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Kafla

Intercontinental



Smt. Nirmala Bhardwaj
(1952-2017)

Nirmala's memories: Left to Right clockwise: (1) With Dev in 2001 (2) With Dev and son Kumar during early 1990s (3) With Riva in 2008 (4) With Dev and grandchildren Arvaan, Aver and Riva in 2010



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On the night of 13th January, 2017, she suddenly left me forever. It was a terrible feeling... darkness engulfed me. There was no meaning in my life anymore. It felt like everything had come to an end... everything had turned to stone.

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

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

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

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

Dev Bhardwaj

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Kafla Intercontinental/2017/1

REMEMBERING MY GRANDMA

Riva Bhardwaj (Chandigarh)

(11 years old)

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

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

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



THE UNEXPECTED TURNS

Dev Bhardwaj

(Translated by Gurdev Chauhan)

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

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

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

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

I can never forget my uncle, Shri Ram Chand ji, for his loving care. He was a very good calligrapher in Urdu. He used to prepare loan papers, promissory notes, agreements, and did all kinds of land deeds documentation. He got one rupee for writing every such document. At that time, this was considered a very good amount. He used to spend that money to purchase cigarettes for himself and the remaining to run the house. I still remember the day when he was playing cards with his friends outside a grocer's shop. I must be six or seven years old at the most. I went up to him, and putting my arms around his neck said, "I want candy". Those days, rounded candies were very popular with children. He took out

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one cigarette from the pack and said to the shopkeeper, “Laala... take this cigarette and give one candy to my boy.” I used to enjoy such sweets, which were offered for free with the purchase of groceries from the village shop in exchange for grains. But I can never forget that Candy bought with one cigarette. My uncle had a very helpful nature.

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

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

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

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

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

I used to take my meals in a nearby restaurant. One day I saw some sort of activity on the first floor of the house next to mine. A big family had landed up there on that very day. I saw a few girls, may be three or four, coming out and going to school or on some other errand. The eldest would stand out on the terrace to see them off. She would continue to watch them going till they were out of sight. One day, I don’t know how, I caught her attention. She looked at me for a few moments. I didn’t quite know what it was that I first said to her. Maybe she too said something to me. I don’t know now what it really was. I got edgy. I went to the office in that nervous state. After work, I came straight home. For a long time, I continued to look at that terrace, but could see nobody up there. I went to my room but my impatience refused to subside. I would come out of my room after every few minutes and look up, only to find the terrace empty. Then I tried to rest on my bed, and soon

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found myself busy thinking about different things. Then suddenly, somebody knocked at my door. I got up in a disturbed state and opened the door. A man stood outside, holding a plate decked in multicolored cloth. "I am *Mama* (maternal uncle) from the first floor of the house adjacent to yours. This is for you." I understood but said nothing. I took the plate, and he went back.

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

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

They were all assembled there to welcome me.

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

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

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

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

They were loading their stuff on a horse-driven cart. As the cart started making its rounds, my heart started sinking. Their new house was a little far, so it was not possible for us to see each other as often as we had got used to. However, I visited her sometimes.

Oh yes, I just remembered that during my first visit to her house near my room, I had asked her name while having tea. “Mariam”, she told me. Upon the wall of their house, there hung a small picture of Mother Mary. On hearing this name, my heart started to pound. I was just about to touch her hand but was dumbstruck now. I thought of Mother... Mother of Jesus... and me! I was caught in a bind. Although after that I continued to meet her, I never called her by this name. We addressed each other without taking names. This continued even after our marriage.

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

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

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

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

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

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Nirmal or Nirmala. Well, we'll call you Nirmal or Nirmala. This name will suit our family.”
So, from Mariam she became Nirmal. Both these names reflected purity.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We shifted to a new house. It was a one-room-one-kitchen house. There, my elder son was born. Out of love we would call him Gullu and this name always stayed with us. I

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looked into Indian mythology and chose the name Kumar Vansh. This name was somewhat difficult to call out but it did go well with him. He is residing in the USA these days. He and his wife, Ruby, both are software engineers, and both their sons were born there. Their sons are called Arvaan and Aver. They are now American citizens... American by residence and Indian by heart. They speak Punjabi at home but American English when outside.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

She had made elaborate preparations for the big day. She lit a bonfire in our backyard with Raman’s help. Our elder daughter-in-law, Ruby, had come over from the USA just four days ago to spend a few days with us. Our younger daughter-in-law, Dimpy, was also helping out in the preparations. There was warmth and merriment all around. We were all sitting around the bonfire, munching Gachak, Revvari, and chatting and singing.

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We had plans to attend a similar function at Raman's in-laws' place after our celebration rituals were done here in the house. She asked me to get ready and put on my newly ironed clothes. I said that the clothes I was wearing were quite good but she insisted that I change, so I did. After that I told her that she should also get ready to go out and change her clothes. She got up from her chair and took a piece of *Til Bhugga* (sweetmeat) from the plate. She broke it into two pieces and offered one to me. I said that my piece was a little bigger and I wanted the smaller one but, she said, "No, you have the bigger piece." These were her last words and the last sweet thing she offered to me. After that, she went to the washroom to change but never came back. After about 10 minutes, my son, Raman, called out to her but got no response. He rushed to the other door of the washroom which was not bolted. A shriek... then another... Maamaa.....Maamaa....aaaaaaa, Raman was shouting loudly and frantically. Hearing him, we all ran towards the washroom. She was lying there unconscious... all dressed up, her hair made... ready to go. We lifted her out with great difficulty... it seemed there was no life in her. We took her to the hospital but what could the doctors do, except inform us that she was no more and hand us a certificate of her death. That night was the darkest night of my life. My voice went hoarse with crying.

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

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

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course it was another matter but it was not so. How could she die, being happy and healthy, as she was that day? These unanswered questions always haunt me.

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

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

She was not only a woman	I had never thought
She was not only a wife	Losing every such thing
She was much more	And so soon
Much more to me	
44 years' companionship	I was living like a king in my house
Spent like it was just a day	All my worries that kept surrounding me
The happy period lay ahead	Outside, just melted, went away
My every morning, every evening	As soon as I stepped into the house
Would be spent in no time	Every worry lost its bite
Telling things to her	Lost its very body
Or hearing things from her	
She kept herself busy	Like a mother she nurtured me
I always saw her at work	Like a sister, she showered affection on me
Going about in the house	Like a lover, she romanced me
Doing things one after another	And like a wife she always gave me comfort
Endlessly, untiringly	
She did everything herself	A complete woman she was
As if others would ruin	A complete wife
What she wanted done	A complete mother
	A complete grandmother
	A mother to all
	Mine and my children
	And grandmother to our grandchildren
	Apart from that
	She was much more
	Yes... much more to me.

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REMEMBERING MAMMA

Raman Bhardwaj (Chandigarh)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Even if I would feel annoyed with her on trivial matters, when she behaved rather childishly or obstinately, I never let her know that. I realised that she won’t understand my point of view

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and would rather feel hurt. She was sensitive, and would get upset about petty matters concerning so many people. Sometimes, I felt as if I had taken on the role of a mother, as I often tried to talk her out of her angst and frustration over petty problems. She always listened to me seriously and often tried to take my advice. Knowing my interest in astrology, homeopathy and acupressure, she would often seek my suggestions on health and religious matters.

Sweet memories

Since childhood, my 'paranthas' were filched from my lunch box at school. Even in college, my friends would relish the 'stuffed paranthas' my mom made. They remember it till this date. I would often ask her to make 'Kheer' during summer and 'Gajrela' and 'Pinni' in winter. Her 'Panjeeri, Gujiya' and 'Badaam Sherbet' were childhood favourites of me and my elder brother. The moment she turned her back, we would open the huge Dabba and grab a few pieces, eating them in secret. They tasted all the more yummy when relished like this.

Last winter, just a couple of days before she passed away, Mama made amazing flax-seed and Date Laddoo/Pinni. I told her Alsi was very good for health and would keep her strong in the winter months. It was a new recipe and she tried it for the first time. I remember her beaming face when she handed over a Dabba full of Pinni to me. "Dekh to kaisi bani hai?" (Taste and tell me how they have turned out). I took a bite and said, "Ye to aap har saal banaya karo" (You must prepare them every winter now).

We continued to relish the Pinni she made much after she was gone. Those were the last literally sweet memories and gift from her.

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

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

Many people say this is the best way to exit from this world. No pain... no realization... no fear... no wait. Everyone has to leave one way or other... this day or the other. She went happy, satisfied, peacefully, that's a solace, though the void of absence can't be filled. We move on with thousands of memories, lessons, bitter and fond.

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

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

<www.artistraman.com>



A TRIBUTE TO MY MOTHER(IN-LAW)

Ruby Singh Bhardwaj (U.S.A.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

First stop, Chandigarh. I arrived on January 9th 2017 and my Mama #2 welcomed me with so much love. Every morning she and I enjoyed tea, while watching and chatting with her son via facetime. She seemed so happy to see me that she never complained of missing her son and grandsons. She enjoyed sharing her diet plans and daily activities with me. She was looking forward to meeting her son on his next visit soon.

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January 13th 2017, the night of her passing from this life to the next, she was excited to celebrate her granddaughter's first *Lohri*. She did the preparations and had a short conversation with me before she left to get ready for the function. She breathed her last with the moon shining above on the most auspicious day of the year 2017. She was held in the arms of her loved ones. Her words, "Bring my son back safely," echoed in my ears throughout the last rites. Till this day, I fail to find a correlation of my visit and her departure, but maybe it's too soon to understand. She has definitely left a big void in my life. It saddens me to not have her around to share the ups and downs of our lives.

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

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

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

— Amit Kalantri

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Dev's *Jija* Sh. Hari Krishan, Dev, Kumar, Kavita, Ruby and Nirmala (1999)

MEMORIES LIVE ON...

Jagdeep Sambey Bhardwaj (Chandigarh)

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

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

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

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

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

She was very passionate about her family and devoted herself completely to her husband, sons, grandchildren and the house. All her energies went into keeping everything spick and span and in complete order. I was greatly impressed by her organizational skills and the methodical and impeccable way she put every little thing where it belonged. Her little 'store' was a storehouse of quick-fixes, containing a solution to every practical need. From a teeny weeny nail to Diwali lights, to every tool, wood pieces, paints, cement, empty cardboard

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boxes, and lots of nondescript material... she would store everything carefully for any quick-fix requirement. At a moment's notice, she would dial the number of her carpenter, *mistri*, painter, *maali*, electrician, *sabziwala*, *sheeshewala*, *cylinderwala*, plumber to repair, mend and provide around the house.

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

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

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

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

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

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MY SISTER

Margaret (Chandigarh)

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

My sister had a happy go family... a loving husband and two caring sons. The elder one Gullu lives in USA. He would call her every week and talk for hours. The younger one is Raman who stayed with her always made it a point to take out time from his busy schedule and go for a morning and evening walk with her. Such a loving mother she was. She as a devoted wife waited for her husband to dine first and served him hot *chappattis* and later had her food. She would call me up daily to inquire about my health. I remember

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the day I had a fall and fractured my back. She came to see me and said where is the need to keep your house so neat that you had a fall, whereas she too sailed in the same boat. She always kept her house spick and span. Everything was kept in its proper place. Even the poáy-bags were folded and kept in a bag and hung behind the kitchen door. What to talk about her as a grandmother to her two loving grand daughters. She spent maximum of her time knitting sweaters for them. Even on her last day, she was knitting for her 9 months old grand daughter Myra, If today too you visit her house and open the fridge you will find variety of chocolates stacked for her grand daughter Riva though she never ate chocolates herself. May her soul rest in peace.

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

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Alice, I.K. Malhotra (Alice's husband), Kumar, Margaret, Kavita,
Raman, Mohit, Dev & Nirmala

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Kafla Intercontinental/2017/20

MY MAASI (Mother's sister)

Kavita (Chandigarh)

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

Oh God, please keep her in your loving care.

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IN MEMORIES Of MY BHABI JEE

Lilyana Kovatcheva (Bulgaria)

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

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

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me inside, prepared tea and meal for me. She called Dev who informed that he will reach home within one hour.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Kafla Intercontinental/2017/22

THE HOT-TEA CUP

Gurdev Chauhan (Canada)

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

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

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

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

When I looked at Dev's wife for the first time, I took her for a Bangali girl. She was in a black *Saari*. (Dev tells me that he loves people who are light black). Then, I had asked

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Nirmala what was her name before their marriage. My question had obviously upset her. She had skirted the straight answer to my question saying that what was there in a name. I thought that hers must be some Christian name. I knew that Dev had all these years have been calling her by the name of Nirmala. Now he simply calls her without saying the word Nirmala. Similarly, Nirmala calls Dev just by saying, 'Listen'.

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

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

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

"Did he stop eating also?" I asked.

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

"How?"

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

"Do you know Punjabi?"

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

"And the second?"

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

"Like Dev they eat too much and tease me too much."

"Which of Dev's habits do you like most?"

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“All and none of them. In fact, his habits are extreme and hence unlikeable. For example, silence is good but extreme silence is worse than noise. Such is the case with his other habits.”

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

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

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

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

She said, “Yes.”

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

She told that he never forbade her to go there.

“Dev do you believe in religion?”

“Have you read my story, ‘I’?”

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

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

“Tell me something about Dev?”

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

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

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

"Does he read his stuff to you?"

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

"What is the routine these days?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dev went into long silence. He stopped peeling onions and sat up gathering his lungi. Now he looked taller. His eyes didn't give the impression that he was averse to my asking him such questions. But he kept his silent. After a pause that seemed longer to me, he got up, looked up his watch, and drank a glass of water. During this moment, he was as if born again and had taken up the hand of Nirmala with more deep conviction and passion. But what he actually said was something like this: "Gurdev, I could have told you a lie and thus could have saved myself. But the truth is as dear to me as it must be to you or for

anybody. I have taken more time in telling you with due honesty and satisfaction that what I have done in this life I would like to do the same in the same situation and circumstances in my next lives. When I married Nirmala my father and mother both were already dead. I rested content offering all my love to my only brother but I felt that my brother was helpless to reciprocate my love due to his wife. What I needed drastically at that time was parental care.

I let this matter stay here, lingering on as it were forever, as Dev does to each story of his. He says that life itself is like this, incomplete and in a state of being unfinished. This very thing makes our life more beautiful, the limit of time lending it more longing, more attraction. I turn to Dev's wife. She is now busy at cooking something in the kitchen. I fall silent and let the clouds of things we were discussing disappear in the thin air. Both their sons were now looking for Nirmala. She reappeared from the kitchen.

“Nirmala do you have any grouse against Dev?”

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

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

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

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

We know more and more with the passing of time that life is itself a great period piece. It has got more to do with time than with space-related but personal events. I have been a witness to the fact all these years Dev-Nirmala family has been on the forefront in all manners and matters of social, cultural and intellectual path. Both their sons are accomplished in their own fields as are their wives. Both his sons have gone after Dev for inter-religion

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and inter-caste love marriages. His one son is in the USA practicing in the field of computer engineering. The younger is a practicing commercial artist now working from home on web art and design. His wife is a journalist. Both have at one time been working together in Chandigarh Editions of the Indian Express and later in the Hindustan Times. Both their granddaughters from their younger son have received immense love and care in the hands of Nirmala, who is now no more.

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

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

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

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HOMEMAKER, THE FULCRUM OF A FAMILY

Dr. Paramita Mukherjee Mullick (Mumbai - Maharashtra)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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A LETTER TO MY DAUGHTER

Sevdija Demirova Abdulova (Mecadonia)

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

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

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

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

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

But, being a Romani woman, especially before 20 years was something that bring me into tears. Thank God I am very strong person! I was a revolutionary woman, something like Jeanne D'Arc, Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxembourg, just not in the same sample. When

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I got married, Romani daughter-in-laws in the Romani families were supposed to be housewives, to work all the domestic duties, not to talk too much, not to tell their opinion, they were not allowed to visit their parents more than one day for the weekends and their parents should have come to visit their daughters ones a week as well. They reminded me on a situation when you are watching TV and the voice is muted. I was probably one of the first daughter-in-laws that had a job and I took my liberty to act independently. I was lucky that my husband was very supportive. He respected my freedom, my hunger to learn, to fill my heart and soul with knowledge. Other members of our family clan were not supportive at all. They were trying to tie me up in a leash. Lucky for me, I was persistent. They couldn't make me do things that were opposite to my beliefs. So, I stayed solid on my feet and continued to do the things I best knew.

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

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

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

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MOTHER'S AFFECTION AND BLESSINGS

Gargi Saha (Hyderabad-Telangana)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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MOTHER'S ROLE IN ISLAM

Anjuman Ara Shilpi (Bangladesh)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ALLAH says in Sura Luqman:

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

And in Sura Ahqaf He says:

And We have enjoined on man doing of good to his parents; with troubles did his mother bear him and with troubles did she bring him forth; and the bearing and the weaning of him was thirty months. (46:15)

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In both the above verses, although both parents are mentioned, the mother is singled out as she bears a greater responsibility and ultimately a greater reward.

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

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

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

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

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

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PERSONALLY SPEAKING

K. S. Sivakumaran (Sri Lanka)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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THE WONDER OF A WOMAN

Miss Sankalpita Mullick (Mumbai-Maharashtra)

(15 years old)

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

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

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

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

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MY GRANDMOTHER

Samra Syed (Barielly - Uttar Pradesh)

(Class-X)

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

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

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SURJIT'S POETRY GIVING NEW MEANING TO FEMINISM

Jatinder Aulakh (Amritsar-Punjab)

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

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

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

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

✱

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

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

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

Another poem from '*Shikasht Rang*':

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

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

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RED

Aleksandar Nikolic (Serbia)

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

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FRITTER'S HONEY

(To my mother with love and respect)

Alicia Minjarez Ramírez (Morocco)

Translated by: **Alaric Gutiérrez**

She kneads in the flour
her little girl song.
Memories in the air,
tactile smells of
clove-cinnamon,
remains of dawns
over green meadows;
treasures in cotton sacks
yearnings filled up

and sterile that never grow.
She kneads in the flour
utopian blue suns.
More than tortillas
she extends
small fish rivulets;
dismiss her bare feet
bathed in frost
while she rinses
childhood voids,
digs short stories
from the cupboard
and tears refuse
to stay or go
brown sugar loaf
dissolves the sorrows,
melodic essences
fly away
like a chased kite
through endless
golden avenues.

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

She kneads in the flour
long gone illusions
saved by time.
It rains in her broken sky,
chords with no sound
where poetry converges.
Soaking chimeras
my mother prepares

✧

a sweet syrup
upon the aromatic oil
of fritters.

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ME

Angelova Olga (Russia)

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

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TREES IN FRUITFULNESS

Anjuman Ara Shilpi (Bangladesh)

Translation: Anis Mohammad

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

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I DREAM TO BE A WOMAN

Anis Mohammad (Bangladesh)

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

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

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

✱

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

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

I dream to be a woman
I wish I were a brother like uterine sisters
I also have wombs of melody
And all the love a wooden flute can produce
Like a visionary, I also create, revolt
and burst out in passion.
For million years have I been watching
aggression on women?
I have turned sick of seeing the
torrent torment over female-folk
As if mistrust and misfortune
were other name of man's face.
Man is not animal;

rascals are meaner than the meanest beast;
As I am born as a son of my parents
I undertake the legacy of being man
Billion times have I been raped
through all my blood-cells and veins
I am bleeding with acute affliction,
pain and pangs
Why shall black image of cowards be
looked for in my eyes?

THAT TIME

Anuradha Bhattacharyya (Chandigarh)

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

Voluptuous embrace
Like the scream of a waterfall
Echoing through the green foliage
Of summer cool siesta.
Glorious applause
For all that I did and never deserved
For all that I was and never revealed
And for my presence.
A vanishing queen
Like a dewdrop in the sun,
A time before my eyes,
There, my mother.

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AN ALCHEMIST

Ayathurai Santhan (Sri Lanka)

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

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**

DEAR MOM IN HEAVEN

(In Loving Memory of My Mother Girija Pathak)

Banajit Pathak (Assam)

What you have given
Is precious
And as bright as
The sunshine is

You have even
Overcome death
And spread its
Perfume to horizons

Mother,
As I march throughout the expedition of life
I memorize how you helped me to develop
With adore, reality and sincerity

I judge how you depicted me vision
To decide the true path

With ideals, ethics and moral philosophies
I learn how you speculated my actuality
To widened the extent
With ambition and mind power

My spirit still aches with sorrow
Secret tears still run
What is destined to say I adore you
Nobody can ever identify

It's now you are not perceptible
To observe with human eye
Except speak in stillness
Strength will respond

To memorize all the cheerful times
Life still has a lot in hoard
As you will by no means be forgotten
I swear to you at the moment
A hollowed place inside my mind
Wherever you will always continue

All the way through existence
You are always close me.

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WOMAN

Batukdas Nimavat (Ahmedabad -Gujarat)

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

✱

Touching my tiny soft body.
You suckled me
With the ambrosia of your breast.

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

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

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A TRIBUTE TO MY WIFE MANJU Bipin Patsani (Odisha)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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A WOMAN

Biplab Majee (West Bengal)

A woman
may bring you to a dream
(She) may bring you to a nightmare

Transforming you into water a woman
may play piano
Or becoming a piano she can ask you
to play piano

Whatever language of the world
translates a woman
A woman carries the load of
half of this world

A woman can light up an oven
Again carrying an AK-47 on the shoulder
She can lead the world forward
A woman if wishes
become a good dream of yours. ...

*(Translated from Bengali by
Nandita Bhattacharya
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THE MOTHER

C. D. Singh (Bihar)

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

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HOMAGE TO MAA

C. L. Khatri (Bihar)

I was holding her in my arms
In the icy winter morning
Her breath slipped out of my hands
My numb fingers could not hold her
My palms were greasy, vision hazy.

They got smeared with sand and soil
Of the fibrous roots of the fallen tree
Stream of tears washed the roots clean
Only salt survived in the quaint eyes
I lost myself in the maze of memory.

Every cleaned root told me a tale
Of her petal like hand on my head

✱

Of her tears and kisses
Of her frolicking fairy tales
Of her lullabies lulling me to sleep.

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

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

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

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

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

She taught me: everything has its day
*Kartik Purnima*¹⁰ was the day of
*khaza*¹¹ and milk
Sweets of sesame seeds (*tilkut*),
curd and beaten rice
On *Makarsankranti*¹², gram flour

and raw mango slice
On *sattuani*¹³ were the breakfast.

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

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

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

Editor - *Cyber Literature*
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BENEVOLENT MOTHER

Dharmendra Kumar Nanda (Odisha)

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

From dawn till midnight
She would be running

✱

And running
Within her dwelling
Gratifying the family members
Amiably
Delightfully planning
For the days upcoming

A wonderful woman
My mom is
Having solemnity
She does shoulder
Bestowed responsibilities
Not becoming indiscreet
And amoral
But being indispensable
Discharging primal duties

Being solicitous
And aromatic
All the time
She does long for
Our well-being
Her advice, benevolence
And liveliness
So influential
Affirming her to be
Responsive and welcoming

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SHAPE OF LOVE

Eliza Segiet (Poland)

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

like life.
The earth showered
with salty pearls.

At her Dream Beach,
she heard the waves
talking to the waves,
heard him saying:
I'm fine with you.

Did he lie?
Did they lie?

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

Translated by Artur Komoter

SILENCE OF DIALOGUE

Eliza Segiet (Poland)

With a sigh
you soothed my senses.
Sufficient were words,
those
unspoken.
Significant.
Strung like
beads.

The sighs soothed
the senses.
Silence of dialogue -
silence
that is spoken.

Translated by Artur Komoter

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✱

HER SILENCE

Gayatri Mavuru (Odisha)

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

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

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

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

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

Her silence
Is as talkative as
The falling snow flakes
Steep, dense and fatal

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

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

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

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

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

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

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TO EVE EVERYWHERE FROM ADAM OF ALL TIMES

George Onsy (Egypt)

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

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

But God, did you really take only one rib,
Altering my whole anatomy, promising

✱

To put instead, pleasure in place
Of loneliness, of agony?
Yes, God, you did take that one rib,
Filling its gloomy void
With strawberry-red flame of fire
That when I just woke up
I found no name but called it “*desire*”.

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

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

TO GOD FOR THE WOMAN
George Onsy (Egypt)

O God
Thank you for
The woman
In man’s life
She gives him
A reason
To be, to try, to strive.
She is your very touch
Through which
You would like
To love giving so much.
She is the melody
Of your guiding voice
Where dancing
Will be the only choice.

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

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

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

Woman, you were born
As a life giver
Wonder architect
Magic creator
You were born by means of
The spirit of thousand of mothers
Untie, courageous and sugary
You were born
With the flames of conquerors
You are new than you can glimpse
Love eternally
Your influence and elegance
The deepness of your bottomless mind
You are woman, heavenly
As you have been from the begin
No matter which but you
You are insufferable

You are the mother, daughter, wife, sister
You are a person
Brawny, elegant
Liberal, brave, fervent
While you are in action, sensation, dedication
You recognize how to draw it
You give a life which gives you admiration
Love and appreciation
Believes in you
Woman, a component of realism
Meadow of life
The inner feelings
Woman, a sign of confident
Loveliness in words
Shine in sunshine
Woman, you appear like
A wife
A mother
A daughter
Woman, you are influential in your essence
Is a gift to the world.

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<guptajitpathak@yahoo.com>

MOTHER

Harekrushna Mahanta (Odisha)

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

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

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✱

MOTHER

Harish K. Thakur (Shimla - H.P)

I have lived for centuries
Under the myth of shadow
Satan's millennia
And the dread of Hades engulfs

Ah! A long night of groans
The ghosts of the rumpled skins
And the starved guts
Haunt me

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

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

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

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IN THE SHADOW OF MOTHER

Hilal Karahan (Turky)

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

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

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

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

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SENSE OF ENIGMA

Jacob Isaac (Kerala & South Africa)

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

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

She murmured ! Evaporation of desire!
She stood and nodded....
Tickling the map of my mind

✱

Pricking the lap of my impulses
But the change of chastity
and the relocation of certainty
wiped my ego and elevation....

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

<jacobisaack@gmail.com>

GIRL

Janardhan Singh Pathania (J & K)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<janpath1@gmail.com>

YOU ARE MY DEAR

Jayanta Kar Sharma (Odisha)

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

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

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

A gift so worthy that I can't measure
It's you dear my wealthy treasure
the right in my life that removes every wrong
power in my life that makes everything strong
bestowed the belief to blindly
trust my instincts

✱

the ray that connects between you and me
it's so magical that no one can see.

It makes me comfortable
when you are by my side
my love is obvious which I cannot hide
the path I walk; you shed light on my way
with your company all my pain goes away
you are my only light when
everything is black
never do I feel scared even amidst the dark
I promise to pursue you passionately
and sustain to love you compassionately.

Ph. 9861168455

<jayantakarsharma@gmail.com>

MOTHER

Krishnakshi Bhagabati (Guwahati - Assam)

(X class student)

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

<pskrishnakshi25@gmail.com>

NOT A WOE TO MAN

Dr. Leo Rebello (Mumbai)

I am an honorable woman,
not a Woe to man.

I deserve much respect
'coz I am the mother, sister,
daughter, wife, aunt or grandma.
I am the constant person.

I can do without man.
Whether it is Krisna or Karna,
Budha, Horus or Zoroaster,
I can bear children on my own.

I was a child,
When I begot Jesus.
I may be a fragile flower
But I am not weak.

I am an honorable woman,
not a Woe to man.

<prof.leorebello@gmail.com>

MY DIVINE GALAXY

Ljubomir Mihajlovski (Macedonia)

(dedicated to my lifetime angel..my wife
Marija Mihajlovska)

...I love your astral body,
my divine galaxy,
your eyes are mysterious nebuloses,
your lips
are watered
with the fire of Supernovas,
your hair
is a comet tunic,
with hands like strange meteors
that cares the heart of mine,
your physic is the Milky Way,
your breath is a beam of universe,

✧

the Saturn ring
around your head hands over
and the red star inside your chest
babbles,
while I am making love to you.....

YOUR HEALING GARDEN OF SILENCE

Ljubomir Mihajlovski (Macedonia)
(dedicated to my sister Petra Mihajlovska)

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

<lupcomihajlovski@yahoo.com>

THIS SOCIETY IS SPOILED

Lovely Bashar (Bangladesh)

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

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

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

Spoiled! ... it's a spoiled society

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

Creation embarking from the very navel
Yet, denying the same naval-root
torture and embarrassment
humiliates women,

The male principles,
are false...
Spoiled!

... it's a spoiled society.

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

<lovelytalukdar@gmail.com>

OBLIVION

Luz María López (Puerto Rico)

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

<luzmlopez@gmail.com>

A LETTER TO MY MOTHER

Makhfuza Imamova (Uzbekistan)

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

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

Now,
My forgiven days come for revenge.
O, how wonderful were my dreams,
It is easier to sleep than thinking about my
dreams.
I wake up and search the guppy world,
I seek from my father's left robes.
I can't adjust if there is no space inside a
home,
I become thin from your each sorrow,

O, my age is growing with the thinking.
Now the suspense is hitting my soul,
Is our home cold?
Did my brother clean the snow?
In front of the door,
Keep yourself hot,
Patience may warm you.
Mother, is there a love in our home?

<mahfuza_saloh@nail.ru>

SPIDER'S WEB

Manjit Indira (Chandigarh)

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

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

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

Transforming
From the statue to a woman
is forbidden for you

The day
The statuesque woman
Awakens
Furious he gets
Curses the day
She appeared

Your being
A woman
To my mind
Was a sin

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

Like a spider
Weaving a web
Around your own self

✱

Moving about
In your wide world
But escape you can't
From this web

Solutions exist
To all problems
Of this world
So transform yourself

From statue to a woman
Cut off the dirty web
Gulp a draught of poison
And go on dying dear
Bit by bit
Till the end
Of the span of life

<manjitindira@hotmail.com>

EMPTY

Margaret O'Driscoll (Ireland)

Feeling cold and empty
like the carriage of that train
a flurry of snowflakes falling
her heart crystallized in pain

She had waited on the platform
not expecting a 'no show'
now her hope have swirled downwards
she leaves empty in the snow

I am me

I am carefree, smiling, happy
I am woman, I am free
I am dancing, hair windswept
I am yours, protect me
I am poetry in motion
I'm a poet, I am me

<margaretodriscoll7@gmail.com>

BIOGRAPHY

Minakshi Goswami Borthakur (Assam)

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

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DRAG ME

Monsif Beroual (Morocco)

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

PAIN IN THE BODY

Morve Roshan (Gujarat)

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

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

<morve_roshan@rediffmail.com>

HOLY TRINE

Mydavolu Venkatasessa

Sathyanarayana (Andhra Pradesh)

From where, in the beginning emerged
this Universe; and in the end
where gets it embedded?!
The spinning planets, the azure sky
and oceans fathomless; the crawling rivers,
deep dales and mountains tall;
the colours bright and pale,
the scents and flavours sweet and sour...
all these lovely charms of all shapes
and forms
and grace of every phenomenon;
seen, sensed and savored....
O man, O man,
ever imagined you,
from where originated they....
that power pool of eternal blaze
that source and sorbent in one?!

✧

Oh try thee know that Holy trine,
that Mother divine!
Not just the woman, a mortal effigy
oppressed under the hombre hoofs is She!
Know her O man as the sacred Pneuma,
the Generatrix Providence!

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

<m.mahathi58@gmail.com>

SHE

Dr. P. Vijayalakshmi Pandit (Telangana)

She brings fragrance of love
into her world like a flower that perfuse the
garden with sweet scent.

She shares her precious love
with the desire to get drenched
in the shower of love.,

She looks delicate and fragile
that shroud her inner essence...
the woman of metal when time demands.

She... a born manager of multiple roles
balancing her moods and deeds.

She gives solace to human life and hence
the eternal flow of life on earth,

She inherent of mystical layers unlimited
that hide her real core ..

She... though so amiable externally ...,
fiercely strong and powerful inwardly.

She... a woman of strength capable of
learning, unlearning,
relearning in her journey of life.

She undergoes difficulty
a beautiful butterfly to transmute
into a sensible woman.,

She an embodiment of love,
kindness and patience,
a gift to mankind and the world.

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I AM...WHO I AM ...

Padmaja Iyengar-Paddy (Andhra Pradesh)

I run, I rush
I walk, I stride
I fly, I soar
I pilot, I glide

I drive, I lead
I steer, I ride
I talk, I discuss
I argue, I chide

I multi-task, I serve
I score, I achieve
I suffer, I bear
I reinvent, I live

I am the storm
I am the calm

I am the hunter
I am the hunted
I am the seeker
I am the sought (after)

I am *Shakti*, I am *Bhukti*
I am *Siddhi*, I am *Riddhi*

✱

I am a woo-man
I am a wow-man.

(Shakti = Power, Empower, Strength, To be able, etc., Bhukti = enjoyment, consumption, limit, possession etc., Siddhi = Accomplishment, Attainment, Success, Perfection, etc., Riddhi = Prosperity, Good Fortune, Growth, Magic etc. These are Sanskrit words)

<padmaja_iyengar@yahoo.co.in>

SUCH IS SHE

Pallavi Kiran (Jharkhand)

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

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

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

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

<pallavikiran@ymail.com>

MY MOTHER

Dr. Paramita Mukherjee Mullick

(Mumbai)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

✱

I am amazed at your beauty
in your weakness.

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

VOICE

Dr. Paramita Mukherjee Mullick
(Mumbai)

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

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

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

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

Oh mother! So blessed to be your child,
 so blessed from my birth.
<mukherjeeparamita@hotmail.com>

TAJMAHAL

Philipose Michael (Kerala)

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

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

Ph. 08593818593

<philiposethathampally@gmail.com>

THE SILENT KITCHEN

P. L. Sreedharan Parokode (Kerala)

From the kitchen
A soft voice heard.
'Time for lunch' ?
'Yes,' he nodded.
With all the items she prepared
Without a third hand support,

Dining table was decorated.
'Come, let's sit together,'
She repeated :
'as there is no class in the afternoon
They (grand children) would
come soon!'
Wiping out sweat from the forehead
She added:
'Some snacks be made ready for them,'.
'Didn't you forget
They won't take bakery food?'
As they reach she too
Becomes a naughty child.

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

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

'let's sit together'?....

<sreeparokode@gmail.com>

A TRIBUTE TO WOMAN

Rajesh Kumar (Karnataka)

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

A girl becomes a woman,
A woman becomes a wife,
A wife, to someone,
That someone, unknown,
Unexpected and never known
But she braves herself to become
Wife by sacrificing her life
Her life, moments of happiness
Moments of sadness are all moments
Of sacrifice in her life.
Ever wife, a women basically,
Struggles, within her own web,
Its a spiders web or any other,
Its a web connected, binded,
Bonded and gravely bounded
A wife's desire to be herself,
Herself remains her and self,
Self becomes selfless
And selfless becomes without self,
Self less and finally no self,
Self sacrificed by women to be a wife,
Faithful, loyal and beautiful wife in her duties
<rajeshvaishnaw7@gmail.com>

THE DUTIFUL WIFE

Rajesh Kumar (Karnataka)

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

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

The bond makes them bonded
And bounded to us.
A wife's duty a never ending one
And ever binding one,
They never rest,
They make us to take rest,
They are dutiful and more than dutiful.

They spend their entire time,
With a sense of duty,
Un paid and un payable duty,
Thanks, never thanked,
Her services unrecognized,
Her beauty unglorified,
But still she has no regrets,
She leaves her impressions in the past,
By sacrificing her present.

<rajeshvaishnaw7@gmail.com>

MY MOTHER IS TIRED

Dr Ramakrishna Perugu (Andhra Pradesh)

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

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

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

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

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

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

All these three days
I too relinquished the outside world
and squatted by her side,
basking in her benevolent aureol,
watching her, winkless, wordless
as if at last I found my real world...
my only world!

Yeah...now nothing is important
for me...nothing else!
I am here...she's here...
we're near as never before...
and around me the brilliant halos
of her eternal love...
Yeah...now nothing is important
for me...nothing else!

Ph. 9849230443

<perugurama2020@gmail.com>

✱

BEAUTY

Sanaa Uppal (Punjab)

To know that she is a beauty
You have to question everything about
yourself first
Once you know that there is no answer ,
you will know her
She will conquer you magnanimously once
you realize that she is the slender one
in beauty
Having her is dating your own passion
You don't have to be a genius or a fool
You simply have to look at her
Her whole body
Each part
Knowing that she depicts nothing
but freedom
When you know that she is the word
in your mouth
Then you will have her all
When you ask yourself
Does it hurt her somewhere when you
touch her
Does she smile when you love her
Have you ever seen that sometimes she
just wont regret lament or cry
Once you see all that in great measure !
Once you see that it is the same pain that
makes her beautiful
Once you see all she is capable of giving in
muteness like a king
Once you see all that
you had been receiving
Till you see all that, you can't be forgiving
in your brutal ego
She will then surprise you
With all the beauty she is
She will reveal all the nudity that she has
inherited from you
like house on fire,

june sun and march moon
With all that she carries in her bunch
For you to burn
To see to touch to feel the slithering life
Once you hold her in your infamous hands,
you will know
The more you separate her.. the more
powerful she becomes
The more you push her aside ...the more
centered position she gains
You are a man because you carry her
traits at the deepest level
She is the soul carrying nothing but you
Taking you beyond sin

<sanaauppal@gmail.com>

EUDAEMONIA OF A WORKING WOMAN

Dr Sangeeta Singh (Rajasthan)

Walk on the tight rope;
you don't have any stick to balance,
Only hands and feet to cope with
the speed and chance
You can't afford to fall ill, rather fall in love
With your work, husband and your li'le dove.
Neither are you an actress, nor a dancer,
Not even a showgirl, just a worker
At home and at workplace, people wonder
Serving delicacies at home
and sometimes ordering burger.
How you manage with the opportunistic
maid, colleagues, in-laws
With confidence and smiles defeat
the time's bloody claws.
Managing kids with their studies,
hiding TV high on the niche,
Sometimes lipstick hides the fatigue,
tears are now cliché.
But do not be a subject of humour and satire,

✱

Throw all old strategic sloughs into the fire.
Before people call you shirker,
evasive, mendacious
Decide to get retired in forties
and be at home, precious.
There is nothing like peace and satisfaction
Dragging the job instead of relaxation?
Work from home or
work at home in suitable slot,
Will definitely upgrade
your personality and lot
Have counselling,
ere you fall down from the rope
Prioritise your choices and don't lose hope.

<sangeetaa07@gmail.com>

MEN & WOMEN

Sashibhusan Rath (Odisha)

Not all women
Are equally attractive
To all men, all the time.
Not all but some women
Are strongly attractive
For some men.
Women's whole body
From tip to toe
Has always remained
A soft being for men.
Some say,
Women are from Venus
And men from Mars.
Others say,
Women can't read maps
Men can't listen for long.
Women can contain men
Men can't contain women.
Men can dance,
Can play the role of women.
Men can be pregnant

With thought only.
But women can be pregnant,
Capable of rearing for months
And after immeasurable pain
Delivers a thinking infant
Who is ever-new and inimitable.
But women are different,
Different in many ways,
Which are good for them,
Good for nature.
Women sustain nature,
She maintains and is aware of
Countdown of destruction.
In contrast men operates
And destroys ruthlessly.
Men and women are equal now,
There are slogans of gender equality
And unisex commodities
Yet still they are unequal, inimitable.
That is the law nature.
Therefore,
Three cheers for all men and women
Mushrooming this beautiful planet
We call earth, unique in cosmos.

Ph. 88955-00543

<sbrath4k@gmail.com>

AUTUMN HAS TO COME

Shwetabh and Padmasha (Bihar)

Perhaps, the autumn has come.
It may be, your face looks cloudy
May be, the deep effects of weather
Has shaken you
In your tough rout of alas
And bereave.
All the way your time.
But remember
The hope that we lived together
And once we smiled with

✧

The green trees in summer
And remember
We had promised to share
Composing poems and
Couplets together.
Any way, keep our promises
And also, we have to smile forever.
Autumn is knocking at the
door.

Ph. (Shwetabh)- 94306-78478

YOU ARE AN ANGEL, MOM!

Subhashree Barik (Odisha)

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

Root to shoot,
Leaf to foliage, I was bloomed
The shower of your love
Nurtured my each cell
My each limb, you caressed.
And now you are struggling
For my struggle free life!
You are an angel mom
Boold-and-felsh frame of the God
You are my angel.
A fortified fort
A protection for me
From stones and sinister beings
Curse and corps
A reservoir of love and care.
You are my divinity, my angel mom.
<subhashree151617@gmail.com>

SHE

Susrisangeeta Mishra (Tamilnadu)

Scorching heat
And furious rain
Bend before her
In her existence take shelter
Light and darkness
Who duel since ages.
Inside the fire of living
She sits untouched
As witness
To stars, planets
And elements at their work
A lone spectator to the delusions weaved
around
She waits
For herself.
She knows ,
Someday

✱

Sky would scrub its cast
From her eyes
Hue of the lips
Would return to the petals of flowers
Glow of the skin
To be soaked by the sun
For truth to surface
In the sea of tears
Time may churn.

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

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

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

<sushrim11@gmai.com>

EACH EVENING A HOPE PASSED AWAY INSIDE OF YOU

Tarana Turan Rahimli (Azerbaijan)

(To the married women who feel themselves lonely)

Each evening a hope passed away
inside of you
Each evening a new grief was born there.
You shed tears to empty your heart,
But you were drown in of your own tears.

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

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

You kept the fragrant memories,
Only they are left from that love.
It is an add destiny, after marriage,
You are called married, but you feel lonely.

(Translated from Azerbaijani by Sevil Gulten)

<terane.turan@gmail.com>

PARTING WISH

Dr. Vijay Vishal (Rajasthan)

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

✧

To proclaim to the world
The priceless prize of my search.

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

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

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

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

But ah!
Before blossoms bore fruit

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

A gold-hearted goddess
A giver of joys
A taker of pains
A silent sufferer
Sister of Stoics¹

She knew not
How to share suffering
Struggled with a smile
On her rose-petalled lips
Dear daughter of
Prometheus²
Even while
Inching towards death
Worried about my health.

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

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

“Wish to enclose you
In my closing eyes!”

Saying so
She mocked death
With her last winsome smile.

✱

Smilingly she lived
And smilingly
Faded out of life.

A difference to me and mine!

1. Greek philosophers who held that sufferings
are an inevitable part of human life and one
should bear them bravely.

2. A Greek god who suffered ungrudgingly for
the good of mankind.

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LOVESICK

Virginia Pasalo (Philippines)

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

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WHAT IS WOMAN...?

Vishal Bodhale (Maharashtra)

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

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

Devoted though neglected
holy grail
Remained silent forever
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<vishal_bodhale@rediffmail.com>

YOU

Wahid Mouzawi (Algeria)

You was a word,
a wave in open lips.

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

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

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

<wahid...sww@outlook.fr>

✧

समझ से बाहर

देव भारद्वाज

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

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

लगभग 44 वर्ष पहले उसका मिलना भी मेरी समझ से बाहर था। मैं चंडीगढ़ के सैक्टर—19 में एक किराये के कमरे में रहता था... ग्राउंड फ्लोर पे... अकेला। उस से पहले भी कई ओर स्थानों पर एक के बाद एक कमरे में रहता रहा था परन्तु ऐसे कहीं भी नहीं हुआ था। दरअसल अकेलापन मेरे साथ—साथ रह रहा था। चंडीगढ़ शहर में आने से पहले मैं अपने पैदायशी गाँव मरढ़ में था.. . बटाला (गुरदासपुर) के पास। मुझे बताया गया था कि जब मैं सिर्फ दो वर्ष का ही था तो मेरे सिर से पिता का साया चला गया था। मुझे मेरी माँ श्रीमती ज्ञान देवी ने पाला ... बहुत लाड—प्यार के साथ क्योंकि मैं उस का सब से छोटा, लाडला और आखिरी बच्चा था। घर को चलाने के लिए मेरे ताया श्री राम चन्द जी का बहुत बड़ा सहयोग रहा जिस ने उम्र भर विवाह नहीं करवाया था। हम ब्राह्मण परिवार में से थे परन्तु हमारी अपनी गुजारे लायक खेती वाली भूमि भी थी। 20 नवम्बर 1948 को मैं इसी गाँव में पैदा हुआ था। उस जमाने में नौकरियाँ कम होती थीं और अनाज को बेच कर घर चलाए जाते थे। घर की जरूरतों के लिए अगर कोई सामान—रसद दुकान से खरीदनी होती तो वस्तु के एवज में अनाज ही दिया जाता था। मुझे याद है— कुछ गेहूँ, चने या धान मेरे कुरते के पल्लू में डाल दिए जाते थे और मैं राशन की दुकान से जा कर चीनी, चायपत्ती, साबुन वगैरा ले आता था।

घर में सब से छोटा होने के कारण मेरी माँ मेरे साथ बहुत लाड करती। मैं भी हमेशा उस के साथ—साथ ही रहता। अगर उसने किसी के घर जाना होता तो मुझे साथ ही ले कर जाती। मुझे वह कभी भी गुस्सा नहीं होती थी और न ही किसी बात से मुझे झिड़कती थी। हर अमावस, संक्रांति को वह अक्सर खीर पूरी या कुछ ओर पकवान बनाती और गली के बच्चों को बुला कर खिलाती। गली के सभी बच्चे उसे अपने ही लगते। तब आटा पीसने या धान से चावल निकालने की मशीनें गाँवों में नहीं होती थी। यह काम वह घर की छोटी सी ओखली और चक्की में करती। सभी औरतें अपने—अपने घरों में ऐसे काम करती थीं। गाये, भैंस का दूध औरतें आप दुहती थीं। शायद सारा दिन घर के काम करने से वह सेहतमंद रहती थीं।

मेरे ताया श्री राम चंद जी का मेरे प्रति लाड और स्नेह मैं कभी नहीं भूल सकता। वह उर्दू में खुशखत लिखने में वह माहिर थे। गाँव में लोगों के आपसी इकरारनामे, जमीन खरीद—फरोख्त की लिखतें, उधार पैसे लेने—देने और सुलाहनामे आदि के लिए वह परनोट लिखते थे और उन को

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एक परनोट के लिए एक रुपया मिलता था जो उस समय में एक बड़ी रकम मानी जाती थी। वह उस पैसे में से अपने लिए सिग्रेट खरीदते और बाकी घर की जरूरत के लिए ईस्तेमाल करते थे। मुझे आज भी याद है कि एक दिन एक लाला की दुकान के बाहर वह अपने साथियों के साथ ताश खेल रहे थे। मैं कोई 6-7 साल का था। मैं पीछे से आकर उनके गले को चिपक गया और कहा— “मैं मीठी गोली खानी हूँ।” तब चीनी की मीठी मोटी गोलियाँ बच्चों के खाने, चूसने के लिए मिलती थीं। उन्होंने ने अपनी जेब में से सिग्रेट की डिबिया निकाली और उस में से एक सिग्रेट निकाल कर लाले को आवाज मारी—“लाला, यह सिग्रेट के बदले मेरे लाल को एक मीठी गोली दे दे।” ऐसी मीठी गोलियाँ मैंने बचपन में बहुत खाई हैं जो हम अनाज देकर घर के लिए सौदा लेते वक्त ले लेते थे। परन्तु एक सिग्रेट के बदले मुझे मिली वह मीठी गोली मेरे यादों में से कभी बाहर नहीं जा सकती। ताया जी के ऐसे त्यागमयी स्वभाव को मैं कैसे भुला सकता हूँ?

मैं आठवीं जमात में पढ़ता था कि अचानक मेरी माँ चल बसी। वह सिर्फ कुछ दिन बीमार रही और फिर सदा के लिए बिछड़ गई। मेरा भविष्य अंधकारमयी हो गया था ...सब तरफ अंधेरा छा गया था। ‘अब क्या होगा?’ यह सवाल बार-बार परेशान करता। घर में मेरे साथ मेरे से दो साल बड़ी मेरी बहन शीला रानी थी। मेरे ताया जी बीमार रहते थे और चार दिन के बाद वह भी पूरे हो गए। मेरा एक मात्र बड़ा भाई श्री हरी दत्त पहले ही चंडीगढ़ में सरकारी नौकरी में लग गया था। वह नौकरी छोड़ कर गाँव नहीं आ सकता था। इस मुश्किल घड़ी में मेरी एक बुआ हमारे पास आ कर रहने लगी। इस दौरान पहले मेरे भाई और फिर मेरी बहन का विवाह हो गया।

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

मैं सोचने लगा था कि मैं कभी विवाह नहीं करूँगा। मैं गृहस्थ होने से डरा हुआ था। इसी लिए जब कोई रिश्तेदार या मित्र मेरे विवाह की बात करता तो मैं टाल-मटोल कर जाता।

मैंने आगे पढ़ना शुरू कर दिया। पहले यूनिवर्सिटी में शाम की क्लासें और फिर प्राइवेट इन्स्टिट्यूट देते-देते ज्ञानी, बी. ए. पास की और फिर एम. ए. पंजाबी। इस दौरान मुझे साहित्य पढ़ने की रुचि हो गई। मेरी तनहाई में पुस्तकों ने मेरा साथ दिया।

मैं अकेला रह रहा था और अकेला ही रहना चाहता था। इसी लिए कभी भी किसी लड़की को लगाव के साथ नहीं देखा था... प्यार करना या विवाह करना तो बहुत दूर की बात थी। दरअसल मेरे अंदर एक सोच घर कर गई थी कि मुझे सन्यास ले लेना चाहिए। मुझे नौकरी या गृहस्थ-बंधन में नहीं फंसना चाहिए। मैं भाग जाना चाहता था.. कहीं भी। परन्तु मैं चुपचाप जैसे साहित्य के बंधन में बंध चुका था। ज्ञानी और एम. ए. पंजाबी की परीक्षाओं की तैयारी समय मैं सिलेबस के इलावा अन्य कई नावल, कहानियों की किताबें पढ़नी शुरू कर दी थी और ऐसे पूरी तरह साहित्य की दुनिया में डूब गया।

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इसी माहौल में अचानक कुछ ऐसा घटा जिस के बारे में कभी सोचा भी नहीं था – जो समझ से बाहर था। मैं चंडीगढ़ के सैक्टर- 19 में एक किराये के कमरे में रहता था – ग्राउंड फ्लोर पर। खाना बाहर खाता था। एक दिन साथ के घर की पहली मंजिल में कुछ हलचल नजर आई। एक बड़ा परिवार वहां कहीं से शिफ्ट हो कर आया था। तीन-चार जवान लड़कियां अक्सर घर से बाहर-अंदर आती-जाती थी... स्कूल जातीं या किसी और काम से उनको जाना होता तो उन को सी-आफ कहने के लिए एक बड़ी लड़की छज्जे में खड़ जाती और काफी दूर तक उन्हें जाते हुये देखती रहती। पता नहीं कैसे हुआ कि एक दिन छज्जे में खड़ी उस बड़ी लड़की की तरफ मेरा ध्यान चला गया। उसका ध्यान भी मेरी तरफ स्वाभाविक पड़ गया था। मुझे याद नहीं कि मैंने उसे क्या कहा होगा परन्तु मुझे लगा कि मैंने उसको कुछ कहा है। उसे भी शायद पता नहीं कि उस ने मुझे क्या कहा होगा परन्तु उसने भी कुछ कहा था। मैं बेचौन हो गया था। इसी बेचौनी में तैयार हो कर दफ्तर चला गया था परन्तु बेचौनी बरकरार थी। छुट्टी होते ही सीधा घर पहुँचा। देर तक साथ के घर के छज्जे की तरफ देखता रहा परन्तु वहां कोई न आया। मैं अपने कमरे में चला गया परन्तु बेचौनी मेरा पीछा नहीं छोड़ रही थी। थोड़ी-थोड़ी देर बाद मैं किसी न किसी बहाने कमरे से बाहर आता और छज्जे की तरफ देखता। शाम ढल गई परन्तु छज्जे में कोई न आया। फिर मैं आँखें मूँद कर चारपाई पर लेट गया और पता नहीं क्या-क्या सोचने लगा। अचानक बाहर से किसी ने मेरे कमरे का दरवाजा खटखटाया। मैं बदहवास होकर उठ बैठा और दरवाजा खोला। एक आदमी बाहर खड़ा था। उस के हाथ में एक थाली थी जो एक रंग-बिरंगे कपड़े के साथ ढकी हुयी थी। “मैं मामा हूँ” उसने कहा। “यह भोजन आपके लिए है... साथ वाले घर से।” मैं समझ गया। मैं कुछ न बोला। थाली ले कर मैंने रख ली और वह वापस चला गया।

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

अगले दिन छुट्टी थी। मामा दोपहर को आ गया, “चलो मेरे साथ। आपको बुलाया है।” उस ने धीमी सुर में कहा। मैं थोड़ा झिझका परन्तु फिर मैंने हौंसला किया और उस के साथ चल पड़ा – साथ वाले घर की पहली मंजिल की तरफ।

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

“चलो।” उसने कहा। मैं कुछ समझा नहीं और चारपाई के एक तरफ हो कर बैठ गया। फिर मुझे उस ने ही बताया कि उसके ‘चलो’ कहने का मतलब है- कुछ बोलो। मैं क्या बोलता? मैं कभी बोला ही नहीं था। वह चाय बना कर ले आई और साथ में कुछ खाने को भी। मैं वहाँ

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से जल्दी जाना चाहता था क्योंकि घर में उस के माता पिता, दादा-दादी सभी थे। मैं चाय पी कर अपने कमरे में आ गया। देर तक चारपाई पर लेटे-लेटे सोचता रहा- यह क्या हो रहा है। मैं अपने कमरे में बेचौन था और उस के घर जाने से संकोच भी कर रहा था।

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

हाँ, उसको मिलने की बेचौनी बढ़ती गई। जब मैं सुबह दफ्तर जाता, वह पहले से ही छज्जे में खड़ी होती और मुझे भी हाथ हिला कर दूर तक सी-आफ करती। दफ्तर से आने के बाद भी वह मौका पाकर छज्जे में आ जाती और मैं भी बाहर आंगन में खड़ा हो कर एक दो मिनट उस के साथ बातें कर लेता, कैसी बातें करता था? अब याद नहीं। एक दिन मैंने एक मैगजीन में किसी शायर की कुछ पंक्तियां लिख कर मैगजीन मामा के हाथ उसे भेज दिया। अगले ही दिन उस ने कुछ अशयार उसी पन्हे में लिख कर मामा के हाथ ही मैगजीन वापस भेज दिया। मुझे महसूस हुआ कि वह शायरी पसंद करती है। बाद में पता लगा कि वह 'शुष्मा' मैगजीन पढ़ती है। परन्तु मैं शायर नहीं था, केवल कहानी लिखता था।

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

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

हाँ, मैं बताना भूल गया कि उनके अपने पड़ोस वाले घर में चाय पीते समय मैं उसका नाम पूछा था। "मरियम" उसने बताया। साहमने वाली दीवार पर माँ मरियम की एक छोटी सी तस्वीर लटक रही थी। यह नाम सुनते ही मेरे अंदर कंपकपी सी छिड़ गई। मैं उसको छूने ही वाला था कि हाथ कुछ दूरी पर ही रुक गया। मैंने माँ के बारे में सोचा। प्रभु ईसा मसीह की माँ... और मैं। अजीब सी स्थिति थी। मैं उसको मिलता रहा परन्तु मैंने उसे इस नाम के साथ कभी भी नहीं बुलाया। बिना किसी संबोधन के ही बातें करता रहा और वह भी इसी तरह बात करती रही।

क्रिसमस आ रहा था। दिसंबर 1972 का क्रिसमस। मुझे बताया गया कि गिरजाघर में बहुत बड़ा उत्सव होगा और उन्होंने चाहा कि मैं भी वहां आऊँ। मैंने हाँ कर दी। क्रिसमस से कुछ दिन पहले मैं उनके घर से माँ मरियम की एक छोटी सी पाकेट साईज फोटो ले गया था जिस में उसने बाल-ईसा को गोद में उठाया हुआ था। मैंने देखा कि उनके घर में इस के साथ की कोई बड़ी तस्वीर या पेंटिंग नहीं है। मेरे दफ्तर में एक कुलीग था - रिपुदमन सिंह। वह शौकिया पेंटिंगज बनाता था। मैंने उसको वह पाकेट साईज फोटो दी और कहा कि एक बड़े आकार की पेंटिंग क्रिसमस से पहले बना दे। उस ने आर्ट बोर्ड पर आयल कलरज के साथ एक अति सुंदर पेंटिंग

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तैयार कर दी। उस का परेम भी लगा दिया। मैं उस पेंटिंग को अखबार में लपेट कर उस पर धागा बांध कर सीधा उस के घर चला गया। क्रिसमस के दिन। मेरा प्रातःकाल उनके घर जाना उनके लिए हैरानी वाली बात थी। मैंने वह पेंटिंग उसे सुपुर्द की और कहा – हैप्पी क्रिसमस।

उस ने बहुत विनम्रता के साथ पहले धागा उतारा और फिर अखबार का कागज। माँ मरियम और बाल ईसा की बड़े आकार की पेंटिंग देख कर सब बहुत खुश हुए और उन्होंने उसे दीवार पर एक उचित जगह पर टाँग दिया। वह पेंटिंग अब पूजा के योग्य हो गई थी।

मेरा सम्मान उस घर में और भी बढ़ गया। उस की दादी को लगा कि लड़का धार्मिक जजबे वाला है और ईसाई धरम का आदर करता है।

इस तरह कुछ दिन गुजर गए। मन की बेचौनी बढ़ती गई। पता नहीं लग रहा था कि मैं उस के माता-पिता या दादा-दादी के साथ कैसे बात करूँ और कब? मैंने सोच लिया था कि मुझे यह रिश्ता बना लेना चाहिए।... जल्दी और वह भी बिना किसी को बताए... यानी अपने भाई, बहनों और अन्य रिश्तेदारों को। कहीं वह कोई अड़चन ही न डाल दें... अंतर-जाति विवाह के कारण।

जल्दी ही उन्होंने वह घर भी बदल लिया। बहुत दूर नहीं, उसी इलाके में। वह एक ऐसे घर में चले गए जिस की एक ही मंजिल थी और काफी खुला आंगन था। मेरी उदासी बढ़ रही थी और खामोशी भी। मैं कुछ दिन उससे मिलने नहीं गया। इस दौरान मैंने भी अपना कमरा बदल लिया था। एक नये-नये बने घर की ग्राउंड फ्लोर पर। परन्तु वहाँ एक शर्त थी – एक कमरा – एक व्यक्ति। उस कमरे में खाना बनाना मना था।

एक दिन मैं उसे शाम को मिलने गया और कुछ देर बैठ कर मैंने कहा कि मेरा एक रिश्तेदार है यहाँ ... पास ही रहता है – मैंने तुझे उस के साथ मिलाना है। वह घर में बता कर मेरे साथ चल पड़ी। मेरी मौसी का जमाई श्री हरिकृष्ण, जो उस समय चंडीगढ़ रेडियो स्टेशन में इंजीनियर था, मेरे साथ अच्छा व्यवहार करता था। मैं उसे उस के घर ले गया और सारी कहानी बता दी। मेरी बहन उर्मिला ने खाना बना दिया और कहने लगी खा कर जाना। खाना खाते और बातें करते काफी रात हो गई। हम दोनों रात को वहीं रह गए। उसको मुझ पर विश्वास व पूरा भरोसा था, वह जान चुकी थी कि मैं आने वाली हर मुश्किल घड़ी में उस का साथ देने के लिए तैयार हूँ। मेरे जीजा ने उस का नाम पूछा। उसने बताया “मरियम”। जीजा सोच में पड़ गया। यह तो बड़ा पवित्र नाम है। यह तो जगत-माँ है। फिर उस ने पूछा कि बचपन में उसे किस नाम के साथ बुलाया जाता था या कोई और नाम भी था घर का। उसने बताया कि उसे बचपन में निमा या निम कहते थे। जीजा ने तुरन्त उस नाम को पकड़ लिया ...यानि निर्मल या निर्मला। “ठीक है निमा या निम... हम तुम्हे मरियम नहीं, निर्मल या निर्मला कहा करेंगे। हमारे परिवार के लिए यह नाम और ज्यादा उपयुक्त रहेगा।” और ऐसे वह मरियम से निर्मल बन गई। दोनों ही नाम में पवित्रता झलकती थी।

अगले दिन सुबह मैं उसे उसके घर छोड़ने गया। सभी गुस्से में थे। उस के पिता श्री शाम लाल जी ने उसे घसीट कर कमरे के अंदर कर लिया। माता श्रीमती शांति देवी डरी हुई थी। मुझे साफ सुनाई दे रहा था – “खबरदार, अगर आज के बाद घर से बाहर पैर निकाला ... तेरी हड्डी-पसली एक कर दूँगा।”

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मैं चुपचाप खड़ा था। उस की दादी ने मुझे कहा— “पुत्र तू जा। फिर आना। मैं सब संभाल लूँगी। तू फिक्र न कर... मैं तुम्हारे साथ हूँ।”

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

जैसे जैसे रात गुजरी। आगे वाली सुबह मैं दफतर जाने की जगह उस के घर पहुँच गया। मुझे मिलने से रोका गया। परन्तु मैंने कहा— मैं शादी कराने आया हूँ, आज ही। आप जैसे चाहो प्रबंध करो... किसी मंदिर, गुरुद्वारे, चर्च में या यहाँ ही घर में... किसी भी रस्म के साथ। मैं आ गया हूँ और आज ही विवाह करूँगा। सब सोच में पड़ गए। दादी समझदार थी। उसने कहा— पुत्र तू बैठ, चाय—पानी पी, मैं फादर (गिरजा का पादरी) को मिल कर आती हूँ। गिरजा उनके घर से दूर नहीं था। इस लिए वह जल्दी ही बात करके आ गई। उसने बताया कि फादर ने पहले तो कहा कि इन दिनों रोजे चल रहे हैं, कुछ दिन ठहर जाओ। परन्तु फिर उसके जोर देने पर वह मान गया कि बिल्कुल साधारण रस्म की जायेगी। शाम का समय दिया गया। सभी खुश दिखाई दिए। उन को यकीन हो गया कि मैं गलत नहीं हूँ। वह तैयारी करने लगे। शादी की ड्रेस तैयार कर ली। चाँदी की दो अंगूठियाँ खरीद ली गई। मुझे किसी तैयारी की जरूरत नहीं थी। मैं सिर्फ शाम का इन्तजार कर रहा था। अपनी तरफ से मैंने अपनी मौसी के जमाई को बुला लिया, गवाही के लिए और किसी को न बताया और न बुलाया। एक दूल्हा और एक बाराती। एक साधारण रस्म से फादर ने कुछ मिनटों में ही हमें पति—पत्नी बना दिया।

मैं गिरजे के बाहर से एक रिक्शा ले लिया और उसे साथ बिठा कर अपने कमरे में ले आया। मैंने उसको अपनी चारपाई पर बिठाया और कहा— मैं शुक्रगुजार हूँ परमात्मा का — तुम्हारे आने से यह कमरा अब घर बन गया है।

डरते—डरते मालिक मकान को बताया कि मैंने विवाह कर लिया है और आप मेरी पत्नी से मिल सकते हो। मेरी पत्नी इस घर में आ कर मरियम से निर्मला बन गई थी। मालिक मकान यह जान कर बहुत खुश हुआ। उसने कहा कि यदि और नौजवान भी इसी तरह बिना किसी खर्च किए, विवाह करवाने लगे तो माता—पिता बेटियों के पैदा होने से भी खुश होंगे। मैं फटाफट बाजार गया। कोका कोला की कुछ बोतलें और मिठाई का डिब्बा ले आया और उस घर में रहने वाले सब लोगों को बाँट दिया। सेलीब्रेशन... जश्न... विवाह की पार्टी...।

अगले दिन हम दोनों चंडीगढ़ के नजदीक ही माता मनसा देवी मंदिर गए। ईसाई धर्म के लिए चाहे वह दिन शोक वाले थे परन्तु तब नवरात्र चल रहे थे जो हिंदु धर्म अनुसार शुभ दिन थे। हमने माता मनसा देवी की प्रतिमा के आगे नतमस्तक हो कर अपने गृहस्थ जीवन की कामयाबी के लिए प्रार्थना की।

मेरे पास बत्तियों वाला एक स्टोव था जो मिट्टी के तेल के साथ जलता था। वह जलते समय कोई आवाज नहीं देता था परन्तु उसे बुझाने के लिए उस की आग धीमा करके उस पर जोर से पानी का छींटा मारना पड़ता था जिस के साथ कुछ धुआँ पैदा होता था। हमने एक तरकीब सोची। कमरे में कपड़े टाँगने वाली एक अलमारी थी। हमने उस अलमारी में कपड़े टाँगने की

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जगह स्टोव रख दिया। वह चावल-दाल रख देती और जब स्टोव बंद करना होता तो पानी का छींटा मारकर अलमारी तुरन्त बंद कर देती... धुंआ अंदर ही अंदर दम तोड़ देता। ऐसे वन रूम वन पर्सन वाले इस कमरे में हम छः महीने रहे... जहाँ खाना बनाने की मनाही थी।

विवाह 9 अप्रैल 1973 को हुआ था। थोड़ी-थोड़ी गर्मी थी। मेरे पास बिजली वाला पंखा नहीं था। उसकी दादी ने एक नया पंखा खरीद कर भेज दिया। यह पंखा हमेशा हमारे साथ रहा। हमने कई घर बदले और आखिर 1982 में अपने घर में आ गए... चंडीगढ़ के सैक्टर 46 के मकान नंबर 3437 में। यह घर चंडीगढ़ हाउसिंग बोर्ड की तरफ से दिया गया था जिस की कीमत किशतों में अदा की जानी थी। यह पंखा आज भी इस घर में हमारे बेड-रूम में चल रहा है। यह कभी खराब नहीं हुआ। हाँ, सिर्फ एक बार इस का रंग धीमा पड़ जाने पर इस को पेंट करवाया था। परन्तु पिछले कुछ सालों से यह पहले के एक या दो पुआइंट पर बड़ा धीमा चलता है और बाद के पुआइंटस पर बहुत तेज। इस की इस प्रॉब्लम को ठीक इस लिए नहीं करवाया कि मकैनिक इस को खोल लेगा, फिर ठीक होने के बजाय कहीं चलना ही न बंद हो जाये। हमें इस की यही रफ्तार सुहानी लगती रही है। आज मैं अकेला हूँ तो यह उसी तरह मेरा साथ दे रहा है।

उस के घर से दादी, उस की कोई न कोई बहन हर रोज मिलने आती। हम भी रात का खाना आम तौर पर उनके घर ही जा कर खाते। एक दिन दादी ने हमें पूछा कि हमें किसी चीज की जरूरत है तो बताओ। मेरी पत्नी ने सिर्फ दो ही चीजें माँगीं – एक अपनी सिलाई मशीन और दूसरी मेरे तरफ से क्रिसमस पर भेंट की माँ मरियम और बाल-ईसा वाली पेंटिंग। यह दोनों वस्तुएँ हमेशा हमारे पास रही हैं और आज भी। मेरी पोती रीवा कहती है कि वह यह सिलाई मशीन अपने पास रखेगी... अपनी दादी की निशानी के तौर पर जो उसे उसकी दादी से मिली थी।

विवाह से पहले तक मैं दफ्तर पैदल ही जाता था या लोकल बस पर। विवाह के बाद साइकिल खरीदने का विचार किया जिससे मैं दोपहर को घर आ कर खाना खा लिया करूँ। दफ्तर घर से कोई दो किलोमीटर दूर था। नये साइकिल की कीमत उतनी थी जितनी मेरी एक महीने की पूरी तनख्वाह। सो संभव नहीं था। परन्तु दफ्तर ने मेरी मदद की। मुझे आसान किशतों में पैसे वापस करने वाला साइकिल लोन मिल गया। महीने की किशत सिर्फ दस रुपए। साइकिल 'इस्टर्न स्टार' कंपनी का था। मजाक-मजाक में मेरी सालियाँ मुझे 'इस्टर्न स्टार' कहने लगीं। मैंने सोचा यह ठीक ही है – मैं बेशक पूर्व का तारा हूँ परन्तु मैं जरूर किसी न किसी दिन पश्चिम में भी चमकूंगा। उन दिनों मैं सैमुअल बैकेट को पढ़ रहा था और उसके नाटक 'एंड गेम' का पंजाबी में अनुवाद कर रहा था। मेरी तीव्र इच्छा जागी कि मैं किसी न किसी तरह फ्रांस जाऊँ और इस लेखक से मिलूँ। परन्तु ऐसे न हो सका। जब मुझे फ्रांस जाने का मौका मिला तब वह इस संसार से जा चुका था। सच तो यह है कि मेरा अपना जीवन और रचनायें बैकेट से बहुत प्रभावित हैं।

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

दो साल बाद यानि जनवरी 1976 में छोटा बेटा पैदा हुआ – लाड के साथ उसे गिट्टू कहने लगे। इस तरह बड़ा गुल्लू और छोटा गिट्टू। हम इन नामों के साथ ही बुलाते आए हैं। जब छोटे बेटे का नाम रखने की बारी आई तो पत्नी कहने लगी कि इस बार वह कोई आसान सा नाम रखेगी। तो उसने रखा– रमन। आज रमन चित्रकारी के क्षेत्र में एक बड़ा नाम है। उस ने राष्ट्रीय स्तर की अखबार 'इंडियन ऐक्सप्रेस' और 'टाईमज आफ इंडिया' में इलस्ट्रेटर यानि आर्टिस्ट के तौर पर बहुत साल काम किया। आज कल फ्री– लासिंग करता है। 'इंडियन ऐक्सप्रेस' में ही उस का मेल डिम्पी के साथ हुआ और फिर उस के साथ विवाह। उस के दो लड़कियाँ हैं। रीवा और मायरा। मैं बताना चाहता हूँ कि मेरे दोनों लड़के– कुमार वंश और रमन ने अपनी–अपनी पसंद की लड़कियों के साथ शादी की है जो सिक्ख परिवारों में से हैं। दोनों पुत्रों ने मेरे सख्त मेहनत करने के रंग–ढंग और स्वभाव को अपनाया है। यह मेरे लिए बड़ी प्राप्ति रही है।

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

कुछ वर्षों के बाद ही 1982 में हमें अपना घर मिल गया। चंडीगढ़ हाउसिंग बोर्ड की तरफ से बना बनाया घर। जो सिर्फ एक मंजिल ही था और वह भी अधूरा। जिस को आने वाले वर्षों में तीन मंजिला खड़ा करना सिर्फ उस की ही मेहनत थी। हाँ, इस के लिए पैसों की जरूरत थी। मैं अपने गाँव मरढ़ गया। वहां अपने बचपन के दोस्त लखबीर सिंह को सब बताया और मशवरा किया कि मैं अपने हिस्से की जमीन कैसे बेच सकता हूँ और किसको। उसने मेरा यह काम आसान कर दिया। आज भी गाँव के साथ मेरा रिश्ता लखबीर सिंह की वजह से ही बना हुआ है। हम अब भी फोन पर एक दुसरे का हाल–चाल पूछते रहते हैं। जमीन से मिले पैसों से ही घर की दो मंजिलों की उसारी की। सारा दिन कारीगरों की निगरानी करती और हर काम उत्तम ढंग के साथ करवाती। मुझे कुछ करने ही न देती। प्रातःकाल दफ्तर जाने के समय पर वह अलमारी में से मेरे कपड़े निकालती, पहनाती – टाई बाँधती, जुरबिं देती...

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मेरे 44 सालों के साथ में उस ने सिर्फ मुझे सुख ही सुख दिया। सच तो यह है कि मैं अपने घर में एक महाराजा की तरह रह रहा था। रिटायरमेंट के बाद भी मैं ज्यादा समय अपने कंप्यूटर वाले कमरे में काम करता रहता। खाना खाने के समय पर उस ने कहना— उठ जाओ अब। बहुत टाईम हो गया। बाकी कल कर लेना।

हर प्रातःकाल मेरे उठने से पहले चाय बना लेती थी और फिर आवाज लगाती— उठ जाओ ...उठ जाओ। मैं अक्सर नींद का ओर आनंद लेने के लिए आंखे मूँद कर पड़ा रहता। उस के जाने से कुछ दिन पहले ही मैंने मजाक में कहा था— किसी दिन तू मुझे उठ जाओ... उठ जाओ ...कहती रह जाएगी — और मैं अनन्त नींद में चला गया होऊंगा। परन्तु उस ने मुस्कराते हुए कहा— कुछ नहीं होगा। तीन वर्ष पहले ही 2014 में मुझे दिल की शिकायत हुई और दो सिटेंट पड़ गए। वह हमेशा मेरी सेहत की चिंता में रहती थी। मैं उसे कई बार कहता कि वह भी अपना चौकअप करवा ले.. ई. सी. जी... इको... ऐंजीओग्राफी... पर उस ने हमेशा न ही की। बेटा रमन भी कहता परन्तु उसने उसकी भी बात न मानी।

वह अपनी मर्जी की मालिक थी। जो चाहती थी वह करवा कर साँस लेती थी। उसने हमेशा रौब के साथ अपना जीवन जिया... चाहे उस के अपने माता—पिता का घर था और चाहे मेरे साथ इस अपने घर में। वह दोनों घरों में नंबर एक पोजीशन पर बन कर रही। सब को अपने मुताबिक चलने के लिए ही कहती। घर के सभी काम आप ही करती थी। न मेरी मदद लेती थी न कुछ बताती थी कि कौन सा काम कैसे करना है। यहाँ तक उस ने कभी मुझे यह भी नहीं बताया था कि कपड़े धोने वाली मशीन कैसे चलाई जाती है।

बहुत कुछ है उसके बारे में लिखने को। बस अब तो बार—बार यही सोचता हूँ कि यह जो हुआ, सब मेरी समझ से बाहर है। इस वर्ष 2017 पहले महीने जनवरी की पाँच तारीख को उस का जन्म दिन मनाया गया था। और फिर आठ दिन बाद लोहड़ी का दिन 13 जनवरी। सारा दिन वह आम दिनों की तरह काम करती रही। दोपहर को रीवा को स्कूल बस से ले कर आई। और आ कर कहा— “मुझे पार्क में चक्कर आया है।” हम समझते रहे कि कमजोरी हो गई होगी या बलड प्रेशर घट गया होगा। परन्तु वह घर आ कर पहले की तरह ही काम पर लग पड़ी। शाम को लोहड़ी खुद जलाई। हमारी छोटी पोती मायरा नौ महीनो की हुई थी और उस की पहली लोहड़ी थी। बड़ी बहू रूबी अमरीका से मिलने के लिए कुछ दिनों के लिए आई हुई थी। छोटी बहू डिम्पी उसको साथ ले कर लोहड़ी—ईंधन में मदद कर रही थी। हम सब आग के आस पास बैठ कर लोहड़ी का आनंद ले रहे थे। साथ ही सभी रमन के सुसराल घर जाने के लिए तैयार भी हो रहे थे। उसने मुझे भी कहा कि मैं कपड़े बदल लूँ — नये प्रैस किये। मैंने एक बार कहा — जो पहने हैं, ठीक ही हैं परन्तु उस के दोबारा कहने पर मैंने कपड़े बदल लिए। अब सभी तैयार थे — सिवा उस के। मैंने कहा कि अब वह भी कपड़े बदल ले और फिर हम चलते हैं। वह कुर्सी से उठी एक तिल—लड्डू थाली में से उठाया, उस के दो हिस्से किये और एक हिस्सा मुझे देने के लिए हाथ मेरे तरफ बढ़ाया। मैंने कहा— यह हिस्सा कुछ बड़ा है, मुझे दूसरा दे दे, छोटा वाला। परन्तु उस ने मुसकराते हुए कहा— खा लो। बस यह उस के आखिरी शब्द थे मेरे लिए, और मुझे दी

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आखिरी मिठास... तिल-लड्डू का एक हिस्सा। उस के बाद वह गुसलाखाने चली गई... कपड़े बदलने परन्तु ईश्वर की करनी, क्या हुआ और कैसे हुआ वह वहाँ से बाहर नहीं आई। 8-10 मिनट के बाद बेटा रमन उसे आवाज देने गया परन्तु अंदर से कोई जवाब नहीं आया। दरवाजा खटखटाय। कोई जवाब नहीं। फिर गुसलखाने के दूसरे दरवाजे की तरफ गया जिस की चिटकनी अंदर से खुली थी। ...फिर एक चीख... एक और चीख... रमन चीख रहा था— मा.. .. मा. . . मामा . . . मामा ...। हम सब अंदर भागे। वह गुसलखाने में निढाल पड़ी थी। बहुत मुश्किल के साथ उठा कर उसे बाहर निकाला गया परन्तु वह जैसे खत्म हो चुकी थी। फिर भी हस्पताल ले गए परन्तु वह क्या कर सकते थे... सिवाए मौत का सर्टिफिकेट देने के। वह रात एक सब से काली रात थी। मेरी आवाज खूब रो-रो कर बेहाल होने के बाद आखिर शांत हो गई।

मुझे मेरी माँ याद आई। मेरी माँ ने अपना आखिरी साँस कैसे लिया होगा, मैंने नहीं देखा। मेरी पत्नी ने अपना आखिरी साँस कैसे लिया होगा, मैंने नहीं देखा। जब माँ का देहांत हुआ मैं घर पर नहीं था, हवेली में था। मैं वहां कुछ दोस्तों के साथ रात को पढ़ता था और वहां ही सोता था। माँ के चले जाने पर भी मैं खूब रोया था। उस समय मेरी उम्र सिर्फ 14-15 साल की थी। मैं बार-बार चीखा था— “मैं अनाथ हो गया हूँ... मैं अनाथ हो गया हूँ।” अब पत्नी के अचानक चले जाने पर भी मैं चीखा था— ‘मैं फिर अनाथ हो गया हूँ।’ परन्तु यह चीख केवल मैंने ही सुनी... अपने अंदर, और किसी ने भी नहीं सुनी।

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

उस के चले जाने की जुदाई असहनीय है। जिंदगी मुश्किल तो हो ही गई है परन्तु ऐसे लगता है जैसे सब कुछ खत्म हो गया हो... और मैं भी खत्म हो जाऊँगा। दोस्त मित्र, रिश्तेदार कहते हैं — सब्र कर, ईश्वर का आदेश मान। यह कहना आसान है परन्तु जिस

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तन लागे वोही जाने... कोई हल नहीं है। हाँ, मौत का कोई हल नहीं है। मौत का हल सिर्फ मौत ही है।

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

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

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

आखिरी दिन तक
आखिरी घड़ी तक
जब तक उसे देखा
वह घर का सारा काम करती रही
जैसे हर रोज करती थी।
सब कुछ खुद करना
जैसे किसी ओर से कुछ भी करवाना
उसे पसंद न हो
या उस में उसकी तसल्ली न हो।
सुबह की चाय बनाने से
ले कर रात की रोटी तक
वह मेरे ही लिए
मेरी पसंद के लिए ही
सब कुछ करती थी।

कभी सोचा भी नहीं था
कि इतना सारा सुख
किसी समय पर अचानक छिन जायेगा
क्योंकि ऐसा
न तो उसने कभी कहा
और न ही हमने सोचा।

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

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

वह एक मुकम्मल औरत थी
एक मुकम्मल पत्नी
एक मुकम्मल माँ
सब की माँ
मेरी और मेरे बच्चों की माँ
और उनके बच्चों की एक मुकम्मल दादी—मां
और इन सब से अधिक
वह बहुत कुछ और भी थी
हाँ, मेरे लिए वह बहुत कुछ थी...
बहुत कुछ...

<writerdev@gmail.com>

*

अनखीली पत्नी चरनजीत लाल 'तसकीन'

"क्या मैंने भी उस के साथ इन्साफ किया है?" इन्ही ख्यालों में डूबे हुए मैंने कंप्यूटर खोला और यू-ट्यूब प्रोग्राम पर जा कर एक पुराना धारावाहक देखने लगा।

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

यह शब्द धारावाहिक की एक लड़की पात्र दूसरी पात्र लड़की से कह रही थी। इन बोलों ने मुझे सोच के गहरे सागर में धकेल दिया। मैं सोचने लगा, कि मेरी वह जीवन साथी, जो मुझ को जिंदगी के इस आखरी पड़ाव में एकेला छोड़ गई है, वह भी तो मेरे साथ कदम से कदम मिला कर और कांधे से कांधा मिला कर चलती थी। मैंने अपनी जिंदगी में उस की इस खूबी की कभी कद्र नहीं की। उस के इस महान सहयोग को सराहा नहीं। मैं उस के इस सहयोग को उस का फर्ज समझ कर नज़र-अंदाज़ करता रहा। यह सोचते-सोचते मुझे जीवन की कई घटनाएँ याद आ गईं।

एक रात, जब मैं उर्दू के एक साप्ताहिक अखबार में कातिब के तौर पर काम करता था तो रात को अपनी ड्यूटी से फ़ारग हो कर तकरीबन साढ़े नौ बजे घर वापस पहुँचा। संतोष, मेरी पत्नी ने मुझ से कहा, "ज़रा जल्दी आ जाना था।"

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

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

"कुछ भी नहीं था?"

घर का सारा राशन वह ही लाती थी। मुझे तो आटे दाल का भाव भी पता नहीं था। सारा घर तो वही संभालती थी। मेरा काम था कमा कर लाना, उस का काम था घर चलाना। वह बिलकुल अंगूठा छाप थी, फिर भी वह समझदारी में मेरी अपेक्षा से कई गुणा अच्छी थी। उस की याददाशत गज़ब की थी। पुरानी से पुरानी चीज़ भी मांगो तो वह तुरन्त निकाल कर ला देती थी। अनपढ़ होने के बावजूद वह एक कुशल रीकारड-कीपर थी।

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

"क्या बच्चों ने भी कुछ नहीं खाया?"

उसने ना में सिर हिला कर कहा— "कुछ नहीं। मैं क्या करती।" उस ने मेरी तरफ लाचारी से देखते हुए कहा।

मैंने अपनी जेब में हाथ डाला, सिर्फ एक रुपए का नोट मिला, जो मैंने साइकिल को पैंक्चर लगवाने के लिए रखा हुआ था। मैं हड़बड़ा गया। चारपायी पर बैठे अपने तीनों बच्चों की तरफ देखा जो मेरी तरफ अपनी बेबस और लाचार आंखों से देख रहे थे।

मैं सोचने लगा और बुड़बुड़ाया, बच्चे भी भूखे, पैसा भी नहीं, घर में खाने को भी नहीं, मेरा

किसी दुकानदार से उधार भी नहीं चलता? रात का समय, अब क्या किया जाए? इसी उधेड़-बुन में मैं उठा, मेरी लड़की चंचल, जो उस समय दस साल की थी, बोली –

“कोई बात नहीं बाउ जी, आप परेशान ना हों, हम भूखे ही सो जाते हैं, कल तो आटा कहीं ना कहीं से आ ही जाएगा।”

यकीन जाने, लड़की के इन हौसला देने वाले शब्दों ने मेरे दिल को आपनी मुठ्ठी में जकड़ लिया। शब्द क्या थे अर्जुन के बान थे। अर्जुन के वह बान जिन्होंने भीषम पितामाह के सीने और जिसम को छलनी करके रख दिया था। मैंने साइकल उठाया और सोचते-सोचते 21 सैक्टर में अपनी एक मुँह बोली बहन कृष्णा के घर की तरफ चल पड़ा। घर की घंटी बजायी, दोनों पती-पत्नी बाहर आए।

“भाई साहिब आप? इस वक्त?” साथ ही मेरा बाजू पकड़ कर बड़े प्यार से मुझे अन्दर ले गए।

मैंने बगैर हिचकचाहट के कहा— “घर में आटा नहीं है और मुझे पता भी नहीं था, मुझे पचास रूपए की जरूरत है।”

कृष्णा फुरती से अंदर गई, पचास रूपए और एक थैली में आटा डाल कर ले आई। बोली “लो भाई जी, घर जा कर बच्चों को रोटी बना कर खिलाओ।”

मैंने आटा वापस कर दिया और पचास रूपए रख लिए। कहने लगी, “आटा क्यों नहीं ले जाते?” मैंने जवाब दिया— “किछी,” मैं प्यार से कृष्णा को किछी कह कर बुलाता था, “मुझे मालूम है कि तुम रूपए तो वापस ले लोगी परंतु आटा वापस नहीं लोगी। दूसरी बात यह है कि मुझे सन्तोष की आदत का पता है उस ने मांगे हुए आटे की रोटी नहीं पकानी और ना ही खानी है। मैं जाते जाते शास्त्री मारकीट से आटा और दूसरा सामान ले जाऊँगा, वहां दुकाने रात के दस ग्यारह बजे तक खुली रहती हैं।”

उस वक्त जब मैं पैसे-पैसे के लिय मुहताज था, उस ने कभी भी मुझे यह बोली नहीं मारी कि तुम ने सरकारी नौकरी क्यों छोड़ी। क्यों दूसरों की भलाई के लिये अपने बच्चों के भविष्य को दाव पर लगा दिया? उल्टा मेरा साथ देती रही। उन मुसीबत के दिनों में मैंने अपने सुसराल, आपने माता-पिता, किसी अन्य रिश्तेदार, किसी नजदीकी दोस्त यार से मदद नहीं मांगी और ना ही अपने हालात, आपनी तंगी के बारे में किसी को बताया, क्योंकि मुझे अपनी अनखीली बीवी का साथ मिला हुआ था। वह कांटों भरे रास्ते पर उठाए हुए मेरे हर कदम के साथ कदम उठाती। मेरा हौसला टूटने नहीं देती थी। वह ही मेरी हिम्मत थी, वह ही मेरा हौसला थी। कहती थी— किसी से मदद ले ली तो वह मुझे सारी उम्र बोलीयां मारेगा। वह लोग कहेंगे जब तुम भूखे मरते थे हम ही तुम्हारे काम आए थे। हम ने ही तुम्हारी मदद की थी। मेरा सिर उम्र भर के लिये नीचे हो जाएगा।

माझे की रहने वाली इस अनखीली लड़की की शादी मेरे साथ 1951 में हुई थी। उस वक्त उस की उम्र कोई पंदर-सोला साल की होगी। जब वह हमारे घर के छोटे से आंगन में चांदी की पाजेबों को छनछनाती हुई घूमती थी तो मेरे पिता जी बुहत ही खुश होते थे। राजा दशरथ की तरह कहते थे—

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लड़कपन आपने घर से आई।

राख्यों नैन पलक की नियाईं।।

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

सरकारी नौकरी छोड़ने के पश्चात् मैं प्राइवेट नौकरी के साथ-साथ छोटी सी प्रिंटिंग प्रेस भी चलाता था। प्रिंटिंग प्रेस ठीक से चलती नहीं थी। यह एक खसारे का सोदा था। पर फिर भी जब प्रेस लगा रखी थी तो उसे चलाना तो था ही न। संतोष ने 22 सैक्टर से 20 सैक्टर तक, सरवण लाल एंड बरद्रज, पेपर मरचंट की दुकान तक पैदल जाना और कागज़ के एक या दो रिम सिर पर उठा कर पैदल ही वापस आना। यदि मैंने कहना कि रिक्शा कर लेनी थी तो जवाब देना “क्या जरूरत है, यह पैसे मेरी लड़कियों की कापियां खरीदने के काम आँएँगे।” जब मेरे पास प्रेस में कोई बड़े साइज का पोस्टर छपने के लिए आ जाना तो उस ने मेरे साथ मशीन पर खड़े हो कर कागज़ उठवाने लग जाना। कभी कोई कैलंडर पर सेहरा छपने के लिये आ जाता तो भी वह मेरे साथ मशीन पर खड़ी हो जाती और मेरा हाथ बटाती। कभी-कभी तो मेरे साथ मशीन भी साफ करने लग जाती। घर को संभालना, बच्चों की देख भाल, मेरे सारे काम जैसे कपड़े साफ और सुथरे रखना आदि, घर का सारा सामान बाजार से लाना, प्रेस में मेरा साथ देना यह सभी काम वह हंसते हंसते करती थी।

एक दिन मैं अपनी बहन कृष्णा के घर गया तो वह अंदर अपने पती सुरिन्दर, जिस को प्यार से हम छिन्नी कहते थे, कह रही थी, शर्मा भाई साहिब आते हैं तो मैं देखती हूँ कि वह रोजाना एक जैसे ही कपड़े पहन कर आते हैं, शायद उन के पास एक ही पाजामा और कमीज हैं। परन्तु भाभी जी उन के कपड़ों को कितना साफ और सुथरा रखती हैं। इस बार अगले हफते जब वह टीका लगवाने आएँगे तो मैं उन को यह बादामी रंग का कुरता और पाजामा दूँगी। उन को यह बादामी रंग बड़ा अच्छा लगेगा। उन्होंने ने कभी भी मेरे से कुछ नहीं लिया। उल्टा हर राखी-टीके के अवसर पर आपनी तौफीक के मुताबक मुझे कुछ ना कुछ देकर ही जाते हैं। मेरा दिल करता है कि इस बार मैं आपने भाई को कुछ जरूर दूँ। मेरे सिर पर उन का कर्ज है। मैं भाई के प्यार का मोल तो नहीं चुका सकती, पर कुछ ना कुछ तो कर ही सकती हूँ ना? कृष्णा अन्दर बोल रही थी और मैं बाहर दरवाजे पर खड़ा सुन रहा था। कह रही थी “छिन्नी प्यार का कोई मोल नहीं होता। यह मेरा भाई मुझे सगे भाईयो से भी ज्यादा प्यार करता है।” मैं अन्दर गया और आपनी बहन किछी से लिपट कर रो पड़ा। मेरी आपनी कोई सगी बहन नहीं थी। यह सब सन्तोष की वजह से ही था।

घर में एक ही छत वाला बिजली का पंखा था। जो मैं ने सैक्टर 22 के भारत सटोर से 1960 में 20 रु महीना की दर से किशतों पर खरीदा था। हम दोनों ही यह पंखा खरीदने गये थे। आज 58 साल हो गए हैं वह पंखा आज भी मेरे पास है और मुझे उन दिनों की याद दिलाता है जब सन्तोष रसोई घर में खाना बनाते वक्त पसीने से तर हो कर अपना पसीना सुकाने के

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लिये मेरे पास आ कर बैठ जाती थी। अभी पसीना पूरी तरह से सूखता भी नहीं था तो कह देती थी, “रोटी लाऊँ? गर्म गर्म खा लो फिर ठंडे खाने का मजा नहीं आता।” मैंने कहना “तू पहले अपना पसीना तो सुखा ले फिर ले आना।” उस ने कहना— “पसीना तो सूखता रहेगा पहले आप खाना खा लें।”

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

एक बार हालात बहुत ही खराब हो गये। मेरा बड़ा भाई अमृतसर से आ गया। वह मेरे पास सीधा मेरे दफ़तर सैक्टर 21 में पहुंचा। महीने की 7 तारीख थी और उस दिन मुझे पंजाब कांग्रेस पत्रिका के दफ़तर से कताबत करने की 202 रुः उजरत मिली थी। मुझे कहने लगा— “जीत, तेरी भाभी के बच्चा होने वाला है। मुझे 200 रुः की जरूरत है।” मैंने 150 रुपए दे दिये। कहने लगा— मैंने तो दो सौ मांगे थे। मैंने जवाब दिया “मुझे 200 रुपए तो कुल मिले हैं। मैंने मकान का 50 रुपए कराया भी देना है नहीं तो मालिक मकान मेरा सामान उठा कर बाहर फैंक देगा।” कहने लगा— चल ठीक है और वापस चलने लगा। मैंने कहा चल घर चल, खाना खा कर जाना। “नहीं मुझे जल्दी है, तेरी भाभी ने कहा था जल्दी आ जाना।” उसने कहा।

घर आकर मैंने संतोष को जब पचास रुपए दिये तो उस ने मेरे मुँह की तरफ देखा। मैंने कहा “150 रुपए भाई गिरधारी ले गया है, भाभी के बच्चा होने वाला है।” उस ने पचास रुपए हाथ में लिए—लिए मेरी तरफ फिर देखा, मुँह से तो कुछ नहीं बोली पर मुझे लगा जैसे कह रही हो — “महीना भर खाना क्या है? राशन भी लाना है, बच्चों की फीस भी देनी है, बिजली—पानी का बिल भी भरना है।” उस महीने मैंने, मेरे बच्चों ने और संतोष ने अखबार की रद्दी के लफाफे बना—बना कर बाजार में दुकानों पर बेचे और गुजारा किया। कभी मैंने एक रोटी कम खानी और कभी संतोष ने। सात—आठ दिन के बाद मेरा दोस्त सिकंदर लाल मुझे मिलने घर आ गया। कहने लगा “चरनजीत, मैंने पिछले हफ्ते तेरे भाई गिरधारी लाल को लुधियाना में देखा था। यार उस के तो बड़े ठाठ हैं। वह तो कविंडर की सिगरेट पी रहा था। नये बूट भी पहन रखे थे। लगता था जैसे दो घूँट लगा भी रखी हो।”

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

बुड़बड़ाई, “घर इस लिये नहीं आये कि बच्चों को एक रुपया देना पड़ेगा।” मेरी शरमिन्दगी को देखते हुए बात को पलट गई। “चलो छोड़ो, इस बात को। हमारी करनी हमारे साथ, उन की उन के साथ। चाय पियो, सकन्दर भाई जी बहुत दिनों के बाद हमारे घर आए हैं।”

एक बार की बात है— मेरी प्रिंटिंग प्रैस की बड़ी गरारी खराब हो गई। गरारी लुधियाना से ठीक करवानी थी। जिसमें दो तीन दिन लग जाने जरूरी थे। मैं जाता तो अखबार का काम रुकता था। मैंने कहा— अब क्या किया जाए। कहने लगी “मुझे बताओ कहाँ से ठीक होनी है, मैं जाती हूँ।” मैंने उसको जगह के बारे में समझाया। फौरन समझ गई, वह लुधियाना की ही

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तो रहने वाली थी। मशीन पर 300 रूपए खर्च आना था। मैंने कहा— मैंने जालंधर माँ के पास 400 रूपए की कमेटी डाल रखी है जो 3 महीने हुए पूरी हो चुकी है, माँ से रूपए ले आना और मशीन की बनवाइ दे देना। कहने लगी मैं विश्वा मित्र भाई साहिब को साथ ले लूँगी, वह वहाँ पर बिजली के महकमे में हैं, उन की वाकफ़ियत भी होगी, हो सकता है कुछ छोट मिल जाये। माँ बाप और छोटे बहन—भाईयों से भी मिल आऊँगी। मैंने बस की छँत पर गरारी रखवा दी और बस के कुल्ली को कहा— सरदार जी, जरा मदद कर देना, आराम से उतार कर किसी रिक्शा वाले को कहना कि दरेसी ग्राउंड के पास लाल फोंडरी वालों के पुहँचा दे। भला जमाना था और लोग एक दूसरे की मदद भी करते थे।

वह मशीन की गरारी ठीक करवा लाई। वापस आकर कहने लगी—आगे से मुझे जालंधर जाने के लिए मत कहना। आप जाउ ना जाउ, आप के माँ—बाप हैं, भाई—भतीजे हैं। मैं नहीं जाऊँगी। मेरी बड़ी बेइज्जती हुई है। मैं अपने पैसे लैने गई थी, मदद माँगने नहीं गई थी। माँ ने पैसे तो दे दिये लेकिन विवहार ठीक नहीं था। मेरे साथ भीख मंगों जैसा सलूक किया गया।

जहाँ तक मुझे याद है, वह किसी ग़मी और खुशी में तो जालंधर गयी होगी लेकिन आम मिलने के लिये सारी जिंदगी वहाँ नहीं गई। यह उस की अनख थी।

मैं सोच रहा था कि जिस बीवी ने मेरी भूख में भूखे रह कर मेरा साथ दिया, मेरी हर मुश्किल में मेरा साथ निभाया, कभी कोई गिला—शिकवा नहीं किया, वह उस समय जब मुझे कुछ सुख का सांस आया है, छोड़ कर क्यों चली गई। कभी कोई शकायत भी ना करने वाली, कोई फरमायश भी न करने वाली जिस ने हमेशा मेरा हौसला ही बड़ाया, हमेशा मुझे ढारस ही देती रही। वह मेरी जीवन साथी मेरे जीवन के नाटक का एसा करदार थी जिस ने अपने लिए कभी भी कुछ नहीं मांगा। कहती थी “यह तो पत्नी का फर्ज है। मैंने अपना फर्ज निभाया है। किसी पर कोई अहसान थोड़े ही किया है.... पत्नी का फर्ज है कि वह अपने पति के हर दुःख सुख में उस का साथ दे। कांधे से कांधा मिला कर चले।”

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



Remembrance

**रोकर फजा, ये कहती सुखनवर चला गया
वो प्यार का जखीरा, समंदर चला गया.**

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

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माँ साथ—साथ है अनुरानी देवी (गुहाटी—असम)

माँ साथ—साथ है। हमेशा साथ रही है। जब से मैंने होश संभाला मैंने माँ को अपने साथ ही महसूस किया है। बचपन में वह मुझे स्कूल छोड़ने जाती और फिर छुट्टी के समय मुझे लेने आती। जब मैं बड़ी हो गई तो वह मुझे दूर तक जाते देखती रहती और मेरे वापस आने का इंतजार करती। जब मैं घर आती तो मुझे चाय बना कर देती और दिल की बातें करती। उसने हमेशा मुझे दिल लगा कर पढ़ाई करने के लिए कहा और उस के उत्साह से ही मैं दसवीं, बी. ए. और एम. ए. कर पाई। और फिर एक कालेज में अध्यापिका बन गई।

मुझे जीवन भर प्रेरणा देने वाली औरत मेरी माँ ही थी। उस का जन्म असम के नलवाड़ी जिला में सुनकुर्या गाँव में हुआ था। वह ज्यादा पढ़ी लिखी तो नहीं थी परंतु वह हमेशा हमारे चार बहन—भाइयों की पढ़ाई की जिम्मेदारी खुद लेती थी। वह जानती थी कि इस समाज में पढ़ाई के बगैर कुछ भी सफलता हासिल नहीं होती।

पहले जमाने में लड़कियों की शादी उन की छोटी उम्र में ही कर दी जाती थी। मेरी माँ की शादी भी सोलह वर्ष की उम्र में हो गई थी। इसी लिए शायद उसे अधिक पढ़ने का मौका न मिला। मेरे पिता जी सरकारी नौकरी में थे। इस लिए घर और बच्चों की देखभाल और पढ़ाई की जिम्मेदारी माँ के सिर पर ही थी। माँ की वजह से ही हम अच्छे इंसान बन सके। माँ के आशीर्वाद के साथ मैं आज अपनी पसंद के कालेज (बी. बरवा कालेज, गुहाटी) में अध्यापिका के तौर पर काम कर रही हूँ।

घर के काम—काज के इलावा मेरी माँ समाज सेवा करने में भी हमेशा रुचि रखती रही। हमारे इलाके की महिला समिति की वह प्रधान थी। वह और भी कई अलग अलग संस्था के साथ जुड़ी हुई थी। उस ने घर और समाज की जिम्मेदारी को हमेशा खूबी के साथ निभाया।

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

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

दुर्गा पूजा के दिन थे। यह सब कुछ सप्तमी वाले दिन हुआ। उस दिन मेरे पिता बहुत सारी जलेबी ले कर आए थे। मैं कुछ ज्यादा ही खा गई। पिता ने और खाने से मना कर दिया। मैं अपने कमरे में चली गई और रोने लगी। मेरी माँ एक प्लेट में दो जलेबियाँ ले कर आई और

कहा — ले खा ले ओर मुझे अपना एक बिलाऊज भी दिया जो मुझे पसंद था और मेरे साईज का था। उस दिन माँ ने गोभी की सब्जी बनाई थी और साथ में दाल—चावल। हम सभी खाना खा कर 11 बजे सो गए। रात साढ़े ग्यारह बजे माँ ने दरवाजा खटखटाया और कहा कि उस की छाती में दर्द हो रहा है। हम ने फौरन डाक्टर को बुलाया जो आधे घंटे में आ गया परन्तु वह तो पहले ही खत्म हो चुकी थी। कोई बीमारी नहीं थी उसे, फिर पता नहीं क्यों अचानक दिल के दौरे के साथ वह हमेशा के लिए दम तोड़ गई। आखिरी दिन भी वह मुझे कितना प्यार दे कर गई, याद करके मन भर जाता है।

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

मेरी माँ मुझे कभी गुस्सा नहीं होती थी। मेरी हर गलती पर मुझे प्यार के साथ समझाती थी। एक घटना याद आ रही है। मैं चौथी क्लास में पढ़ती थी। शाम को खेलने चली गई। मुझे वहां डाक्टर दादा जी और आंटी जी मिल गए। वह भी घूमने जा रहे थे। मैंने भी उनके साथ जाने की जिद की। उन्होंने कहा— तेरे माता—पिता तुझे डांटेंगे। लेकिन मैंने कोई परवाह न की और उनके साथ चल पड़ी। जब घर वापस आई तो रात के नौ बज चुके थे। मेरी माँ और पिता बहुत परेशान थे, वह सोच रहे थे— कहीं उन की बच्ची को किसी ने अगवा न कर लिया हो। पिता बहुत गुस्से में थे और मेरी पीटाई करना चाहते थे। परन्तु मेरी माँ ने मुझे एक तरफ कर दिया और अपने कमरे में ले गई। उस की आँखों से आंसू बह रहे थे। उस ने मुझे बाँहों में ले कर खूब प्यार के साथ समझाया कि आगे से इस तरह नहीं करना। मैंने कहा— ठीक है, मैं आगे से ऐसा नहीं करूँगी। उसके बाद जब भी कहीं जाना होता मैं माँ को बता कर जाती। अब भी जब माँ नहीं है तो मैं पिता जी को बता कर जाती हूँ।

माँ के बारे में जितना भी लिखूँ वह कम ही रहेगा। बहुत कुछ है उस के बारे लिखने के लिए। मैंने माँ को हमेशा अपने साथ महसूस किया है। बचपन में जब से होश संभाला मैंने उसे हमेशा अपने साथ—साथ ही महसूस किया। आज वह बेशक शारीरिक रूप से मेरे साथ नहीं है परन्तु उस का आशीर्वाद हमेशा मेरे साथ है और आज भी मैं उसे हर पल अपने अंगसंग ही महसूस करती हूँ। मैं जानती हूँ कि दुनिया की हर माँ अपने बच्चों के लिए महान और प्यारी होती है परन्तु मेरे लिए मेरी माँ सब से महान और सब से प्यारी थी... रही है और हमेशा रहेगी ...आखिरी साँस तक।

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माँ की ममता

हिरामन लांजे 'रमानंद' (नागपुर-महाराष्ट्र)

दुनिया में माँ की ममता से बढ़कर कोई चीज़ नहीं है। माँ की ममता की महता विश्व के सभी महान व्यक्तियों ने हमें बताई है। एक मराठी कविता के भाव है, 'स्वामी तीन्ही जगाचा आईविना भिकारी' यानि प्रत्यक्ष भगवान जो तीनों जगत का स्वामी है माँ के बिना अनाथ है।

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

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

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

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

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

जिसने हमारे जीवन को सींचा और धरती की सौगात दी वह नदी भी हमारे लिए माता है। गंगा माँ कहकर हम अभी भी दौड़े चले जाते हैं गंगा मैथ्या के दर्शन के लिए।

जिस धरती पर, जिस देश में हमने जन्म लिया वह धर्ती वह देश को हम धर्तीमाता, मातृभूमी कहते हैं। उसकी आन बान बनाए रखने के लिए अपना जीवन तक नौछावर कर देते हैं। सपूत होने में गर्व महसूस करते हैं। शायद ही कोई कुपूत अपनी माता से द्रोह करने की बात सोचता होगा। उसका सर्वत्र धिक्कार ही होता है।

इन सभी की ममता प्यार दुलार से ही हमारा जीवन सुखमय होता है। बहन, भाभी या जीवनसाथी पत्नी भी माता समान व्यवहार से जीवन की हर कठीनाईयों में साथ निभाते हैं। कहते हैं स्त्री रूप लेकर माया ने अखिल ब्रम्हांड को अपनी गोद में समाया है।

अनुभवों का खजाना दादी या नानी की याद आते ही हमें हमारा बचपन याद आता है। पिता जी की आदरणीय तथा माता जी को माता समान लगने वाली दादी-परम आदरणीय स्त्री होती है। दादी ने सुख दुःख भरा जीवन यादों में सिमटा होता है। हम चाहे तो दादी से बहुत कुछ सीख सकते हैं।

परिवार में व्यस्तता के कारण किसी को वक्त न मिलने पर दादी का आसरा होता है। वह अपने पोता-पोती का पक्ष लेती है। कहते हैं की वृद्ध दादी के चेहरे पर की झुर्रियाँ अगाध अनुभव छुपाए रहती हैं।

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शरद ऋतु में पतझड़ से निश्पर्ण हुए पेड़ फिर हरे भरे होकर उन पर पक्षी चहकते हैं। यह दादी ने कई वर्ष देखा होता है। सुख के बाद दुःख और दुःख के बाद सुख आना ही जीवन है। यह दादी जानती है। एक स्त्री होने के नाते अनुभवों से संपन्न दादी ममता का भंडार प्रतीत होती है। इसलिए दूसरों की गलती भी माफ करने की समझ दादी सिखाती है।

माँ बाप की व्यस्तता, प्रासंगिक झगड़े हो या दुर्भाग्यवश माँ का स्वर्गवास हुआ हो या सौतेली माँ का व्यवहार ठीक नहीं हो। ऐसे में दादी का सहारा अनमोल साबित होता है।

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

दादी-नानी से बचपन में सुनी कहानियाँ जीवन भर याद आती रहती हैं। लोकगीतों और लोक कथाओं के प्रति हमें बचपन में ही रुबुरु कर साहित्य के प्रति समझ बढ़ाने में उनका योगदान होता है।

वृद्ध दादा-दादी नाना-नानी को हर घर में सन्मान मिले। जिन्होंने कठिनाईयाँ झेलकर अपनी संतान को काबिलियत दी उन्हें ढलती उमर में बोझ समझकर उनसे दुर्व्यवहार हो या उन्हें वृद्धाश्रम में रखा जाए यह बच्चों को कभी बर्दाश्त नहीं करना चाहिए।

माँ बाप दोनों नौकरी करने वाले परिवारों में बच्चों की देखभाल और सुरक्षा की दृष्टि से वृद्ध माता-पिता का परिवार में होना बहुत जरूरी है। उनके लिए नहीं पर अपने स्वार्थ के खातिर हम यह देखें कि परिवार में उनको जगह मिले-सन्मान मिले। पैसा देकर प्यार दुलार नहीं खरीदा जा सकता। अपनत्व-ममत्व रखने वाले मातृत्वभाव रखने वाले अपनों से बढकर कोई सेवा नहीं दे सकता।

गोमाता को कसाई खाने में भेजने वाले और माँ बाप को घर से निकाल देने वाले में क्या अंतर होगा। जितनी जल्द यह हम समझ पाएँगे वही अच्छी शुरुआत होगी।

जिन्हें परिवार में प्यार मिला वे धन्य हैं। जिन्हें यह सौभाग्य नहीं मिला उन्हें सब कुछ मिलने पर भी कुछ कमी जरूर महसूस होती है। बिना कष्ट से जीवन में मिला उसे संजोगकर रखे उसपर गर्व करे। देहात में आज भी संयुक्त परिवार में दादा-दादी, नाना-नानी बच्चों से प्यार करते दिखाई देते हैं।

हम देखते हैं की खेती के काम में लगे परिवारों में समस्याएं उभरकर आती हैं। चाहकर भी माँ-बाप बच्चों से प्यार नहीं जता पाते हैं। कभी कभी प्यार की मूरत कही जाने वाली माँ बच्चों को मारती है – ताड़न करती है। पर यह तात्कालिक प्रक्रिया होती है। कुछ ही क्षणों में बच्चे को गोद में लेकर रोती महिलाएं हमने देखी हैं। फिर दादी प्यार से सहला कर माँ की कमी भी दूर करेगी। माँ तो फिर काम में लग जाएगी।

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**जीवित रहोगी सदा
(अपनी माँ की याद में)
आरती कुमारी (बिहार)**

नहीं उगेगा अब
मेरे हिस्से का सूरज
उसकी चमक
तुम्हारे चेहरे से थी माँ!
नहीं खिलेंगे कल
मेरे लिए फूल
उसकी रंगत, उसकी खुशबू
सब तुम्हारी हँसी से थी माँ!
थम सी गई है हवा
ढूँढ रही है
मेरा दिल....
जो तुम्हारे
धड़कनों के साथ ही
धड़कता था माँ!
आज से रातें भी
हो गई हैं सर्द
तुम्हारी गोद की गरमाहट
ममता का आँचल
सब....
मुझसे छूट गया है माँ!
हमें बोलना सिखाया
लौरी सुना
कई रतजगा किए तुमने
पर खुद आज
खामोशी की चादर तान
क्यों सो गई हो माँ!
ऊँगली पकड़ चलना सिखाया
और आज

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

जूझ रही हूँ मैं
स्वयं ही.. अकेले
मेरा साहस, संबल
सब तुम ही तो थी माँ!

पर तुम मुझसे
चाहे कितनी भी दूर
क्यों न चली जाओं
हिस्सा हूँ मैं
तुम्हारे वजूद का
जीवित रहोगी तुम
सदैव
मुझमें...

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**नारी को सन्मान दो
अनीता ठक्कर (मुंबई)**

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

बिन नारी यह जग अँधेरा
नारी बिन कटे न यह जनम का फेरा

नारी पुरुष की स्त्री है वही नारी माता है
न जाने यह नारी से हम सबका क्या नाता है
कोई उसे खोता है, कोई उसे पाता है

वही राम की सीता है, वही कृष्ण की राधा है
वही राँझा की हीर है, वही मजनू की लैला है
नारी के बिन यह पुरुष बिलकुल अकेला

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नारी प्रेम की गाथा है, नारी प्रेम का रूप
बिन नारी यह संसार, लगे कैसे कुरूप

इसलिए नारी को सन्मान दो
जीने का उसे अधिकार दो।

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वो बांये हाथ वाली औरत
बालचो बालचेव (बुल्गारिया)
अनुवाद: मौना (मोराक्षी कृष्ण)

ट्रेन पर करती है यात्रा अकेले
और खिड़की पर चिल्लाती है नाम तुम्हारा
तुम घर पर खेल रहे हो शतरंज —
अँधेरे में —
अकेले अपने आप से — यानि कि तुम हो
वह पहुँचती है तुम्हारे शहर में
और फिर से भीड़ में —
पुकारती है नाम तुम्हारा
और फिर छुप जाती है
उस्तरे की धार पर ज्युँ हो
ऐसे वह तुम्हें करती है प्यार
क्योंकि —
कम से कम —
तुम हो तो !
तुम हो !

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माँ
सी . डी सिंह (बिहार)

एक अत्यंत निर्धन विधवा
अपनी झोपड़ी के सामने
एक टूटी खाट पर आँधे लेटी
पास में जमीन पर बैठे अपने
पाँच वर्षीय बेटे को सूखी रोटी
चबाते देख आहत थी।
बालक ऊपर लेटी माँ को देख
बोला — मम्मी, नमक दे दो।
झोपड़ी के अन्दर सारे मिट्टी के बर्तन
खाली पड़े थे।
माँ बेटे को नमक भी नहीं दे पायी थी।
माँ का दिल टुकड़ों में टूटा था,
आँसुओं के शैलाब उमड़ चले थे।
आँसुओं की बुंदें लगातार नीचे बेटे के
हाथ में पड़ी रोटी पर गिरने लगी थी।
रोटी का टुकड़ा मुँह में डालते हुए
बेटे ने चहक कर कहा था—
माँ, रहने दो, अब नमक नहीं चाहिए।

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<cdsinghdehri@rediffmail-com>

तनहाई
चरणजीत लाल 'तस्कीन'

तन्हा हुए इहसास हुआ
दिन में दिन रात भी होते हैं
और हर एक दिन तनहाई के
चौबीस घंटे होते हैं।

तन्हा हुए इहसास हुआ
हम बाकैद—ए हयात तो हैं

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पर असल में देखा जाए
तो दीवारों की कैद में हैं।

तन्हा हुए इहसास हुआ
दुनिया में फूल भी होते हैं
जब एक भी फूल मुरझा जाए
हम बिन खुशबू के होते हैं।

तन्हा हुए इहसास हुआ
कुछ लोग तो जिन्दा होते हैं
वह जिन्दा नजर तो आते हैं
पर जिन्दा लाशें होते हैं।

तन्हा हुए इहसास हुआ
तेरी फोटो दिल बहलाती है
वह बात नहीं कर पाती है
बस दिल में आग लगाती है।

तन्हा हुए इहसास हुआ
अब मैं हूँ और तनहाई है
हर सांस जो आता जाता है
बस तेरी याद दिलाता है।

तन्हा हुए इहसास हुआ
अब मैं भी जाने वाला हूँ
तेरी तनहाई में मैं अपना
हाथ बटाने वाला हूँ
उस देश जहां तू रहती है
अब मैं भी आने वाला हूँ।

Mr. Charanjit Lal 'Taskeen' is no more with us He left to his heavenly abode on 3 Jan. 2018. May his soul rest in peace. Kindly also see page 83.

मां
दीपक शर्मा चनारथल (चंडीगढ़)

मां तू फिर बीमार कब होगी
मां तू जब पहले बीमार हुई थी
तो बड़ी भी आई,
छोटी बहन भी गले मिल रोई थी।
तीनों भाई भी मेरे, तुझे देखने के लिए आए थे,
लोकलाज की खातिर ही सही,
भाभियों ने भी गांव के चक्कर लगाए थे।

मां तुझे बुखार था,
मगर पिता के चेहरे पर चाव था,
नातो-नातियों के लिए,
दुकान से पूछ रहे, भाई सेब का क्या भाव था।

पुराने चूल्हे चढ़ी दाल,
आज रोटी का अलग ही स्वाद था,
मां तुझे बुखार था,
मगर तेरा आंगन आज आबाद था।

बचपन वाली हलचल,
आज फिर अपने घर हुई थी,
अकेलेपन का दुख भूल,
अपनी फूलवाडी को देख,
मां तू भी तो आज खुशी में रोई थी।

मां तू लाख बुलाए,
वक्त नहीं है का बहाना लगाएं,
ससुराल जाएं, दोस्तों संग टुअर लगाएं,
छुट्टी वाला दिन शहर में सो कर बिताएं,
मां काम बहुत है,
यह कह गांव से कन्नी कतराएं।

मां तेरी बीमारी की खबर ने
सब को एकत्र कर दिया,
मां तेरी बीमारी ने आज तेरा परिवार
एकत्र कर दिया।

फिर से भाईयों को मिलने का दिल करता है,
पिता भी सब को याद कर हिचकी सी भरता है।

माँ तू फिर बीमार कब होगी,
लंबी हो उम्र तेरी,
मगर तू फिर से अधमोई सी कब होगी,
माँ तू फिर बीमार कब होगी,
माँ तू फिर बीमार कब होगी।

Ph. 98151-52959

माँ जैसा कोई और नहीं देवमणि पाण्डेय (मुम्बई)

ममता से रोशन दिल अपना
माँ से दुनिया उजियारी है
सच पूछो तो बस माँ के ही
कदमों में जन्नत सारी है
मीठी मीठी थपकी देकर
माँ जिस पल लोरी गाती है
तब नींद से महकी आँखों में
परियों की डोली आती है
जीवन के सफर में जब दुनिया
काँटों से राह सजाती है
बनकर फूलों की चादर तब
माँ धरती पर बिछ जाती है
कितनी भी धूप कड़ी दुख की
माँ कभी न हिम्मत हारी है
माँ ने अपनी हर एक खुशी
अपने बच्चों पर वारी है
पढ़-लिखकर जब बन गए हैं कुछ
पश्चिम की हवा में झूल गए
धन-दौलत, शोहरत मिलते ही
अपनी माँ को वो भूल गए

खो जाता बचपन अगर उसे
ममता की नाव नहीं मिलती
माँ के प्यारे से आँचल की
जो शीतल छाँव नहीं मिलती

माँ से उल्लास है कण-कण में
माँ तो खुद्दाबू की क्यारी है
माँ जैसा कोई और नहीं
माँ जग में सबसे प्यारी है

Ph. 98210-82126

अक्सर ही हरदेव चौहान (चंडीगढ़)

अक्सर ही
कहीं अंदर, बाहर
जाने से पहले
गुलाबी वाश बेसन में झाँकते
बीस मेगा पिक्सल के
कैमरे वाला
अक्स दिखता है
साफ, शफाफ
और मुँह, हाथ धोने से
इन्कारी हो जाता है मन...
कहीं वाश बेसन की चमक
फीकी न पड़ जाए
फेस वाश
और पानी-छीटों के साथ-
बिन बताये
बिन पूछे
और भी जरूरतें,
होती रहती पूरी
मसलन
पैट, कमीज का कम्बिनेशन...

*

स्कूटर के मिरर पे
टाँगा होता
मैचिंग हेल्मट...
शोलडर बैग में
रखे होते हैं
नित्य सुबह के प्रयोग, व्यवहार वाले
कागज, पत्र
जरूरी पैसे

सुबह की हो
या शाम की
चाय प्याली में
हमेशा पड़ी होती है
अपेक्षित मात्रा में
शुगर फ्री
और दो, तीन
चीज बिस्कुट—

बड़ा आसान
और सकूनमयी होता है घर
बीवी की हाजिरी में
जैसे कोई
मल्टी कलर
ऊन का मखमली गोला
रैपर चड़ा हुआ

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सौभाग्य

हिरामन लांजे, 'रमानंद'

मुल मराठी कविता 'सौभाग्य लेणं' का अनुवाद

सुहाग की सौगात मिली है
व्यवहार तुम्हारा स्नेहमय हो
खुशियाँ सब मिलेगी तुम्हे
व्यवहार मे सहज भाव हो।

भुल जाना होगा अपना मैका
करना न होगा दुखी मन
ये तेरी माँ समझाती है
माँगती है तुझे वचन।

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

जीवन साथी का साथ न हो
ऐसा जीवन दुस्वार है
पति—पत्नि साथ साथ रहें
तो सोने में सुहागा है।

बेला सुकुमार नाजूक रहे
पेड़ से लिपटकर और
नारी सौभाग्य पाकर रहे
जीवन में सबला बनकर।

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

<lanjehiraman@gmail.com>

वह औरत

कुन्ती (झाँसी—उ. प्र.)

तनहाई में डूबी औरत
घर आंगन में घुटती औरत को
काश विशाल समंदर मिले
जिसमें मछली—सा तैरे उसका मन
अपनों के द्वारा कतरे गये परों को
कातरता से निहारती

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बंद कमरे में छटपटाती औरत को
काश उन्मुक्त आकाश मिले
जहाँ पंछी बनकर उड़े उसका मन
अज्ञानता का ग्रहन लगी
सुंदर संसार से अनभिज्ञ औरत को
काश ज्ञान की निर्मल गंगा मिले
जिसमें विदूशी बनकर बहे उसका मन

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माँ
डा.मधु धवन

माँ ज्योतिपर्व का कलश
माँ ज्योतिपर्व का भरा कलश
खिलखिल हँसते सुखके तारे
धन धान्य आँगन में बिखरे
उमंग उत्साह भरे हरपल हमारे
जीवन पावन मंगलमय हो
जब जब माँ हमको निहारे।
माँ ज्योतिपर्व का भरा कलश
शुभ मंगल मंगल मंगल हो ।
प्रति निमिष स्नेह स्पंदन हो,
नव आशा का नेहबंधन हो ।
विश्वास हृदय का संबल हो
ममता का मधुर चुंबन हो
हर बात तुम्हारी अनुपम हो
पिसती गृहस्थी में अनवरत हो
माँ ज्योति पर्व का भरा कलश
शुभ मंगलमंगल मंगल हो।
आलोकित होता कण कण
अपराजित होता जीवन रण
संकल्प सदा रहे अक्षुण्य
है कर्म सफलता का दर्पण

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

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

गज़ल
मीर हलीम जैदी 'हलीम'
(बरेली-उ. प्र.)

कैसे गुजरे हयात तेरे बगैर।
कुछ नहीं मेरी जात तेरे बगैर।
वकत ठहरा हुआ सा लगता है,
कैसे दिन और रात तेरे बगैर।
जानता हूँ कि मिल नहीं सकती,
इन ग़मों से निजात तेरे बगैर।
दिल से पलकों पे आके ठहरी है,
आंसूओं की बरात तेरे बगैर।
बहरे जल्मात में असीर कोई,
ऐसे कटती है रात तेरे बगैर।
तेरी तस्वीर आईना मेरा,
तुझ से करता हूँ बात तेरे बगैर।
डर है अब आके बस न जाये 'हलीम'
दिल में लाअतो-मनात तेरे बगैर।

Ph. 99972-35991, 84459-72572

समझ निवेदिता जेना (ओडिशा)

वे सब बैठे थे महफिल में
हँसते हुये और चहकते हुये.
मैं पहुंची तो पता नहीं क्यों चौंक गए सब.
हँसना, ठहाके लगाना... सब बंद.
कैसी एक चुभती हुई निरवता.. क्यों???

मां ने कहा था कभी...
इस दुनिया में दो तरह के लोग
एक औरत के प्रवेश से चौंकते हैं.
चाहे वह जीवन में हो या कमरे में.
वे जो औरत को समझते हैं –
सिर्फ एक देह,
या वे जो समझते हैं उसे देवी.
देवी और देह के बीच भी रहती है,
एक औरत— एक इन्सानि मन,
उन्हे नहीं है पता.

तभी तो औरत के प्रवेश मात्र से
वे चौंक उठते हैं.
चाहे वह जीवन में हो या कमरे में.

<nibedita.nibedita.jena0@gmail.com>

यह आधी रात बसंत पद्माशा झा (बिहार)

यह आधी रात बसंत
चूँ ही हवा, बुनती रही सन्नाटा
झिंगुर बोलते रहे
चुपचाप अँधेरे में झरते रहे शिरीष के पत्ते
सड़क सुनसान थी
वह ऐसा वकत नहीं था
कि तुम्हे पुकारा जा सके
महज याद दिलाने के लिये

कि मेरी अन्जुरियों
में भरे हुए मोंगरे के फूल
गिर चुके थे
गो कि सुगंध मेरी
हथेलियों में अब भी तारी थी
न कसमें न वादे न रिश्ते
न होठों पर रुकी हुई
मुस्कराहट और न वे फूल, जो
अब नहीं थे मेरे पास
कि तुम्हे सौंप सकूँ
मेरी आँखों में
ढेर सावन ठहर गया था
जिन्हें रोकने की कोशिश में
मेरी पलकों काँप रही थीं
और अलविदा लिखने से पहले
मेरी कलम थरथराने लगी थी.

Ph. 094309 38008

माँ, जीवन की सच्चाई तुम हो डॉ. पंकज विरमाल (इंदौर-म. प्र.)

माँ, जीवन की सच्चाई तुम हो,
सीने से लगाकर खुशियाँ पाती तुम हों।
पलकों में सुलाकर मन से जागती तुम हो,
देख मुझे हंसता अंदर से रोती तुम हो।
माँ जीवन की सच्चाई तुम हो।
खूब खिलाती खुद न खाती तुम हो,
रोता मुझको देख बिलख जाती तुम हो।
माँ जीवन की सच्चाई तुम हो।
खुशियाँ मेरी देख जहाँ पाती तुम हो,
मायूसी पर जतन कराती तुम हो।
माँ जीवन की सच्चाई तुम हो।

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मैं ही दिखता जग में इतनी अंधी तुम हो,
जलधि हिलोरे लेता इतनी शक्ति तुम हो।
माँ जीवन की सच्चाई तुम हो।

Ph. 08889203339
pankajvirmal1963@gmail.com

मेरी बहना प्रवेश धवन (नई दिल्ली)

जाने वाले किधर को चले जाते हैं,
जाते यूँ कि न वापिस कभी आते हैं।

दिल तड़पता है मिलने को तुझसे मेरा,
पर करूँ क्या जो जीवन ठहर है गया,
तू तो रिश्तों के दायरों से है उठ गई,
मेरा जीवन बिछोह-दर्द से भर गया;
अपने खुद में ही हम तो घुले जाते हैं,
जाने वाले किधर को.....

जिन्दगी का सफर जो तेरा तय हुआ,
मेरा जीवन जुदा मुझसे होने लगा,
इक शहर जो तेरे दम से आबाद था,
तेरे जाने से वो अब है ढहने लगा;
रात-दिन जिन्दगी के ढले जाते हैं,
जाने वाले किधर को.....

न मैं पाती तुझे भूल बहना सखी,
मेरी आँखें तुझे हर तरफ ढूँढतीं,
कैसे समझाऊँ अपने को समझूँ नहीं,
इस मरज की दवा तो कहीं भी नहीं!
मर्ज 'मर्जी-खुदाई' सहे जाते हैं,
जाने वाले किधर को.....

जब भी चाहा तुझे भूल से भूलना,
तेरी मूरत हटाये न मुझ से हटे,
अखियों के झरोखों में बैठी हुई,
आँसूयों के खटोलों में पेंगे भरे;

प्याला जीवन-ज़हर का पिये जाते हैं,
जाने वाले किधर को.....

राहे-जीवन में हम को अगरचे कोई,
मिल गया जो मेरे ज़ख्म को कुछ भरे,
ज़ख्मों-निशानी फिर भी रहेगी अमर,
ता-उम्र टीस उसकी जायेंगे सहे;
अब तो जीने को यूँ ही जिये जाते हैं,
जाने वाले किधर को.....

Ph. 98910-26579

औरत रानू उनियाल (लखनऊ-उ. प्र.)

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

माँ तुम हो तो
रानू उनियाल (लखनऊ-उ. प्र.)

माँ तुम हो तो घरों में ताले
आज भी नहीं लगते
खुले हाथों से स्वागत करती हैं
घर की खिड़कियां
खलता नहीं है आज भी
उस दालान में घूमना
गमलों, फूलों, करी पत्ते की खुशबू
सब कुछ तो वही है
वही तख्त, वही कुशन,
वही ताजे नीबुओं की खुशबू
बगीचा अभी भी वैसा ही है हरा भरा
माँ तुम हो तो सब कुछ वैसा है
भला सा अपना सा, मासूम, चुस्त
बिलकुल तुम्हारी तरह
हर वक्त सजग, सहज
आँगन की तुलसी सा
पूजा के दिए सा
चालीसा की चौपाई सा
आम के गलके सा।
खट्टा मीठा, हाँ मेरे बचपन सा।

<ranuuniyalpant@gmail-com>

राहें
डॉ. संगीता सिंह (राजस्थान)

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

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

बैठा पाओगी घर और बाहर में साम?
पाना चाहती हो गुठली के दाम और आम?
नहीं होगी संभव समाज सेवा निष्काम!
यशलिप्सा तो नहीं घेरेगी? छूटेगा राम!

अनवरत चलना भी नहीं सही,
चाहिए कुछ तो विश्राम

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

<sangeetaa07@gmail.com>

मैं खड़ा ही रह गया
सतीश कुमार सिंह (जांजगीर-छत्तीसगढ़)

तुम लिए मुस्कान अधरों पर हँसे फिर चल दिए
आँसुओं की देहरी पर मैं खड़ा ही रह गया।
समय के प्रतिघात को
मैं नमन करता ही रहा
रिक्तता की अग्नि में
खुद का हवन करता रहा
किंतु मेरी साधना में ही रही कुछ कमी शायद
सिंधु बनना चाहता था पर घड़ा ही रह गया।
डूबना चाहा कभी जब
हृदय की गहराइयों में
मन उलझकर रह गया तब
देह की परछाइयों में
इसलिए ही आत्मा का विम्ब
टूटा झनझनाकर
संशयों के गेह में जब मैं अड़ा ही रह गया।

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माँ तुम्हारी मुस्कुराहट
अब मुझे मरने न देगी
पर ये मेरे घाव को भी
अब कभी भरने न देगी
सोचता था शुभ-अशुभ का फर्क
समझूंगा नियति से
पर अंगूठी में नगीने सा जड़ा ही रह गया ।
Ph. 94252-31110

<satishsinghjanjgir@gmail-com>

गज़ल

डा. शगुफता गज़ल (बरेली-उ. प्र.)

फलक के चाँद सितारों ने साथ छोड़ दिया ।
जमी की महकी बहारों ने साथ छोड़ दिया ।

हमारी बज्म से क्या रूठ कर गया कोई,
गुलों की बात क्या, खारों ने साथ छोड़ दिया ।

गमे फिराक में दिल को था खाक हो जाना,
लगी जो आग शरारों ने साथ छोड़ दिया ।

वह जिस के दम से थी रौनक हमारी महफिल में,
चला गया तो नजारों ने साथ छोड़ दिया ।

अजीब मोड़ पे ले आई जिन्दगी मुझ को,
कि मेरे अपने सहारों ने साथ छोड़ दिया ।

अजब न था कि भंवर से हम बच के आ जाते,
मगर हमारा किनारों ने साथ छोड़ दिया ।

जिन्हें हम अपना समझ कर 'गज़ल' सुनाते रहे
सहर के होते ही तारों ने साथ छोड़ दिया ।

Ph. 98376-47221

गज़ल

डा. शगुफता गज़ल (बरेली-उ. प्र.)

यादों से एक शाम सजाई तेरे बगैर ।
सूनी पड़ी हुई थी खुदाई तेरे बगैर ।

बे नूर कायनात की हर शय लगी मुझे,
जिस सिम्त भी निगाह उठाई तेरे बगैर ।

यह भी हुआ कि शाम ढली बज्म भी सजी,
महफिल ही मुझको रास न आई तेरे बगैर ।

तेरे बगैर डसती रही मुझको जिंदगी,
मत पूछ कैसे उम्र बिताई तेरे बगैर ।

पलकों पे दीप जलते रहे रात भर 'गज़ल',
इक पल भी मुझको नींद न आई तेरे बगैर ।

Ph. 98376-47221

श्रापी माँ

डा. शरणजीत कौर (चंडीगढ़)

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

माँ कि जिसका पुत्र
पुत्र ना बनना चाहे

माँ कि ममता मारी
ले गहरे गहरे सांस

मन ही मन पिघल जाये
वह एक श्रापी माँ ।

माँ ने एक पाप था किया
तभी तो बार बार वह कहती
क्या करूँ.... मैं क्या करूँ?
टीले से क्या कूद मरूँ?

*

माँ न बनी थी सीता
न बनी थी अहल्या
वह एक श्रापी माँ

बार बार वह पुत्र कहे
माँ तो होती है माँ! बस!!
खुले बाल सफेद मुँह
सहमी सहमी डरी डरी
वह एक श्रापी माँ

आज का पुत्र कैसे माने?
बात समय की कैसे जाने
गूंगी बोली माँ कहलावे
पति, पिता और पुत्र तीनों 'प'
बने शरीक, बोले माँ
वह एक श्रापी माँ

माँ तो जैसे खारा दूध
दीवार में उगा बेकार वृक्ष
पीले हुए फूलों का दुःख
गूंगी बोली रहे तो माँ
नहीं तो वह एक श्रापी माँ।

Ph. 98556-06432

नारी शक्ति का चित्रण विजय राठौर (जांजगीर-छत्तीसगढ़)

वो सलीके से घर चलाती है
नौकरी भी वो करके आती है
हजार गम हो झेलती है वो
फिर भी अपना धरम निभाती है

जिस तरह हो निबाह करती है
कुछ भी हो, नहीं आह करती है
जब बला कोई हम पे आती है
अपने आँचल की छाँह करती है

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

वो पहेली है, उसे बूझना है
उसे सब झंझटों से जूझना है
घर के भीतर वो लक्ष्मी है मानों
उसे देवी की तरह पूजना है

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

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

हम जहाँ चाहें वहाँ जाती है
हम जिसे गायें, वो भी गाती है
वो अगर बात में अड़ जाये तो
यम से वापस हमें ले आती है

वो नहीं हमसे अदावत करती
प्राण प्रण से ही मुहब्बत करती
हम भले उसकी बुराई कर दें
वो हमारी ही वकालत करती

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

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

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उसके हाथों में दुनिया पलती है
उससे ही कायनात चलती है
उसके होने से बर्फ की ठंडक
जिंदगी उसके बिना जलती है

फूल है, आग है, नदी है वो
चौन है, सुख है, जिंदगी है वो
दिन में है धूप, गुनगुनी, मीठी
रात में स्निग्ध चाँदनी है वो

Ph. 98261-15660, 9826478727,
<rathorevijayjng@gmail.com>

माँ का कातिल डॉ० विजय विशाल (राजस्थान)

वो मेरी माँ
और बाप भी थी
भगवान का वो
एहसास भी थी,
उसने तो दिया ही दिया
कभी कुछ माँगा
न कुछ लिया।
मेरे जीवन के अँकुर को
अपने खून से उसने सींचा,
आँखों में बसाया सीने में भींचा।
मेरी चाहतों के परिन्दों को
परवाज़ कराने के लिए
उसने मुझे अपने ही
पँख काट कर दिए,
फिर चाहे उसके लिए उसे
घर-घर में बर्तन घिसने पड़े
या चक्की में पिस जाना पड़ा।
वो मेरी माँ
और बाप भी थी।
पर हाय!

एक दिन
खूबसूरती से भी खूबसूरत
एक हसीना की खूबसूरती का
मैं शिकार हो गया,
मरीज़-ए-इश्क मैं
बहुत बीमार हो गया,
उसकी दिलकश अदाएँ
उसका बेमिसाल हुस्न
मेरी रातों की नींद
और दिन का चैन
चुरा ले गया।

फिर आई
एक सुरमई शाम
पिलाया उसने
इन लफ़्जों का जाम :-
"मुझ से ज़्यादा
तुम माँ से प्यार करते हो,
तभी तो
माँ ही की बात करते हो,
जाओ! जाओ!
पहले माँ का दिल ले आओ,
फिर मुझे ले जाओ!"

महबूब की माँग
और माँ का प्यार,
हुआ इनसे
मैं यूँ दो-चार
'एक तरफ माँ का दिल
दूसरी तरफ तेरा प्यार
न मैं इस पार
न उस पार।'
फिर! मुझ मरीज़-ए-इश्क ने
कर डाला वो क़माम
जिसे कहते हैं हराम,
सोई माँ का सीना चाक किया
और

*

दिल का तोहफा साथ लिया ।
अन्धेर कर
अन्धेरे में भागा
तोहफा—ए—दिल दिखलाने को,
ठोकर जो लगी
दिल गिर ही पड़ा,
मैंने इक ज़ख्मी आवाज़ सुनी —
“बेटा!
कहीं चोट तो नहीं लगी?”
पर सुनी, अनसुनी करनी ही पड़ी
दिल दबोचा फासला तमाम किया ।

रखा जो मैंने
माँ का दिल
महबूब के नाजुक कदमों में,
दिल मेरा भी चाक हुआ
यूँ उसके खूनी खँजर से :-
“माँ ने तुझे
वो सब था दिया
जो भगवान
किसी को देता है,
तिस पर भी तू
उस देवी माँ
की लाश पे
चलके आया है...!
जा!
लौट जा तू
माँ के कातिल
यह महबूब नहीं
महबूब का साया है!
जो अपनी माँ का
हो न सका
वो मेरे लिए भी पराया है!
वो मेरे लिए भी पराया है!!”

Ph. 77422-49650

देवदासी विपन गिल्ल (पंजाब)

पावों में
घुंगरू बाँध मैं
नाचती हूँ,
मीरा की तरह ।
किसी श्राप के डर से
उठती है पीड़ा
मन में
पर मैं मीरा नहीं,
देवदासी हूँ
हे देव!
मैं तुम्हारे द्वार आई
एक भेंट हूँ
तुम्हारे दरबार पर चढ़ा
एक प्रसाद हूँ
तेरे भक्तों
और पुजारीयों के लिए
हूँ एक भोग की वस्तु ।
हे देव!
मैं तुम्हारी देवदासी
प्रतिदिन हो जाती हूँ
पवित्र
जैसे हर सुबह
तुम पावन होते हो,
दूध, दीपक और केसर से
सुगन्धित परीसर में
मेरी कलाई पर खुनवाई गई
तेरे नाम की मुहरछाप
मुझे दिलाती है याद
कि मैं तुम्हारी दास हूँ उम्र भर
तुम्हारी देवदासी ।

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<vipan.gill@yahoo o.com>

कहाँ हो माँ? वीरभद्र कार्कीढोली (सिक्किम)

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

दया, करुणा, प्रेम और
आत्मीयता से परे
इस उजाड़े बंजर मुल्क में
अकेला छोड़ कर मुझे
मेरे माँ! तुम कहाँ हो?
कहाँ हो तुम?

मेरा जनम, अपनी ही भूल नहीं
मेरा जीना,
पाप ६ अधर्म से जुड़ना भी नहीं
इस बंजर जमीन पर
इस मोड़ पर रुकवाकर
तुम कहाँ हो?
तुम कहाँ हो माँ! माँ! कहाँ हो?

उस शाम,
बहुत थकी हुई थी तुम
होंठ सूखे थे, सूखे
याद है, मुझे
तुम बेचौन थी, कलांत थी
उस हालत में भी तुम
मुस्कराना चाहती थी...

उस शाम
गरम हवाएं चल रही थीं
काफी दिनों से
आसमान पर जलता सूर्य!
पूरी तरह अस्त हो चुका था
उस शाम
आदमी! फकत आदमी को
तलाश रही थीं, तुम

कुछ ज्यादा ही याद कर रही थीं! तुम
अब वह शाम नहीं
मुझे तुम्हारी याद आती है. हद!
इस वक्त तुम, कहाँ हो, माँ?

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

पता नहीं
अब किस ऋतू को वसंत कहें?
किस ऋतू को मने श्रृंगार?
जीवन रू खिलती है, निकलती है
स्वतरु मरती है, मरती जब
माँ! तुम्हारी याद आती है.

तुम्हारा स्पर्श चाहता हूँ
तुम्हारी ईश्वरीय दुनिया में
जीने को जिंदगी!

कुछ अलग है मेरे
नहीं कहूँगा किसी से

कभी तो मेरी याद
आती होगी तुम्हे भी

इस स्थिति, अवस्था में
मेरा मन, अंतरात्मा, अंतरु करण
सिर्फ तुम्हारा ही स्मरण करता है
यह क्षण, यह पल, तुम कहाँ हो माँ?
तुम कहाँ हो?... तुम कहाँ हो? ...कहाँ हो?

ढbirbhadr777@gmail-com>

Nirmala's memories



Nirmala with Dev, 1973 & 1976



Dev, Raman, Kumar and Nirmala at Jhiri (Jammu) Mata Bua Daati Darbar (Early 1980s)



Kavita, Alice, Nirmala and Surinder Kaur (Jagdeep's mother) - 2011



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

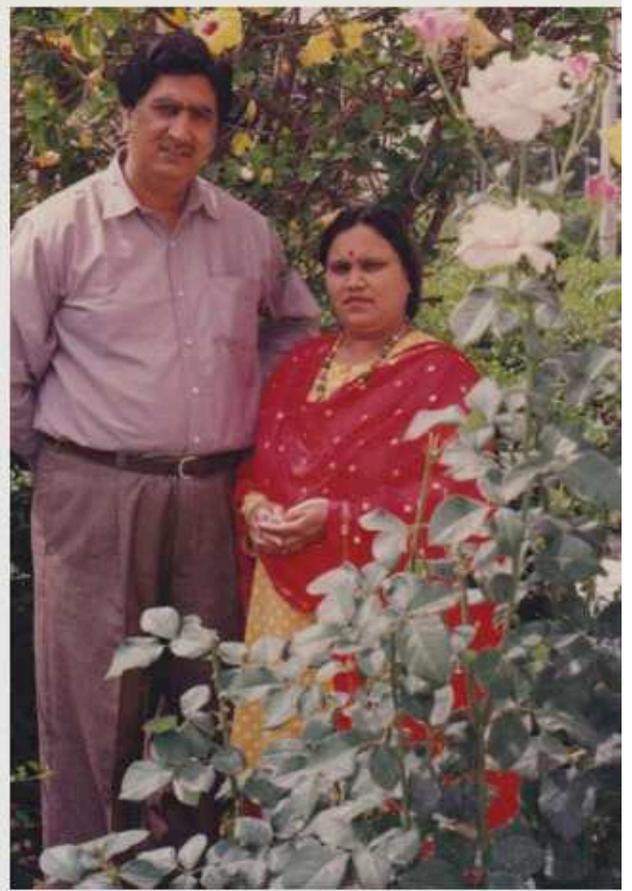


Jagdeep's parents - Paramjit Singh, Surinder Kaur with Nirmala and Dev (2001)



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

Nirmala's memories: Left to Rights clockwise (1) With Myra in 2016 (2) With Dev in early 1990s (3) With Dev and sister Margaret in 2016 (4) With niece Kavita in 2016



Nirmala's memories: Left to Right clockwise: (1) During a family function in 1997
(2) With Dev, Kumar & Ruby in 1997 (3) With Dev at Indore in 1994
(4) With Raman and Jagdeep in 2002 (5) With Dev at home garden in 1988
(6) With Dev, Raman & Jagdeep during Raman's wedding in 2001

