was nothing wrong between us. We are both healthy. Maybe God hasn't given us the trust to take care of his entrusted creatures. I gave up. With children or not in this marriage, I had to endure my thought at that time. But turning fifteen, I was getting tired. If only my husband hadn't ventured into many women, maybe I would have survived.

After a few minutes I let my cell phone ring again. Why don't you just leave a message as usual if I don't pick up the phone? I started grumbling to myself. Then I stood lazily and walked slowly to the TV table in the living room. I felt my head was dizzy again. There is a feeling of nausea coming again. Maybe I caught a cold because since last noon until tonight I haven't eaten anything. I don't know lately I always feel full even though I haven't eaten anything.

"Hello good evening ..." I replied after the voice on the cell phone greeted me. It's so strange, I hear the female voice. Was this Sandra? I asked myself and was curious.

I was only silent for a moment. My head felt lighter, and suddenly I felt very weak. My legs are no longer able to stand up. This woman was not Sandra... and this was the first time I hoped, the woman I'm talking to is my husband's mistress!

But she's not Sandra, she's a nurse from a hospital in my town. The nurse in a friendly voice only asked me to immediately go to the hospital. Without thinking my body felt is weak, I drove the car of my husband brought me to the hospital where my husband was treated. I didn't stop praying that he was okay. But I can't lie to myself, I felt very worried. My desire to leave it vanished somewhere. I just felt afraid that bad things were lurking along.

After twenty minutes of driving like crazy, I arrived at the hospital parking lot. Not caring about the nausea and dizziness, I jogged to the emergency room. There aren't many patients here. And a nurse seems to already know, I am the wife of the accident patient on the highway that happened an hour and a half ago that they have been waiting for. I followed her footsteps to a bed without saying anything, just smiling kindly as if there was nothing to worry about. Even I forgot, how he knew I was his wife without them asking... Or maybe they have seen my picture on my husband's cell phone.

We stopped right at the corner of the emergency room. My husband's body is full of tubes. And the heart rate monitor machine looks increasingly unstable when I hold my husband's warm hand. Oh Jesus Christ.. I still love my husband. I don't want to lose him.

I stroked his head which was slightly swollen. The nurse had told me in a whisper that my husband was bleeding profusely in his head. And sadly, only a miracle will keep him alive.

I called his name right in his ear. I know my husband heard what I said. He also knew I love him very much. And I saw a tear drop from the corner of his eyes. I hugged him as if I didn't want to be separated from him. And I felt my husband's heartbeat increasingly unstable. Then several nurses asked me to sit quietly. I didn't know what liquid they injected. Because after that his body looked calm and his heart rate returned to normal. I just hoped, there's a miracle.

But my wish was only a dream. Because before dawn he left. Though there was the most beautiful news I would whisper to him if he woke up from his coma.

I am pregnant. After fifteen years of our marriage, I got pregnant. I found out about my pregnancy from a nurse who helped me use a pregnancy test. Because a few hours before my husband was pronounced dead, I was nauseous and vomited. Then by a nurse I was taken to the examination room. There were several other nurses and a doctor on duty. At first I thought I just caught a cold or I was stressed about my husband's condition. Because something like that I have guessed this one month. But the doctor on duty just smiled and asked me not to worry. Then she sent me to the hospital dispensary to buy a pregnancy test and stock up on prescription vitamins. And the result made me want to cry. I wanted to scream into my husband's silent ear. I wanted to tell him my pregnancy which he had been waiting for during our marriage. But all my hopes were just dreams. He had to go forever.

Samarinda, March 28, 2020

FICTION



Alifya Basrai (India)

Alifya Basrai is an ex-banker with over twelve years of experience in the banking industry. She embarked on a journey of writing poems and short stories getting inspired by her own eleven-year-old daughter. A voracious reader herself, she enjoys reading non-fiction, religious books, and philosophical content. She has been writing poems and short stories for over two years now and has more than forty poems in her collection. Her book *An Anthology from a Poet's Desk* was published in June 2020 which is a compilation of her poems and prose along with her daughter's collection.

PERSEVERANCE PAYS...

by Ms Alifya Basrai

It was the first time that she had seen an audience like that. With her head down, she slowly walked towards the center stage. A frenzy broke out in the crowd when they saw Shyamalee for the first time. All the rejoicing was a sheer mockery. She was quite blasé about her situation. It wasn't the first time people ridiculed her or found her as an object to scorn. However, this was her day, as she had been waiting for it for a very long time. A day that would change everything for her is what she had contemplated. All she could hear is a symphony of sounds that were elevating her Spirits.

No one knew what act Shyamalee was going to perform. She bowed down; to express her gratitude in advance. Something, usually done after any performance, but she didn't want to take any chances today. She had to entertain the crowd with her act. She walked toward the ladder that took her up to the ropes. She was happy to be in her space once again.

The very next moment, her body propelled through the air from one bar to the other. The spectators were awestruck with the performance put up by Shayamalee. They hadn't witnessed anything like this one before. To perform such acrobatic tricks high above the ground with swiftness and finesse turned into a memorable experience for the crowd. A performance that lasted fifteen minutes kept the stunned spectators on their toes.

The moment the act got over; she could hear a resounding cheer from the spectators. Shyamalee was back at the center stage to bow to the crowd once again. It was her moment when she stood watching the crowd applauding ecstatically at the most memorable performance they had witnessed.

Tears of happiness welled up in her eyes, and she let them streak down her cheeks. Her thoughts took her back to the day the memories of which she had long forgotten... the day, when she was publicly ostracized by her society and village four years ago. An incident was where Shyamalee was abducted and raped for three consecutive days by the village goons. The village *Sarpanch* had given her an ultimatum to leave the village in twenty-four hours.

It was painful to witness her helpless parents, back then who were not only disinclined; but had refused to leave the village to accompany her. It was disheartening to note that her very own people were willing to disown her because of their impoverished circumstances. The only thing that changed was that Shyamalee had finally decided to put a brave front in front of the world. A plucky girl, who had astounded her audience just a few moments ago.

It took her four years; to convince her mentors at the circus; to put up a performance so elegant. Happiness was not short-lived. As she stood on the stage for the first time today in front of the cheering crowd, she very well knew that this was just the beginning. It was perseverance that made Shyamalee chase her dreams despite being a dwarf and a rape survivor. A never to give up girl had finally found a reason to live and face the world head-on.

ESSAY



Renata Pavrey (India)

Renata Pavrey is a nutritionist by profession, specializing in clinical and sports nutrition. She is a trained classical dancer in the Odissi style. In addition to Indian classical dance, she has also trained and performed in various Western dance forms, is a marathon runner, and bibliophile. Her writings cover a broad spectrum of subjects including dance, books, running and others like sports, health and fitness, languages and music.

TRIBHANGA – WHEN DANCE AND CINEMA COLLIDE

by Ms Renata Pavrey



Last year I had read a book titled *Dancing in the Family* - an intergenerational memoir by Sukanya Rahman, about her mother and grandmother and the presence of dance in their lives. While seemingly a book about dance, the story was actually about three generations of women and the things that bound them together and those which drew them apart, showcasing three strong individuals in a story as one.

When I first heard about *Tribhanga* - written and directed by Renuka Shahane - what struck me was its title, sourced from an *Odissi* dance posture of the same name. Being a trained *Odissi* dancer myself, I was piqued about this movie that wasn't about dance but resonated through its name. The tagline stated it was a story of three generations of women, and I was immediately reminded of *Dancing in the Family* - dance a character in itself, but a story with so much more to offer.

Tribhanga is a family drama about the choices we make and how they influence not just individuals but families at large. The movie begins with Nayantara Apte (Tanvi Azmi) in conversation with a writer who is recording her in order to pen her thoughts and words into an autobiography, when she collapses from a brain stroke and falls comatose. Nayan has been a much celebrated novelist in her own right, having won several literary accolades over the years, but with no familial ties. This brings us to Anuradha Apte (Kajol), Nayan's

estranged daughter who refers to her mother by name because that's just what she is to her, not a mum at all. The trio is completed by Masha Mehta (Mithila Palkar), Anu's daughter who's currently at her mother's place due to her ongoing pregnancy. The entire movie is narrated through Nayan's coma, in the form of past recordings from the writer Milan, and surfacing memories from Nayan's daughter and granddaughter.

As described by Anu, the three women can be represented by *Odissi* postures - *Abhanga* (Nayan, for her dual personality of being revered by some and abhorred by others), *Tribhanga* (Anu, for her self-proclaimed craziness and overwhelming personality), and *Samabhanga* (Masha, for her calm and composed disposition) - a wonderful metaphor of the many interpretations of classical dance, from stoicism and rigidity to playfulness and fluidity, dance movements conveying the emotions and feelings of a dancer in myriad ways that go beyond steps and set choreographies. *Tribhanga* in *Odissi* refers to three bends of the body, and the movie *Tribhanga* represents these bends as characteristics and traits that run through a family - every individual bringing their own constitution to create the larger canvas of "family", just as parts of the body work and move differently but still sync together in their individuality to construct the larger piece called "dance". Jigsaw puzzle pieces are in solid forms on their own but form a larger, clearer picture when the brokenness comes together.

All the classical dances of India are known for their depiction of the nine rasa (sentiments and emotions), and *Tribhanga* runs through the gamut of *shringar* (love), *veera* (valor), *karuna* (sadness), *hasya* (humor), *raudra* (anger), *bhayanak* (fear), *bibhatsa* (disgust), *adbhuta* (surprise), and *shanta* (peace). From Anu and Robindo's unshakeable bond as siblings banding together in a broken family, Anu standing up to an abusive husband to keep her daughter safe, the revelation about why Nayan is not writing her own autobiography and resorting to another writer to do so for her, Anu's constant jibes at the writer Milan for revering the mother who doesn't deserve to be called so, Robindo "mistakenly" referring to *Nayan* as "*aai*" (mother) which draws the ire of his sister, Masha's childhood fears of isolation and rejection on being raised by a single mother carried into adulthood and her need to belong, Nayan finding out that her husband was abusing her daughter, Anu's reaction on discovering her daughter underwent a gender determination test hoping for a boy in spite of being brought up by a single mother, and all three women coming to terms with past

grudges they have carried to the present, silence festering relationships that could have been salvaged a long time ago.

Director-writer Renuka Shahane literally takes us through dance jargon without making it obvious, and like a dance recital flowing from *mangalacharan* to *pallavi*, *abhinaya* and *moksha*, the *mudras* and *chalis* being phenomenal performances by all the leading actresses in an all-round wonderfully created and presented movie.

Of particular interest in *Tribhanga* was Kajol's portrayal of an *Odissi* dancer, and Renuka's handling of the character. The connection between the title of the movie and its lead actress's character was an innovative touch, considering *Odissi* as a dance form in mainstream films has not been explored much. At the same time, understanding that Kajol is an actress and not a trained dancer herself, the *Odissi* bits have been relegated to photographs of shows and pre-recital scenes of Anu in costume. I loved Renuka's respect for the traditional arts by bringing one into the limelight, without creating a caricaturists performance by showing the actress actually dancing a style she has not devoted her life to learning. I feel huge respect to the director for her deference to classical dancers who spend years studying a dance that's part of their lifestyle.

Tribhanga released on Netflix earlier this year, and is a treat to watch for both dancers and non-dancers alike. All images are courtesy Netflix.

MEMOIR



Dr Tangirala SreeLatha (India)

Dr Tangirala SreeLatha, is an Associate Professor of English in NRI Institute of Technology. She has been an educator for 26 years, a bilingual poet, short story writer and translator. Her poems are anthologized widely in various National and International collections and other e-journals. She regularly contributes to Innerchildpress, Muse India, The Criterion, Literoma, Guntur International Poetry Fest, Guntur and Amaravati Poetic Prism – An International Multilingual Poetry Festival conducted by CCVA, Vijayawada. She has to her credit, an anthology “VOICED THOUGHTS” and more than 57 published research papers. Her interest in modern fiction is inclined especially to Indian women writers which enabled her research in the same area.

MY MOM'S SAREE – A MEMOIR

by Dr Tangirala Sree Latha



The fabric I present here is a *Mangalgiri Saree*, a popular handloom product from the state of Andhra Pradesh. Mangalgiri town is known for the famous temple of Panakala Narasimha Swamy, which is believed to be present since *Satya Yuga*. It is said that Yudhistira had himself installed the main idol in the erstwhile temple present at the foot of the hill. The Mangalgiri handloom tradition has been a part of the town for more than five centuries.

Mangalgiri cotton Sarees have a *zari* or golden thread work embellished *Nizam* border and *pallu* without any embellishments or designs on the main body. The fabric is woven only on pit looms, which enables the weaver to exert more force during the weaving process without any gaps. This is what distinguishes the Mangalgiri textiles from other weaves. The uniqueness of Mangalgiri cotton owes to its durability which has placed this small town on the world textile map. This textile attained global demand as the new generation enjoys wearing these cool cotton *kurtas*, *dupattas*, and trendy stoles which can be teamed up with western wear for a funky Indo-western look.

These Sarees when applied with light coat of starch suit any formal occasion adding more elegance to the person as well. The more they are used the softer the cloth gets. They can be perched on bed even for infants to provide them the soft touch and cozy feeling of their grandmother. The one I describe here is my mother's, which provides me her warmth even in her absence.

On the occasion of *Dussehra*, that year, I accompanied my mother for buying Sarees for the festival. She bought saffron colored Saree which was really eye-catching and radiant in its texture as well as the color. Her choice brought bright sparkles in my father's eyes as well, as he prefers such striking colors for her. He always felt that such bright colors enhance

the dignified look that my mother carried usually. The complexion of her skin rightly matched the color of this Saree which my father fondly gifted her on that festive eve; especially that was their silver jubilee year of wedding.

Whenever she wore that Saree, she received all appreciation from the onlookers besides best compliments. The spark of joy and pride in her eyes still lingers in front of my eyes. That was one of her favorite collection too. She liked its soft and smooth texture which provides much comfort in the hot season of the year too.

After her demise, when my father asked us (two of my sisters and I) to share her Sarees, that was my first choice to pick. The saffron colored Saree that looked very bright on her milky white skin is the dearest treasure of all the collection I have. The soft, elegant plain Saree loaded me too with appreciation whenever I wore it. The decent look, cool and comfort feeling it provides even during the hot season is ever cherishing. I still cherish the unique warmth of her touch, the fragrance of her body on the Saree that enables me feel her presence forever and ever.

Now that the Saree is worn out and torn, I use it as bed-spread that gives me a feeling of resting in my mother's lap. I hence wish to be clad in that choicest Saree of my mother as well as me and reach her in the other world when the uninvited guest takes hold of me.

QUOTES WITH THE IMAGES

Ms Nisha Rana's Quote

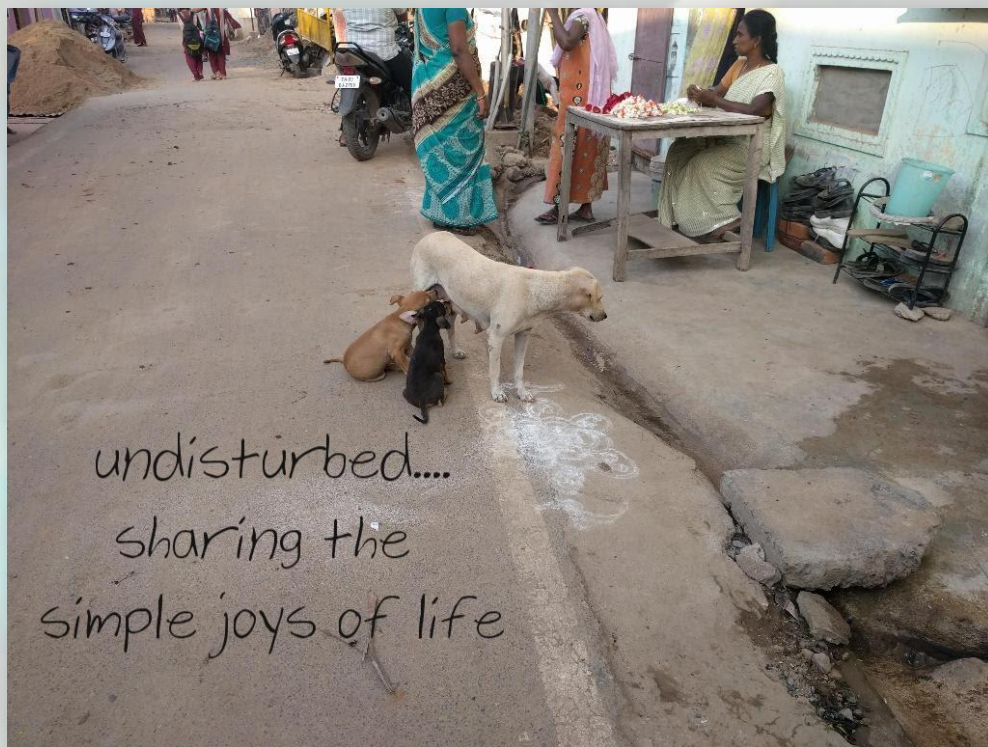
If at all, we have to fight.

**Let's fight for peace on earth,
not for the pieces of it.**

— Nisha Rana

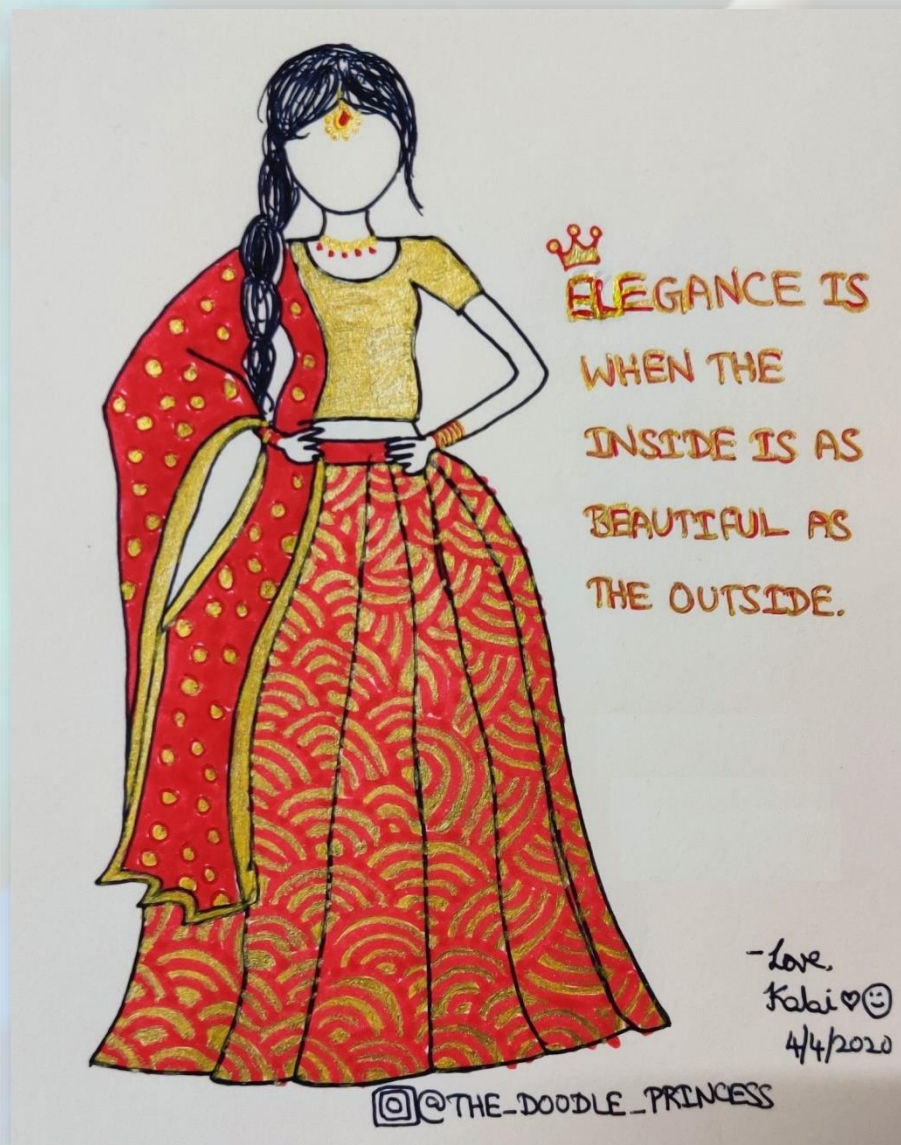


Ms Hema Ravi's Quote



undisturbed....
sharing the
simple joys of life

Ms Kalaivani Radhakrishnan's Quote



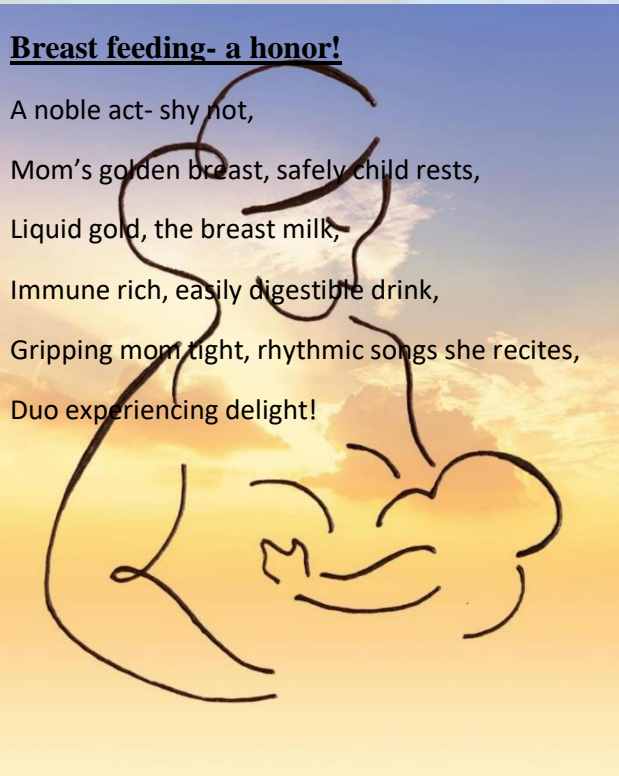
Dr Thirupurasundari's Quotes

Pregnancy- a blessing!

Honor bestowed upon her,
Glow radiating, curve bulging,
In safe abode, rolling under one skin,
Optimistic, immaculate love before the first sight,
In her womb, later in her arms,
Forever in her heart!

**Breast feeding- a honor!**

A noble act- shy not,
Mom's golden breast, safely child rests,
Liquid gold, the breast milk,
Immune rich, easily digestible drink,
Gripping mom tight, rhythmic songs she recites,
Duo experiencing delight!

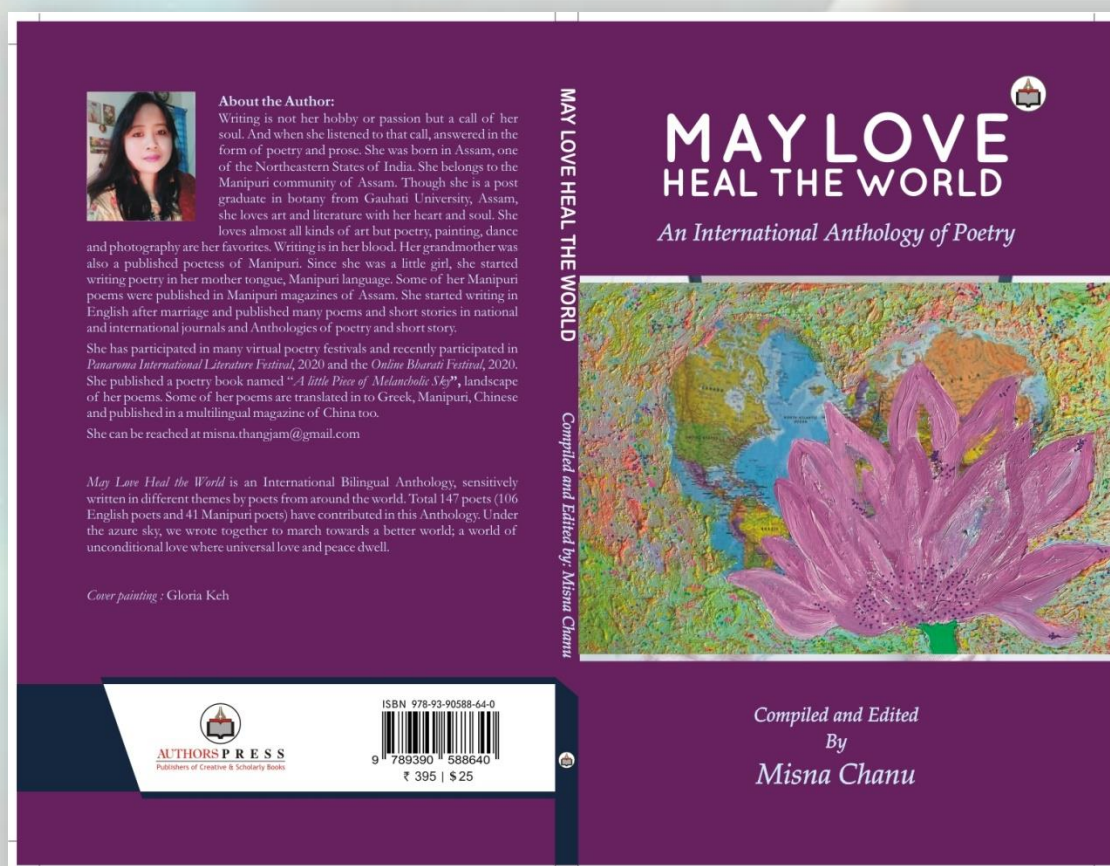


PUBLISHED AND UPCOMING BOOKS

Name of the Book - May Love Heal The World

Type - Poetry Anthology

Editor and compiler – Ms Misna Chanu



Misna Chanu is postgraduate in Botany, and has two children. She is a bilingual poet from Assam (India), who writes in English and her mother tongue (Manipuri). She loves art and literature, especially poetry. Her works have been published in international and national Anthologies and journals. She published her first book of poetry, *A Little Piece Of Melancholic Sky*. Her poems have been translated in to several languages like Manipuri, Greek, Serbian, Italian, Turkish, Spanish and Chinese. Two of Her international anthologies *May Love Heal The World* and *Under The Azure Sky*, (bilingual) and a poetry book of her own named *Many Shades Of Love* are under publication.

INNSÆIAN'S VOICE**Arising from the Dust**

Compiled by Ms Meera V Barath

Editorial Board Member, INNSÆI

International Journal of Creative Literature for Peace and Humanity

Arising from the Dust, is an anthology by the Lets Make Stories Dino, a writing battalion, with 32 (stories/poems) by 32 Dinowriters, published by

The Archaic House (near ArtoonsIn)

<https://thearchaichouse.com/shop>

<https://www.amazon.in/dp/8194847478>

Each and every quill shared is an experience and a phoenix moment, which we face in our day-to-day life. And the battalion of Dinowriters have roared this phenomenon in their quills through their stories and poems.

Through this book, are they aiming at changing the situations around us? Not necessarily!

Because challenges are like those dust particles. Either we clear it or allow it to build an anthill on us.

Each and every word in this anthology is an experience and all are connected through words and experiences.

Arising from the Dust is all about creating a life from the ashes!

"Wait not for yet another Phoenix!

It's in me!

Clipped were the wings,

Not my soul!

Arising from the Dust,

Not only a collection of quills,

It's every soul's rise!!"

The foreword has been written by Dr Santosh Bakaya

Review by Lily Swarn

Editing by Anju Darshini & Manas Mukul

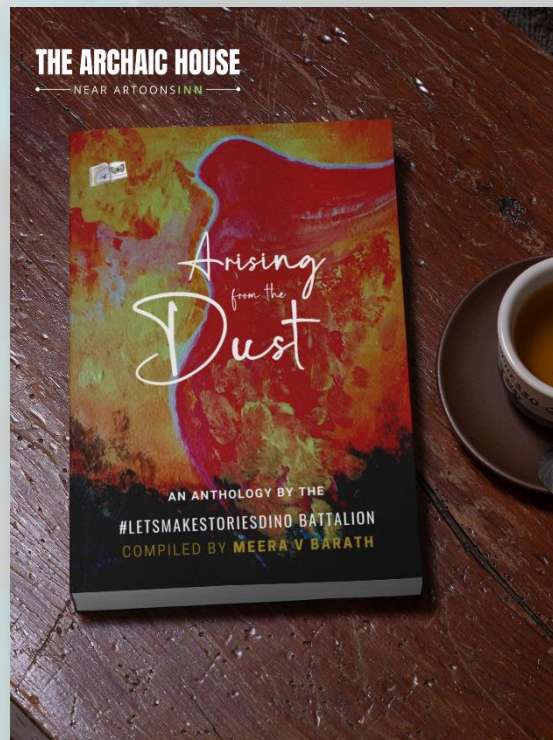
Curtain-raisers by Meera V & Anupama Dalmia

About Lets Make Stories Dino

A writing community on facebook with close to 700 members. They conduct weekly 100 words event and Arising from the Dust is their first project in association with The Archaic House (Near ArtoonsInn)



THE ARCHAIC HOUSE
— NEAR ARTOONSINN —



#LETSMAKESTORIESDINO

Is it yet another motivational or an inspirational story? Or is it a collection of stories that would change the outlook of your life? The answer is, "Not at all!"

Arising from the Dust is all about creating a life from the ashes, it's a compilation of our day to day events and how we have been embracing the ashes called challenges in our lives and how we have been evolving.

Grab a cup of coffee and a read, this would definitely be a "Coffees and Conversations."

"Inspirational and overwhelmingly spine straightening for women who have felt like underdogs since eternity."

-Lily Swann
Poet, author, Peace and Humanity ambassador

THE ARCHAIC HOUSE
— NEAR ARTOONSINN —



Fiction
Cover art by Maiti Chatterjee Das

The Sea, Within INNSÆI

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