

Monthly Online Poetry and Prose

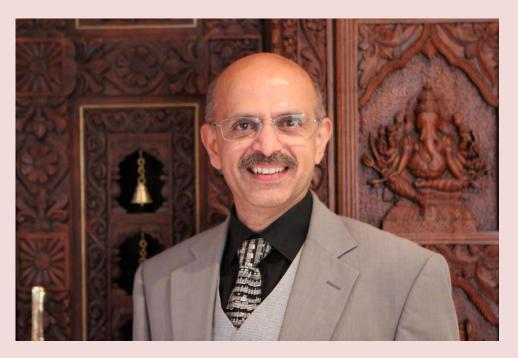
Magazine

May 2021



Edited and Published by Glory Sasikala

SHANKAR N KASHYAP



TITLE OF COVER PIC

SKI TRAIN

ARTIST PROFILE ART PERSPECTIVE

I am an orthopaedic surgeon with varied interests including writing and painting. I worked as an orthopaedic surgeon for nearly 40 years before retiring from the National Health Service as a Hip and Knee surgeon.

After over twenty-five years of research into ancient Indian history, I have published three books of the Harappa Series out of six. They are fictionalised accounts of bronze age India based on archaeological and literary evidence. I have used the Rigveda as the source of material, as I believe the Vedic scriptures are historical documents of our ancestors. I can visualise our Vedic ancestors populating the Harappan civilisation from around 9000 BCE till the demise of river Saraswathi in the middle of second millennium BCE. I was invited by the YouTube channel, Sangam Talks to give a lecture on Dasharajna

(<u>(17) RgVeda's Dasharajna Yuddh Bharat's First Itihaasa?</u>] Dr Shankar N Kashyap | #SangamTalks - YouTube

My first book was a contemporary novel based on true story dealing with medical fraternity within the UK – A Kangaroo Court. I have also published a thriller – The Retribution – based on a true story.

I have been writing poetry since childhood and the passion has been the result of two poetry books – Musings of a Romantic (a brief compendium of poetry) and Lady in Red. My next book, Ghazals (in English) is to be published soon.

I have been painting for a few years now with exhibitions both in the UK as well as in India. Mostly self-taught with some training at the local art school at Newcastle upon Tyne. I see poetry in art and try to portray realism of nature in my paintings. The images I see are like songs that I remember from my childhood and youth. I can see the fusion poetry and art in my writings.

I have been painting for a few years now. Studied art at school and took part in number of exhibitions while at school. Since then, I have been mostly self-taught with some training at the local art school at Newcastle. I have done some online courses – Diploma of Excellence from Old Master Academy, Drawing Certificate from Udemy, Painting certificate from Udemy. I took part in the Morpeth Art Gallery competition recently – Northumbrian Gathering and won the competition.

My interest is varying, mostly oils and in watercolours. Most of my work is on landscapes and still life. I have also had some experience with portraiture and abstract.

My paintings have been exhibited in Hues of Bliss National exhibition in Lucknow in India in 2019 and local exhibitions in Newcastle. My paintings have been sold in several charity auctions raising good money for local and national charities. I have recently taken some commissions for landscapes.

Website

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YouTube channel

Shankar Kashyap - YouTube

ABOUT GLOMAG

GloMag is the coming together of writers in their diverse manifestations, thoughts, and expressions, and the visual interpretation of these. Sometimes the original thought of the writer gets completely lost in the interpretations. Visual aids help us to decipher the writer's intentions, and at the same time, enhance the reading experience. Perhaps you are sitting in solitude beneath a bough, besides a lake, and you turn the pages. The thoughts capture you, time stands still, and you become engrossed, oblivious to anything but these beautiful writings, expressions, and pictures. Your soul dances in ecstasy, participates in a cosmic experience, it sways and chants. Somewhere someone is telling you about duality, someone tells you about a forlorn house without music, someone shows you how to love, and someone raises questions about existence itself.

And when you come to, the world is still there, the lake is still there, the birds are chirping, shadows have lengthened. Nothing feels the same! You are not the same! You get up reluctantly. It's time to go home.

~ Glory Sasikala

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HAAT IN PANDEMIC

Haat is open for seven to ten, sellers keep eyes on swollen sacks and buyers on empty bags. unaccustomed, parties find hard to keep hands at bay.

But warm boys in uniform appear at authorized hour,

'hurry, hurry, don't try to fool.'

cap on head, stick in hand, they stomp each shack and so they warn.

Sun-bathed lungis, sweat-sodden saris parti-coloured pyjamas gape, 'what we do with unsold herbs, fish and fruits?'

'Father, mother, sister, brother, be good and hail the laws of land. have you no eyes? have you no ears? don't you see floating carcasses in maa Ganga?' lanky boys whistle again and again.

haggard hawkers hurriedly act and put dreams back in sacks, and abuse the abundant sky.



Abu Siddik: I am a writer, residing in Berhampore, Murshidabad, India. I work as Assistant Professor. I have contributed to various e-journals and anthologies. I have also published six books. Website: www.abusiddik.com



KASHMIR

Kashmir is dead, in fecund. Death glen on an imperial scale. We watch the bodies swoop through the nebulous cloudover, screeching a few yowls before slumping to the ground. A grody echo reverberates across the hematic streets, before settling back into a wraithy lull. A deep ravine, sunless and sinister... a howling wind wallops, yells into a harrowing sky reducing probity to almost zilch. Envoys, a race of hunting canines, their tuxedo, and mien a kooky blend of rogues and fiends. While their sadism seems to keep pushing, and our brawl to be foolproof to it. They boot the corpse away with a stout slam, striking at his head. It all seems to not be over as quickly as it began, there can be no queries as to who are the troublemakers. They step over the corpse to delve into his bullet-ridden chest. I take it, knowing what has to be done. Tossing the death shortly over the back of my psyche, dripping heavily, an opaque cloak of the brutality of death tumbling across my naive flank. My eyes boohoo shoddily as I catch the formidable haze with the sword before me, chopping my head off, and leaving my family with the blades deep into their paunch to moan in galled phobia.

Charred and cracked besiege

Celibacy still aflame

Scorpions gnaw us



Adnan Shafi: I am a poet, writer, columnist, translator, Ghazal writer, motivational speaker, blogger, and reviewer from Tral Kashmir (J and K). I have contributed my poems to various reputed magazines and journals. I have also published my poetry book 'Tears fall in my heart'. In 2020, I was awarded by Gujurat Sahitya Academy for poetry. In 2021, I was awarded the Shakespeare medal for my literary merit, writing quality, uniqueness, and creativity. Furthermore, I have won the 2021 best achiever award in the field of English literature as the title, 'Best English Poet'.



FROM MY COFFIN

From the tiny hole in my coffin I see chairs filled with people I watch my drunk colleagues I hear their lies and their anger

From the tiny hole in my coffin I no longer feel discouraged or miserable from missing my life I don't feel like doing anything From the tiny hole in my coffin I want to write but, I feel numb I want to dream but, I can't sleep I want to pray but, my faith ended

From the tiny hole in my coffin I start crying from watching my father smoking and asking me to smoke with him, as my mother is sobbing, as if I shouldn't die before her.

From the tiny hole in my coffin I realized that my casket is built -by my son as my beloved put her wings to my coffin to be in the sky. My coffin doesn't talk back to me I choke my mother tongue in tears My coffin is the peaceful territory Baghdad & Montreal stabbed me.

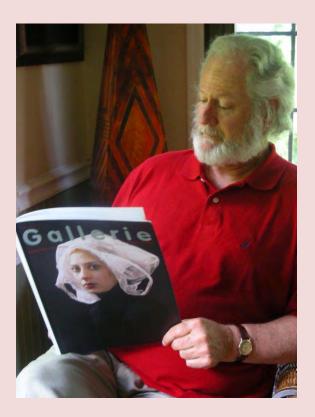


Ahmad Al-Khatat: Ahmad Al-Khatat was born in Baghdad, Iraq. His work has appeared in print and online journals globally and he has poems translated into several languages. He has been nominated for Best of the Net 2018. He is the author of The Bleeding Heart Poet, Love On The War's Frontline, Gas Chamber, Wounds from Iraq, Roofs of Dreams, The Grey Revolution, and Noemi & Lips of Sweetness. He lives in Montreal, Canada.



BULLET If you wash a bullet beneath the waterfall

of empathy, it'll never leave its chamber.



Alan Britt: He has been nominated for the 2021 International Janus Pannonius Prize awarded by the Hungarian Centre of PEN International for excellence in poetry from any part of the world. Previous nominated recipients include Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Charles Bernstein and Yves Bonnefoy. Alan was interviewed at The Library of Congress for The Poet and the Poem. He has published 18 books of poetry and served as Art Agent for the late great Ultra Violet while often reading poetry at her Chelsea, New York studio. A graduate of the Writing Seminars at Johns Hopkins University he currently teaches English/Creative Writing at Towson University.



MYSTICAL TOPAZ

A stone full of magic,

poetry and unexpected reflections.

At dawn, it discreetly steals the beauty of daylight,

illuminating the grayness with streaks of pale pink.

It has the freshness of the morning

and the innocence of a child's sleep.

At noon, it leads along a narrow path to the Garden of Eden —full of the richness of blue, lush green and the scent of red flowers with petals as passionate as the lips of a girl in love.

The stone sprinkles gold particles with each move. It sparkles like a happy laugh full of larks and it has the vigor of the droplets carried by the waters of the stream. In the evening, it takes on dark colors of melancholy.

Such jewels are the women – sorceresses, who constantly wander between the earth and heaven. They rise to the clouds to sing together with the angels and fall to the ground to sell their soul to the devil for a little love.



Alicja Maria Kuberska: She is an awarded Polish poetess, novelist, journalist, editor. She is a member of the Polish Writers Associations in Warsaw, Poland and IWA Bogdani, Albania as well as other organisations. She has received two medals-the Nosside UNESCO Competition in Italy (2015) and European Academy of Science Arts and Letters in France (2017). She has also received a reward of international literary competition in Italy, "Tra le parole e 'elfinito" (2018). She was announced a poet of the 2017 year by Soflay Literature Foundation (2018). She also received the Bolesław Prus Prize Poland (2019), Culture Poland (2019) and first prize Animator Premio Internazionale di Poesia Poseidonia- Paestrum Italy (2019).

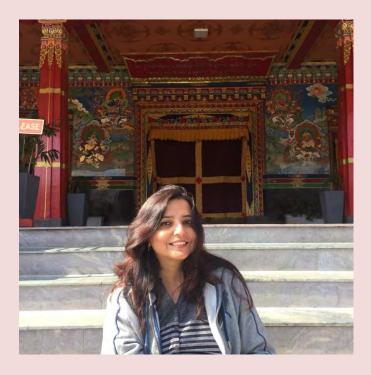


THE QUIET

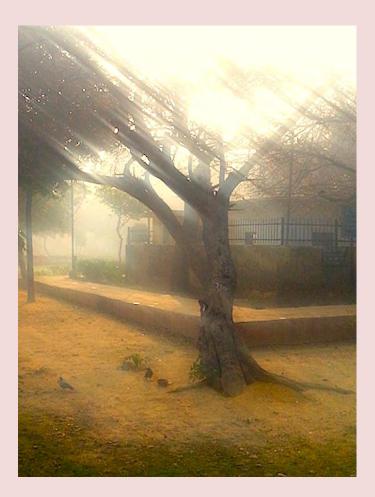
Inside the story where I live, it sometimes hushes up like it would in a place, stilled by the lack of pattering footsteps.

The stillness feels new, eerie, as if the story now is haunted. Forgotten are the humming voices of humans, mindful of their words. There is no palpable mark when stories weave slow, words disappear. Only the whiteness of the page seems blinding, before eyes slowly adjust.

And then one day, they come alivethose unseen words like a spark give out all I need to know of the story. Till then I let the quiet seep inside me.



Amanita Sen: Amanita has 2 collections of poems: 'Candle In My Dream' and 'What I Don't Tell You'. Her works have been published in numerous journals in India and abroad. She is a mental health professional and lives in Kolkata.



WHEN THE CHILD DANCES...!

Be not this or that – be astonished...petals at your feet.

Once wan Child dances engrossed in her body's

notes wild and happy - more joy intent

than I could know.

When we awake at dawn, we stand by window.

We look at Sun traipsing on treetops,

golden threads filtering into

Life as Child's eyes eager focused demand of me. When I am late for such light reprieve, Child's eyes accuse me of negligence –

Like we accuse Sun when grey-ed clouds Overhang heavy dripping of pathos. *I learn to be prompt punctual when she wishes to dance.* I relearn music of innocence scattered... Now it rises uncoiling from hiding heart of mine,

for all my tears held tight

like uncast pearls of life's sumptuous

eternal longing – Now quiet sad places are filled

with trilling joy of dance.

The Tao of truly freeing inner

moves as Child dances it. Sun squeezes darkness;

I swallow swirling balls of light.

My lithe body whirls through shadows

shedding ache in fascia and skin marked by Time.

Sparkling Child of glee now sees what her future can be.



Ambika Talwar: I am a poet/author residing in Los Angeles, USA. I work as English professor. I am published in various anthologies. I have also published a collection of poems and a poetic-spiritual travelogue. My creative expression lends dimension to my work as a spiritual-intuitive energy practitioner.



ACCURATE LOVE EXPRESSED THROUGH INACCURACIES

She used to write to me

with all sorts of inaccuracies-

misspellings, grammatical errors, etc.-

but with love quite accurate, pure.

Some souls writing with accuracies,

on the flip side, broke this heart.

And that with accuracies as well.



Aminool Islam: I am a poet residing in Bogra, Bangladesh. I work as an English language instructor. I have contributed to various anthologies. I am currently the sub-editor of a literary magazine named Neeharika.



WHERE HAVE ALL THE FLOWERS GONE

The valley reverberates a void displaced from blissful abundance wrecked in chequered history of time, the lushness of pristine beauty sighs a longing through uprooted birch bullet riddled cedar forests, whimpers in turbulent eddies of tripping rivers winding a way orchards of once blushful youth whither in spasms of disengagement the beauty of lakes, sprawling gardens kissing stupendous backdrops is rejuvenated on the artist's canvas a still frame adorned on concrete, or a backward scroll into recollection of cine shots from romances of yesteryears.

Bruised and bleeding in reckless multiple stabs the paradise disintegrates Inheritance of loss.



Amita Ray: Amita Ray is former associate professor in English and Vice Principal of a college residing in Kolkata, An academic of varied interests she is a Translator, Short Story writer and Poet. She has two volumes on Translations of noted Bengali authors to her credit. She is presently a translator in several ongoing projects. Her latest publication is a collection of short stories titled *TRAIL OF LOVE AND LONGINGS*. She has a passion for writing poems and has been widely published in various anthologies, journals and e-zines of national and international repute.



BACK HOME, GWALIOR

it's night here, late night

and i wander

sleepless

searching

coves

we missed talking

nights in gwalior

remain the same

the same dry wrath of

a stoney river

sweeping homes

hurts

and hustle of the

unsleeping dread

loving here

was even longer

the last time the fort slept

the sky slept

and the sun slept

loving you then

was far more

than just seeing you

loving was you

incisive of a seasonless day

gwalior stayed back

loving you are now years

hurtling past

passing railway

stations

on strange dawns

a violence of a night

wind

seems to ask sometimes

tell me

what would you say to me?



Amitabh Mitra: He is an Indian-born South African physician, poet and artist. He is one of the most widely published poets globally.



A SHAGGY DOG STORY

The wind knocked often on the door

Since no one else did

The house could sense its own impending fall

All those who missed it were gone

Only a strange ache remained

In the heart of the mulberry tree

Staring at its shady wavy reflection

In the leaf-filled waters of the little well

Especially when the berries ripened and fell

Like satiated purple caterpillars Waiting for innocent dimpled hands And juice- stained mouths of children Who were picking blueberries on a different continent The crow decided to sit down And tell the peeling wall a shaggy dog story About a pony-tailed priest And a horoscope wrapped in ominous red linen The eavesdropping squirrel suddenly turned tail And scuttled away to its leafy nest Where hungry babies waited Who did not know the meaning of passports Inspite of the scratching of rats' claws Like the lazy scrawl of an immigration officer's remarks At a western visa counter For coloured people One day There will be affirmative action

A grandson will come and build a new room During the elections The internal logic of life Reasserting itself Perhaps even as a flour mill Where the ants can eat their fill No questions asked The pumpkins having ripened On the decaying vine, ready to tumble



Amita Sarjit Ahluwalia: I am a retired civil servant but at heart a poet and teacher. I write, mostly poetry, in English, Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi. I was awarded the NISSIM International Poetry Award (First Prize) 2019 and then the Reuel International Award (First Prize) 2020 for Non-Fiction Prose by The Significant League, a well-known Creative Writing Group on Facebook. Recently, the Destiny International Community of Poets based out of Wakefield, England, UK declared me Winner of their Poet of the Year 2020 as well as Critic of the Year 2020 recognitions.



OPEN YOUR LIPS

1. Love

Open your lips and sing to me

Anna, mon amour

with the lips that are wounds in your hands

with your eyes

and your lips I adore

with the lips of your heart

and the lips of your thighs

the lips in your bust

and sternum

and cerebellum

the lips of your spine that hold me straight

and the ones that make me float

that of your love's helium

2. Open your lips and sing

my children

The world grows ever dark and

tomorrow

is a question

But sing, sing your way through

Till your heart is burning

with faith, hope and love

out of the darkness of the future

and know there is always light

at the end of the day of sunlight

still, of starlight and moonlight

3. The Sacred

Open your lips and sing

Jesus

I met you too on the road

to

my personal Damascus

like Paul

Meeting you has made me lonely

marked me

set me apart

in a world that does not want you

but your song

more beautiful than any other's

I had heard ever, by far

so far

made me easily turn my back on the world

give it up

So open your lips and sing to me

Jesus

for when you do

the things of the earth grow strangely dim

and even heaven's

made new.



Ampat Koshy: Dr. Koshy A.V. is presently working as an Assistant Professor in the English Department of Jazan University, Saudi Arabia. He has many books, degrees, diplomas, certificates, prizes, and awards to his credit and also, besides teaching, is an editor, anthology maker, poet, critic and writer of fiction. He runs an autism NPO with his wife, Anna Gabriel. Two of his co-authored books published in 2020 were Amazon best-sellers in India and USA, namely, Wine-kissed Poems with Jagari Mukherjee and Vodka by the Volga with Santosh Bakaya.



Raphael Nast (Unsplash)

LOVING YOU

I am pressing my fingers thin into my palms, My worth reduced to your reluctant alms Revolted, feeling it's better to let you know Hard it is, but I must let you go. And so, I am calm. I am so composed. To the bone. My secret terror, No one's business but my own.

I guard my lingering livid corpse, Singing sotto voice, a dirge at my own wake Smiling still, so limpid, brilliant, That you harshly whisper "Fake".

Yes! My smile gets put on easy. Silly me. Still so malleable. Like makeup, or sugar icing on a cake.

But No,

I don't wear love like lip gloss.

My loving isn't fake.



Amrita Valan: She is a writer from Bangalore, India and has a Master's degree in English Literature. She has worked in various professions, ranging from the hospitality industry, BPOs, and as content creator in deductive logic and reasoning in English. She is currently a stay-at-home mom to her two boys. Her work has been published in many anthologies and online journals. Arrivederci, her debut collection of fifty poems about arrivals, departures, farewells, hopes of reunion, love loss grief and recollection is out on Amazon as of 7 May 2021.



AUTUMN AFTERNOON

Same sky spreads itself

over us

Same roads go through

minds

And that ridiculous shelter

of a tree when sudden rains

came, poured incessant

splashes on us

We're drenched to the core

in that autumn afternoon

Do you still remember the tree, and the roadside on which it stood alone, in the grey afternoon?



Aneek Chatterjee: I am a poet and academic from Kolkata, India. I got published in reputed literary magazines and poetry anthologies across the globe. I authored 14 books including three poetry collections and a novel. My third poetry collection titled "of Ashes and Persiflage" (New Delhi and Kolkata, Hawakal) came out in November, 2020. I have a Ph.D. in International Relations, and have been teaching in leading Indian and foreign universities. I was a Fulbright – Nehru Visiting faculty at the University of Virginia, USA and a recipient of the prestigious ICCR Chair to teach abroad. My poetry has been archived at Yale University.



LOVE AND COMPASSION

She freely flows in my veins

Wrapping her arms around my soul

Keeping my heart afloat.

Our days are not planned by the bucket list

A random moment changes life instantaneously

All the plans, hopes and dreams

Suddenly frozen in time.

No announcements, no warning signs Life throws you the worst curveball Unexpected, unimaginable Your mind races, you question everything "I have so much to do, I have so much to live for".

The propensity to love outweighs life's challenges When all seems lost and hope a farfetched dream It's love and compassion that holds you closely Flooding your soul and caressing the heart Burning the midnight candle of hope.

If love and compassion were the Embodiment of humanity Life would be beautiful With perpetual peace and hope No matter the odds being slim You will fight with all you have Just one more sunrise, just one more smile Just a long walk with you, hand in hand.



Angela Chetty: I am a poet residing in Durban, South Africa. I work as a consultant. I have contributed to various anthologies and numerous journals. I have also published a poetry anthology. I have been honoured as a contemporary poet with the most heartfelt poems in 2019 and had two poems featured in the Top 100 poems for 2019.



MY LOVE

My love

White jasmines have bloomed

In the courtyard

Cool wind has started to flow

Slowly northward

My love

Fragrance of jasmine has begun

To float around

It has settled in my tired mind

Without a sound

My love

I am going to make a garland

Of white jasmine

Long one with a rose at the end

You have not seen

My love You will begin to love me and The slender string Of jasmine to lovelorn hearts Much joy bring

My love

It will swing across your back When you walk To your beauty menfolk will Watch in a shock

Seeking your love my heart Has become weak Gift of a garland of jasmine I Hope will do the trick



Anil Kumar Panda (alias Tiku): He is from Brajrajnagar, Odisha, India, and resides there currently. He works as a mine surveyor in coal mines. He writes short stories and poems whenever he gets time.



Pic clicked from a balcony of my apartment complex

THE ART OF POETRY

The freedom to take off from a moment's ledge into the big, boundless blue is poetry.

Unhurriedly at first, as if testing the wind's tenacity for the muse, and then brisker as the mind flaps its imaginings, soaring into its immense possibilities, poetry is to discern the detached being of what simply is, from the panoramic view of the scattered tumble of enterprise. Or to swoop in, to pick on its debris in an attempt to prick its decaying conscience.

Is it the freedom to flit from hunch to hunch or to be drawn by the sprawl of foliage to a single branch? Both, for thought is as fickle as the bird is. Who knows which claims which? Poetry is to nibble on its ripened metaphor and fly away with it or to drop it half-eaten for the universe to spin a world around it.

To cruise, to fly in formation or to splice the air with a sharp turn of the wings, poetry is the freedom to choose, in a sky teeming with expanse where no two feathers need collide.

It is the art of learning new manoeuvres without outmanoeuvring another, the heart to aid and brace a fledgling feather.

Poetry is quiet dissolution into the honeyed horizon, to fold spent wings into the sweet warmth of homecoming.

It is the gentle rise and fall of breath, having surrendered its song to the dawn that would wake up to read the music of the poet's flight.



Anju Kishore: A poet, editor and formerly a Cost Accountant, Anju Kishore's poems, some of them prizewinning, have been featured in numerous journals and anthologies. Her book of poems inspired by the civil war in Syria, *'…and I Stop to Listen'* earned her a glowing review in Kendriya Sahitya Akademi's English journal, *Indian Literature*. She has been part of the editorial teams of five anthologies with India Poetry Circle and Kavya-Adisakrit Publishing.



LIMBO

The darkness of your soul penetrates unknown depths of sin. The glory of your light rises above heights of love. In between we meet to consecrate our union, where no human has gone or returned from before. Echo of your laughter and the shadow of your touch reverberate throughout.

Steeped in the grayness

bound by dark and light,

we battle our frailties

as we struggle to connect.

*Published by Turkish Literature and Art, April 2019



Ann Christine Tabaka: I am a poet and writer residing in Delaware, USA. I am a retired organic chemist and a retired personal trainer. I have 10 poetry books and have been published in numerous magazines and journals worldwide. I was nominated for the 2017 Pushcart Prize in Poetry. I was the winner of Spillwords Press 2020 Publication of the Year (Poetic), and I have won poetry awards from individual publications.

*(a complete list of publications is available upon request)



SLOW BUT STEADY, WINS WITH RACE

To be fair

once a hare

was walking in a jungle

not in a crowd

but quite single,

as a matter of chance

and unintentional glance

he saw a tortoise

moving slow, looking wise

the hare mocked at him tortoise drank that whim but felt quite pinched and challenge for a race was clinched the Hare accepted that with smile but with inside wit and guile as expected the Hare went far ahead after covering more than half the distance the Hare got a sense of taking some rest that would be the best, he stopped and started eating the lush green took his beating having his food, he wanted to sleep near a shade he took his leap, As for Tortoise he constantly moved along and with time covered long despite his slow pace

and in this nosy race he overtook the sleeping Hare with beautiful resolve and care he reached the destination point singly not joint won the race when the Hare awoke he was all a shake because he was fairly late someone rightly said slow and steady wins the race



Ashish K Pathak: He is a middle school teacher posted in Munger district of Bihar province. He has got a letter of appreciation from the President of India for his poem. He has been conferred WUP gold cross medal for his writing in the world book 'Complexion-based Discrimination'. He is one of six persons selected for featuring in Marula World anthology. He is a regular contributor in Glomag.



BEFORE THE RAIN...

She came and sat by my side

The night was still and midnight owl hooted

She had a violin in her hands

Playing a tune of the crescent moon

The sky is overcast, maybe thunder cloud Maybe it will rain My dreams became alive with its melodies

Was it a cursed sleep?

My heart aches, my prayers not granted

A sandcastle ruined by the wind

Wake up, the voice said

The storm has come, thousands of drums sounded

The thunder roars in the summer sky...



Asoke Kumar Mitra: He studied at Hindu school and St. Xavier's College, Kolkata, and is a retired journalist and was editor of 'Calcutta Canvas' and 'Indus Chronicle'. He is a bilingual poet. He has contributed to various anthologies published in India and abroad. His poems are translated into various languages. 'Savage Wind' is his first poetry book, a bilingual edition, translated into Spanish by Mexican poet Josep Juarez. 'Song Of Pebbles' is his second bilingual poetry book, which is translated into French. Poetry, photography, paintings are his passions.



THE OLD COUPLE (PART ONE)

This is a bit how The Old Couple, talk -Sometimes, they talk to each other Whether the other is present or not -Absent presence makes the heart grow, If fonder is even possible

We won't grouch much about bone aches Or scars too delicate and sore to speak of. At least not in front of our frisking lambs, Who - when gleams in our eyes had All but fizzled out—

Make eyes sparkle again when

We see them do what we once did.

Our very own eyes see gawky fledglings Fly into, up, up and away into

Their Brave New World.

May they, somehow, get through it all. May these babes display two gifts Our hearts would pass onto them: The gut of iron, the heart of gold. May they not be fiddled with and fooled. May they, somehow, be brave and wise

And we'll be up and doing, you and I and Not slump on couches, Not let our necks crick, backs hoop, Eyes gawk at screens... No! We'll link with our...

Country Choirs,

Country Women's Associations,

Women's Shelters, Men's Sheds,

Sports Clubs, local pubs

Monthly Markets, the Annual Shows, and

What Community is left to link with

For the while,

We'll do Senior's Gym, Brain Gym.

Tend the grandkids, swim a bit...

We'll shop for ourselves

Do for ourselves without, heaven knows,

Surrender to the Carers.

Yes, Brave Hart, we'll soldier on,

You and I.

We'll stage a good show. Yes!

Not philosophise from the rocking chair.

Not eat, thrice a day,

Crotchetiness and gloom.

We'll re-name chores and crowds:

Informal gymnastics,

And memos to what's left of ourselves: To breathe and not to rage at The Unchangeable: Like the supermarket jostle, Like our co-juggle with the Unshapelinesses of shopping bags until They kind of obey and stuff into the car

So long as our legs can walk, We'll march with many or few to Expose -Not just by petitions or by Letters shot to Editors

Expose -

What the corrupt would hide,

While innocence is outraged or

People, people!

Sleep rough and starve.

In our last steps,

We'll celebrate this old land and

Not just the land Captain Cook landed on



Barry Pittard: I am a poet, lyricist and short story writer, living in the Hinterland of South East Queensland, Australia. I am a retired (refreshed!) teacher, and have also worked as an NGO among the socially marginalised. I have broadcast on social just and world music themes on community radio. In the theatre, I worked as an actor, director and writer. Presently, I am doing a personal dance sadhana, extensively using the superb music of Uma Mohan.



ACCIDENTAL MEETING

A day that started off, filled with joy and laughter, changed like the turn of the tide.

The impact, the anguish and pain, replaced the happiness of the flesh, with turmoil and anxiety.

When I looked through the window and saw his body flung like a stone through the air, all the plans that were in place were now a total waste.

There was panic instead of happiness.

There was anxiety instead of smiles.

I could feel the borderless emotion of concern rise up in me, like a fire being fed with wood.

I was concerned about his condition, his hurt, his wounds and his life and death.

My worry as big as the universe, I could not contain.

An unsettling feeling took control of me.

I was tossed into the unknown.

Motionless, quietly he lay there for a while, like someone who has surrendered his life to his fate, and suddenly! Like the flags of a ship starts flapping at the rise of the wind.

He rose to his feet like a valiant triumphantly at war.

There was movement, there was life there was hope.

I could breathe in the fresh air of relief and sanity.

When his motorbike collided with my car, like a wave that crashes against a huge boulder,

it brought all the arrangements we had made for the rest of the day to an abrupt standstill.

The day was spoiled, the festivities over.

The realization that an unknown future will always be a part of humanity infiltrated my soul.

To argue and fight against this fact will only cause unnecessary grief.

Rejecting it will be fruitless and in vain, it will be like walking around with a bucket filled with holes, trying to catch the rain.



Bevan Boggenpoel: He was born in Salt Lake, Port Elizabeth, South Africa. He attended Soutpan Primary and matriculated at Westville Secondary School. Boggenpoel completed a Baccalaureate in Education at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. He launched his debut Anthology 1 December 2016. The book was well received by the public and he sold 200 copies locally. He is also an author at a South African website known as Litnet (Literature Network in South Africa). His poetry is written in a South African context that covers different issues in daily life. In his writings he strives to tell a story or teach a lesson that will inspire and motivate. He is currently a teacher at Bethelsdorp Road Primary in the northern areas of Port Elizabeth.



I

Where was I?

I rose from null

And one day

Vanish into void

For a short period

I play

On this stage.

I pluck my words

From the trees

There are millions and millions

I choose a few only

To write here

And put my sign

Because when they will come

They will find me

In these letters

Because in these letters

I am and will always be

In my presence and absence

For generations from here

Because these words

Were there and will be there

In their absence and presence.



Bharati Nayak: I am a bilingual poet, critic and translator residing in Bhubaneswar, India. I work in the Government of Odisha. I have contributed to various national and international anthologies and e-books. I have also published three poetry books, two in English language and one in my mother tongue ODIA and worked as co-writer in two poetry Anthologies. I regularly write on on-line poetry site www.poemhunter.com where I am placed among the top 500 poets and offered the title 'Poetic Basil' for my contributions.



PICTURES AT FIVE

(for D. K.)

Kneeling on the floor, thumbing through

the albums around me, I see

the pictures: at five, on Santa's knee;

your first sailor's knot in Cub Scouts;

tuxedoed for a prom. Then

you joined a different promenade,

one of brown and tattoos. Now you bunk with eight others in Ramadi.

Yesterday, Christmas Eve, you called your mother and me.

That's when I heard of the insurgent who came at you, pistol bared, shooting, and you, with your M16 "not readily available," grabbed your knife to spare your life. These are not the times I wanted for my son, so I went back to these old shots and remembered those days

to avoid the images I now endure until, God willing, May.



Bill Cushing: Bill resides in Glendale, California with his wife and their son. He recently retired after more than 20 years teaching in Los Angeles area colleges. Bill's work has been journals, in anthologies, literary magazines, and newspapers. He facilitates a writing workshop for 9 Bridges Writers Community and performs with a musician on a project called "Notes and Letters." His poetry collection, A Former Life, was released in 2019 and was recently honored with a Kops-Featherling International Book Award. His chapbook Music Speaks won the 2019 San Gabriel Valley Poetry Festival Award and recently medaled in the 2021 New York City Book Awards.



Stumbling over the stairs

File slipping from my hand

My shawl sweeping the office floor

I stoop to collect the scattered papers

To place them in the file haphazardly

amidst an air of melancholy.

The bold letters of my mom's name

on the file cover

smile, exuding a certain warmth, enough to break a composed mein,

for tears waiting to gush out .

And for a moment oblivious to the surrounding

I let it flow

And trickle on the file cover,

As if paying their homage.

If only, I was endowed

with the power to bargain with God,

The legacy and all that I own,

Or would own in my life time,

I would relinquish to get you back next to me,

holding your warm hands

instead of this cold file,

that bestows me your legacy.

What good is this marble, gold or granite,

bereft of your angelic smile.

Oh how I wish I could have held you a little longer

Before you transcended to the blue yonder.



Bilquis Fatima: She is an innate lover of nature and speaker for social issues, has allowed her feelings to be expressed as short writes and speeches from her college time. Although being a post-graduate in Chemistry, she has also mastered the skills of poetry appreciation and writing. Her poems reflecting the situations that are prevalent in the society, have been appreciated in some groups of poets and writers lately.



JAJPUR ROAD, MY HOMETOWN

Jajpur Road is my hometown,

As I see it daily, it looks me black and brown

But one day, when I was passing by,

Through a road exterior, from afar it looked,

As if, it wore a colorful crown

Its sky looked amazingly blued The meadows all greenly hued, Dazzling whiteness, some edifices did exude

Sometimes when I go abroad, on job or on a tour, Staying back long, I bitterly brood, To come back, I panic, in desperate mood

The silent serene suburb that surrounds it, The fading mountains where the horizons meet All linger in my mind, day and night

Its crowded lanes where I jostle my way The street temple where in the evenings I pray, All rush into my mind, do dance and play Things seem distasteful coming closer,

The sweetness of which is felt, moving farther



Bishnu Charan Parida: I am Bishnu Charan Parida from Jajpur Road, Odisha. Professionally an engineer, I love life, people, relationships, and of course, poetry. I write both in Odia, my mother tongue, and English. I have got my articles and poems published worldwide in anthologies and magazines of repute.



MIRAGE

in the secret corner of my mind there is Arab sand with some date palm trees and a little away a vast ocean where the mermaids sing through the island caves where the pirates had hoped to return but could not make it

where lost in the desert heat I just step inside the mirage to see the dry sand getting wet under my feet and the weird scorpions getting transformed into coconut crabs where day and night chase each other in a whirlwind or a whirlpool where I sail like a Polynesian sailor through the surreal pathways of sand, water and twinkling stars

there I feel real fear and real time hunger and thirst and see the bond of my stiffened muscle with my disoriented dreams and the true nightmares of my consciousness.



Bishnupada Ray: He is an Associate Professor of English at the University of North Bengal. His poems have appeared in various journals and anthologies. He can be contacted at bishnuray@gmail.com.



Pic by Mike Hurry

SEA'S ON FIRE

the evening sunset

from the beach bar

shimmering orange glow

a skipping jet ski

disturbs the silence

pretty girls passing by

laugh as they go

the chang does its work I'm reaching my high and the sea's on fire burning the sky

a tall African man selling sunglasses got mine so I tell him no my glass is empty I call to the barman and order some more but service is slow one of the bar girls

she makes a hit

a desperate old German

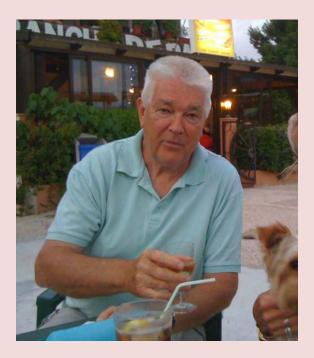
smiles at his luck

this beautiful place

I want to stay forever

but it's only a plan

the chang does its work I'm reaching my high and the sea's on fire burning the sky



Brian Mackenzie: I was born in Inverness in 1949 and have lived there until 1969. Since then I lived in Lond and Saudi Arabia. I have worked most of my life in the Airline Industry which enabled me to travel the world quite easily and cheaply. I am now retired and have lived in Spain for the last ten years. I only started writing since I retired in 2009 and it is only in the last few years I started writing songs and poems and I suppose have become quite prolific. I selfpublished 6 books and 1 book by a publisher, the second soon to be released.



LET ME TAKE A FEW MOMENTS OF YOUR TIME

a villanelle poem

Let me take a few moments of your time

and hold you dear by the arm-

together we can etch memories sublime.

Truly but the colors of life prime

are from each other when we feel warm-

let me take a few moments of your time.

Beautiful is life like the poems that rhyme when slips rat race from the grips of our palm together we can etch memories sublime.

What for are you if alone to watch I'm the waltz of the waves with the wind calm let me take a few moments of your time.

Vibratos from green, guitar leaves' chime in harmony invigorate, invite us with charm together we can etch memories sublime.

Symmetry from asymmetry yet a paradigm of reassurance be our bond soothing as balm let me take a few moments of your time together we can etch memories sublime.



Brindha Vinodh: She is a postgraduate in Econometrics but a writer within. She has contributed to several anthologies and has been a featured poet in 'year of the poet' by InnerChildPress international', USA, and her roseate sonnet selected as one of the best poems of 2020 by the same team.



WAITING OUT DARKNESS

(1)

The sky is sorrowed

When it is overcast

And no drizzling for long

Over the thirsty earth.

(2)

Something struggled hard

Thunder crashed in the sky

And the flash of lightning

Waiting eyes look up the sky.

(3)

At length piercing the dark clouds

A tiny beam comes out

As the harbinger of sunshine

Lo, the rainbow appears on the horizon.

(4)

A word of hope and friendly warmth

Succors a soul in despair

And can elevate his spirits

To sail again on choppy waters.

(5)

As a charismatic healer

Comes the word charged with love

Many flowers fade in this world

For want of this small word.

(6)

Nothing costs

Words kind and compassionate

They do wonders for morale

If you smear on others' wounds.



B.S.Tyagi: He comes from India. He writes in both Hindi and English. He has several books- fiction and non-fiction to his credit. been included His poems have in several anthologies. He writes short stories which regularly appear in national and international literary magazines. His writeups and poems have appeared in national and international magazines. Besides, he has translated four books of poems. He shies away from public celebrations and prizes. Inner bliss he is showered upon through creativity is the greatest prize.



your enemy

could be within family

community

these days

money is sought after

people want you to die

so that they can live

today water is thicker than blood

and blood is mixed with water

oh what a cocktail



Chandramohan Naidu: He is a retired bank employee, now a freelance writer and photographer based in Chennai, part of the poetry circle which meets first Wednesday of every month. He writes poems to be subsequently brought out into a collection.



THE EYES OF JOHN IV LASCARIS

His eyes were green, I remember clearly Their sadness. His father was dead and I Wanted his throne. Oh they loved him dearly John's subjects, a fine boy I shall not lie. We were crowned together at first, I had The army on my side, thin string of pearls Lay on his head, in proper purple clad

But all knew who was ruler. Those dark curls That women loved, that manly cast of look I could not let grow up. I was resolved Not to kill entirely, such measures took So that this little threat would be dissolved. Blinded. I had those little eyes put out Now he could never see me take his throne. He's still alive, a monk. Somehow I doubt I'm happier than him, what can atone For my crime? I regained New Rome, have taken Back Byzantine pride but they judge me My subjects shudder, the church forsaken Shall even a decent grave begrudge me. I should not have done it my death bed sighs No Empire is worth a poor child's green eyes.



Christopher Villiers: I am a poet residing in Braunton, England. I work as a writer. I have contributed to various anthologies and have also published three volumes of poetry.



CLOUDS...MEMORIES

April's cool spring rains wash away the last dead leaves of winter's passing

turn the brown grass green

let new leaves feel the sunlight

let me forget you

summer's found its way

the sun boils the clouds away

they always come back



Dale Adams: I am a poet and musician residing in Oklahoma, USA. I work in an auto dealership. I have been writing poems and composing songs since 2011. I have my own SoundCloud Channel where many of my songs and poems can be heard. I have converted other poets work into songs for them. My work has appeared in several anthologies.



Isabel Gómez de Diego's Pic

AGAIN FIVE HAIKUS

Going back to Earthi

Kids pretty much on their own.

The space herei

We laugh at first too. Gioia with opened Wood Flashing the light thru. ****

Land is our "Guru" In love with Sky and Earth. Our seeds grew and died. ***** Poets and Writers

Prose correspondence

Workings in Poetry.

What instincts am I?

Is it to being Human

Being a Cannibal?



Daniel de Culla: I am a Daniel de Culla, poet, writer, etc., residing in Burgos, Spain. I am retired. I have also published poetry, anthologies more than seventy.

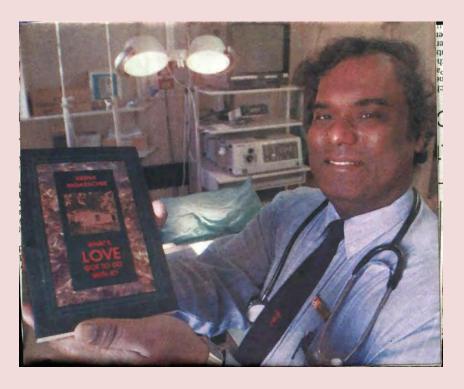


LOVE

In one glance you will know how I feel.

In one smile my soul will speak to you.

In my eyes will dance the sparkle and the ecstasy of your life.



Deena Padayachee: He is a South African Author and Poet, residing in Durban. He works as a primary care physician. His writing has been included in various international and South African anthologies including the Readers' Digest's BEST SOUTH AFRICAN SHORT STORIES. Three of his books have been published. The English academy of Southern Africa awarded the author the Olive Schreiner prize for prose; The Congress of South African Writers has awarded the doctor the Nadine Gordimer prize for prose.



On my last horizon When I must have to stand To cross to the other Universe Stand with me beloved When I pass through The channel of consciousness To the unconscious and beyond Hold my hands beloved For you are the only one Who's there with me At any time, all the time

To make me strong

The world you built for me beloved

Was always going to end

For there's no escape

From crossing to the other Universe

So, stand with me my beloved

On my last horizon

Stand with me



Dipankar Sarkar: I am only a part-time poet residing in Kolkata, India. I work as the Chief Executive Officer of Mongia Green Foundation. Poetry is the only soulmate I have. I find solace in poetry when my heart bleeds. Poetry comes to me completely unannounced, without a notice. I wake up sometimes, out of an altered reality or out of a daydream, and voila, words just start flowing out of nowhere and completely inundate me, forcing me to live an experience of writing.



MY NAME IS JOE SHAFFERS

District Six Blues – Each windswept moonlit night, I hear the poignant echoes from the D6 Musical, "When the South-Easter blows, we will remember wherever we go, District Six!" Proudly born in Bloemhof Flats Block C n° 133 with my dear twin brother, James lasting only a few more months survived by five brothers a sister and the dearest of parents. My life blessed with unconditional love camaraderie and lasting friendships. Parents guiding our path even gangsters had a heart! Nourishing my eventual existential career as Health Inspector. No fears only tears for social neglect the bitter sting of a doomed divisive apartheid regime darkening our mentalities our realities – Our sanity preserved in the love of music my moment of entertaining – *Sounds of Change* – My crooning debut at the entrance of Bloemhof finding my voice on receptive stages joining a band, let by master saxophonist Willie Jales how about that? Even got my own group 'Rendezvous'. Sadly these golden moments destroyed by

Apartheid machines. It happened one sunny morning – Machines advancing trampling deleting our lives our cream screams! Forcibly removed to the sandy flea-infested barren Cape Flats. Our hearts punctured generations affected still neglected – 1976 to 1985 turbulent working in the Cape Flats amidst swirling ash the revolutionary clash no rest from unrest but my association with communities preventing destruction of clinics resulting in my Service Excellence Award – I was even at the Gugulethu 7 killing but turned away by gunpoint yet history would mention me!

Appointed Guide at the District 6 Museum nominated for an Honorary Doctorate by Edinburgh University. Dankie



Don Beukes: He is a South African and British writer. He is the author of 'The Salamander Chronicles', 'Icarus Rising-Volume 1' (ABP), an ekphrastic collection and 'Sic Transit Gloria Mundi' (Concrete Mist Press). His poetry has been anthologized in numerous collections and translated into Afrikaans, Persian, French, Kreole (Mauritius) and Albanian. He was nominated by Roxana Nastase, editor of Scarlet Leaf Review for the 'Best of the Net' in 2017 as well as the Pushcart Poetry Prize (USA) in 2016. He was published in his first SA Anthology 'In Pursuit of Poetic Perfection' in 2018 and his second 'Cape Sounds' in 2019 (Gavin Joachims Publishing Cape Town). He is also an amateur photographer and his debut Photographic publication appeared in Spirit Fire Review in June 2019.

Kenneth Alexander: He is a visual artist who uses various media on canvas, wood or chipboard. In addition, he often uses mixed media - e.g., twigs, cardboard, empty tins, etc. to create a 3D effect. He comes from a typical South African diverse historical background which encompasses an eclectic array of cultures, beliefs, and experiences.



OPPOSING OCTAINES: A DIPTYCH

And thus have we survived Time's constriction: Our birthright has yielded to castration, imagination consigned to fiction, the possible straitened since Creation. Our regular Sunday crucifixions, augmented by dances and cremations, reduced by constraints and interdictions to meaningless recreations. My universe expanding

from a drop of hydrogen.

My world blessed by dawns and springs,

rainbowed by imaginings.

Any tomorrow has wings.

This is why I laugh and sing:

Ending joins with beginning,

every closure with an in.



Duane Vorhees: He grew up in rural Ohio, fell in love, went to school, fell in love, stuck his toe on bits of four continents, fell in love, taught and learned various subjects, fell in love, grew chronologically and physically. Fell in love, fell in love fell in love. 'Love's Autobiography' is the first part of a longer meditation, 'The Many Loves of Duane Vorhees'. It is based on a lifetime of observation, imagination, introspection, experience, and fantasy.



WHEN THE MOON RISES IN YOUR POEM

When the Moon rises in your poem The Lily of my mind blooms When the Sun rises in your poem The darkness of my soul is gone When your poem sings of religion Quietism kills my earthly passion & The bond of my worldly illusion and fascination is lost When the dulcet of worldly life appears in your poem My soul searches for a divine, pure and sacred relation

When the life philosophy of the whole world is found in your poem

My diffidence is lost and I get the knowledge of the soul leaving the earthly epicurism

When you compose the glorious tale of our past

I remember the tales, my grandfather and great grandfather told me during my childhood.

When the voice of nationalism is versified in your poem.

I take an oath to sacrifice my life for my motherland

When day breaks in your poem

The flowers of my soul blossom

Innumerable birds sing morning songs and I bow my head before God.

When I listen the sound of the bell and conch of the evening in your poem.

My soul is overjoyed with spiritual essence, listening to the deeds of the Supreme Soul.

Let your pen run forever

In composing poems and contributing to the world Literature

Let your name be immortalized and found in golden letters in the heart of the world Literature.



Dusmanta Choudhury: He is a poet residing in Jeypore, in the district of Koraput, Odisha, India. He a Lecturer in English in Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Jr. College, Lamtaput in Koraput district in the Department of Higher Education Government of Odisha. He has contributed to various anthologies. He has recently got the Honour of Pentasi B World Featured Poet 2020 Honour. He is also a member of the Pentasi B world Friendship Poetry, The Tunisian Asian Poetry, The Poetry Society, The World Nation's Writers Union, The Love, The Global Literary Society, The Namaste ink an Author's Manifesto, etc. He has also published many Odia and English poems.



NORMALITY

Translated by Artur Komoter

We become indifferent

to the human next to us.

We do not notice

that someone

only pretends to be strong.

With pockets full of

unfinished business,

desires and uncertainties,

maybe we also often

wear masks?

With hope we expect

that we will not be alone,

we look out for

I normality

in abnormality.



Eliza Segiet: I am a poet, playwright, residing in Tomaszow Maz, Poland. I work as a philosopher. I have contributed to various anthologies. I have also published (drama, poetry anthologies - 12). My poems Questions and Sea of Mists won the title of the International Publication of the Year 2017 and 2018 in Spillwords Press. I have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize 2019. I have been nominated for the Soman Global Awards. I have won the Laureate Naji Naaman Literary Prize 2020. I have won the Laureate International Award Paragon of Hope (2020). My works can be found in anthologies and literary magazines worldwide.



TO BE A PRIEST

Adorn in the fresh rush of existence.

The course twists with abundant stones.

An abrupt halt.

A sign argues,

to be a priest or a gangster.

In fever, life determined.

Neither can adequately serve.

Peyote drifts with the poet.



Ferris E Jones: He writes poetry and screenplays from his residence in Puyallup, Washington. His work has been published in Se La Vie Writers Journal, Write on Magazine, Outlaw Poetry, Degenerate Literature 17, Tuck Magazine, The Literary Hatchet, Warriors with Wings and other literary periodicals. He is the recipient of two Grants from the Nevada Arts Council and published several collections of poetry, including To Burning Man, Oh the Path that Followed and As the Toad Sleeps. You can learn more about Ferris E. Jones by visiting www.inquisitionpoetry.com where each month he features the work of other poets.



Pic by Gauri Dixit

the parijat flower bleeds on the sidewalk

few drops make their way to the house stuck to my bare feet

I let them be

after all the floor is but an extension of the sidewalk

the bus that the dusk got on has arrived early the afternoon sports an evening sky putting to sleep all my dreams (to fly)

with extra ice cubes in my drink the air has a familiar chill there's no flame the paneer wastes away on the cold grill the poetry has lost her voice leaving an unhappy quill words are silent, thoughts are dead the lazy music is still



Gauri Dixit: When not busy working in her office, she is busy being a traveller, climbing mountains, walking on untrodden paths, capturing the voice of a solitary flower blossoming from a rock or the bird sitting on a hanging branch, sometimes the setting sun or the sea in her camera as well as in the words she weaves. Her poems speak in a voice which is unique, cold and direct. That she has been a part of many anthologies as well as a Reuel Prize awardee and had commendable mention at Destiny's Poet is incidental. In her first book, 'In My Skin, I Find Freedom', there are poems on varied subjects, yet there is a common thread of a skeptical questioning mind of a free woman.



DEATH CHOOSES ALL

A solo performance at the denouement After a combat with the fear of life The ultimate destination it is But few are willing to reach It is the only thing we all have in common Fair, equal and inevitable to all mortals Not power not stature not beauty Death is not impressed by any It knows no discrimination Between the wealthy and the impoverished, Between the theist and the sceptic No one has ever escaped death Encounters with a deadly virus Have unfurled so many untold truths...



Gayatree G. Lahon: Gayatree is a teacher and a poet from Assam. She did her Master's in English literature from Gauhati University. Being an aesthete, she finds beauty in every object of life and Nature and her poems express these elements in a subtle way. For her, poetry is a celebration of life in its myriad shades. Her poems have been published in newspapers, e-zines and many national and international anthologies.



A quiet pond sits lonely in the sun There is no one to throw stones Or disturb her The dry bushes and trees stand still A tiny twig, from a fallen tree, Sticks out from the water A little bird perched there Just flew away into the bushes She returns, sits on a dry branch, Moves her tail, tilts her head What is she thinking?! The bright afternoon sun Scorches my skin as I watch, In silence, the little world go by.



Geeta Varma: She is a poet based in Chennai, India. She has contributed to numerous anthologies. She has also published two books. She has been a teacher for thirty years and a freelance journalist. She is now an Educational Consultant and writes for Deccan Herald. She enjoys working with children and has conducted many creative workshops. Her interests include music, reading, writing (poems and stories for children) and travelling.



CHAINS

Chains of unpredictability grip swings of time,

Oscillating with an eerie creaking echo,

That breaks the silence of habitations whose portals bang shut,

The quiet is far from tranquil and it invites wheels of civilisation,

To crush its deathly silence to reassure itself that life is still on the move, Stray dogs bay at unseen spirits that feast on humanity,

As the summer sun glimpses through the smog of a sigh that releases in anxiety,

Earth is in grips of a gravity bogging its swirl, inching its way,

In orbits of remorse that fly as meteor dust carrying grim tidings,

Flowers have nothing to say except to blossom truthfully.

Night falls guarding the new moon soon to smile with the sun,

As an optimistic soul strings words of hope in incantations to unlink those chains,

Veering destiny that hangs in mid-air dangling in ghost towns,

Fighting to breathe, battling to live,

Gods have nothing to say for they are engrossed in scripts,

That reverb in enunciations of poetic justice,

As mocking birds whistle away in hedges to build their nests,

They know of bare trees that eventually rejuvenate with tender fronds,

As forests wait in the tenebrous silence,

And window sills heave with warm winds warding away messengers of the nether worlds.



Geethanjali Dilip: Geethanjali takes her name seriously and evolves as a handful of songs. A French teacher by profession she contributes to several ezines and blogs. She is a recipient of The Reuel International award for Poetry 2017 and also the meritorious award for commendable mention in Great Indian Poetry Contest 2018. Residing at Salem, India, Geeth believes that poetry connects and moves the world.



LIFE AND LEMONS

Lemon-colored negligee, hair tousled don't care that my window is open the street outside empty, quarantined and anxiously scanning oximeters measuring each breath while regrets pile up.

Pour myself a glass of warm water with lemon and honey - just so, the lemon let Sunlight in...and Air... Can Covid fly in too with lemon Sunlight?

Neighbor's doors strung Neem leaves guarantee

purity with lemon Sunlight that might be closing in on Doomsday

that is not because of Big Bang but because the Human Race has lost the ability to breathe and talk of the Second Coming of Jesus now

they of the Making who World Wared I & II

whole cities shot down and Twin Towers bombed.

And I, in my lemon-colored negligee

sit idly sipping tea wondering when I'd be able to travel again? -

Not travel per se but the option to

meanwhile choose and choice being between Swiggy and Zomato while watching Netflix.



Glory Sasikala: She is a writer, poet and publisher from Chennai, Tamilnadu, India. She is the Editor and Publisher of GloMag, the international monthly online poetry and prose magazine, and is administrator of the group of the same name on Facebook. She is the creator of 'The Chennai Ladies' series of E-books and books on Amazon.com.



SECLUSION

Everything is quiet and desolate, some grey clouds are sharing stories.

Not everyone is home bound,

not all are stirred and shaken.

The easterly wind forgets home address,

histories are in play, cleansing those old arguments.

Leafless branches sketching the spider web in black and white canvas.

Lights are breaking out and burn memories swirl, moves with spillages like shadow,

You are here yet far beyond,

are you life, or death?

Solitude is whistling in silence,

real and more real under another sky.



Gopal Lahiri: I am a bilingual poet, writer, critic and translator residing in Kolkata. I have contributed to various anthologies and have also published ten volumes of poetry in English and eight volumes in Bengali. In addition, I have also jointly edited two anthologies of poems in English and also have one translation work of short stories of Israel, translated by me from English to Bengali. I have also edited a book on selected songs of Tagore translated in English and one anthology on poetic tribute to Jallianwalabagh Massacre. Two recently published books of mine; 'Alleys are filled with Future Alphabets' and 'From Prinsep Ghat to Peer Panjal' (joint e-book).



MY RIPPED JEANS

Once many moons ago

I had a blue jeans,

A jeans which always smiled at me.

A jeans with perfect shade,

For years I wore it, adored it.

One day I found it ripped.

Ripped on the knees.

Ah! I loved it.

It was irreplaceable.

But at last I bought a substitute.

A new one.

Old one was tough to throw away.

Through the window I peeped.

And saw a child.

A homeless child in shredded pants.

In rains, looking for a shelter.

Under a pushcart he was hiding.

Playing hide and seek with the drops of rain.

I went out with a jacket and a jeans,

Called him out.

Gifted him the jacket and my favourite ripped jeans.

Child who smiled with utmost delight.

Oceans of desires were teeming down his soft cheeks.

And cheerfully he left.

Next sunny morning

I saw him,

Running and playing and enjoying and

basking in under the shimmering rays of sun.

On the seventh sky he was dancing.



He was wearing my ripped jeans.

Imran Yousuf: Imran Yousuf is a Poet/Writer/Columnist/ Translator from Kashmir, India. Currently working as Columnist and Journalist, he has contributed his poems to various reputed magazines, journals and international anthologies. He has co-authored more than 10 anthologies and has also written a series of articles, about the great Sufi Poets of the Kashmir Valley (starting from 14th century), which were published across various newspapers and magazines and now being compiled into a book (to be launched soon). He is presently engaged in interviewing the current generation of great poets from the Kashmir valley. The articles will also be compiled and given the shape of a book.



EMPATHY

Not just sympathy and pity,

But compassion, Empathy

Towards others is

Very important.

Empathy can be

Positive or negative—

Depending on Giver, receiver.

Empathy should be— For sharing joy, happiness Or sorrow, pain.

Too much Empathy, Not good for giver or receiver. Should be optimum.

Empathy should be for Positive purpose, experience. Not negative—To exploit And manipulate others.

Empathize only,

For whom, it's a necessity.

Otherwise, it is

Misplaced empathy.

Be a compassionate, good Listener. But do not absorb Too much—To avoid Toxic empathy.

Empathy is a rare quality

Nowadays in

Personal or professional life-

Much needed Leadership quality.



Jagadish Prasad: I am writer residing in Chennai, Tamilnadu, India. HR Media am and an consultant/Resource Person and also a partner in an HR/Talent Resources consultancy company. have contributed poems to the annual magazine of Chennai poets circle, Chennai. I have also contributed prose and poetry to the in-house magazine of IOB (lobian).



MOVING FORWARD

This is one thing

One power

That is the most important

No matter what happens

Life moves

Likewise, you have to

Keep moving forward

With all that has happened

Good or bad;

Mustering courage

And keeping faith,

When you flow

With life

Then only you would be able to

Stay in the present

And enjoy the essence of life

Experiencing its surreal effects

Which will make you

Realise the moments

That existed so far

Had their own meaning!



Jayant Singhal: I am a writer residing in Delhi, India. I am an Economics graduate. I have contributed to various anthologies in the past.



MAY

A single drop of rain

on the windowsill

is an apple blossom.

Delicate splash

clinging to the glass...

as cool, as bright,

a perfectly formed

rare opal. I wish

to wear it around

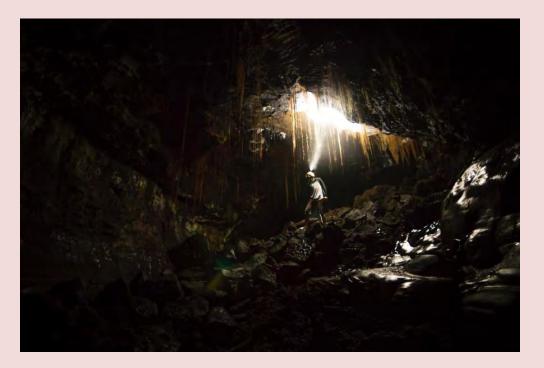
my neck.

In an instant, it

drops silently.



Joan McNerney: Joan McNerney's poetry has been included in numerous literary publications. She has four Best of the Net nominations. Her latest titles are <u>The Muse</u> <u>in Miniature</u> and <u>Love Poems for Michael</u> both available on Amazon.com and Cyberwit.net.



CAVE DWELLER

breathe slow Maharaji your root is deep within the merciless earth where graves are waiting to be dug where prayer is lifted without candle, without flicker oxygen, the currency where instinct functions uncontrolled in the absence of light

where lies are conceived

where hope flies into the coal black wall

suffocating

with the memory of you

as a child

lurks rest

from the panic of fear

from the intent to breach

the inevitable

predatory

peace



Joe Kidd: He is a multi-award-winning songwriter, speech writer, music/film critic, and ordained minister, inducted into Michigan Rock & Roll Hall of Fame 2017, recipient of Michigan Governor's and US House of Representatives certificates for work promoting Peace, Social Justice, Cultural Diversity. He lives in Detroit Michigan USA with partner, author/vocalist Sheila Burke. He has a CD titled *Everybody Has A Purpose* 2015, a book of poetry titled *The Invisible Waterhole* 2020. His works appear in benefit recordings, Music For Japan, and Songs For Standing Rock, many poetry journals. He was on tour throughout North America and Western Europe.

https://www.amazon.com/Joe-Kidd/e/B089QYDXSM

https://joekiddandsheilaburke.com/



ON AND ON

I have invited sleep

to celebrate my wakefulness, deep;

sleep came slept with my dream,

my awakening drifted away

in a void stream.

Reflections of the far city lights

sparkle on the flowing river

of the illusive night,

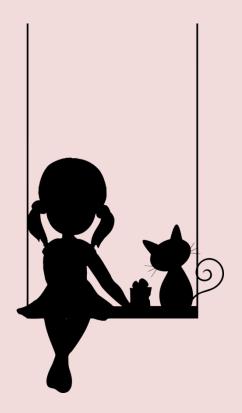
as flakes of hope shimmer in the dark depth of intense fright.

The distorted gleam of passing car lights on a pool of rain water, in splurges, scatter under the speeding wheels; the constant rhythmic pulse of the impatient wipers draw glimmering images of hazy and glinting whispers on the canvas of the windscreens.

A longing homebound, throbs captive for a peaceful sleep in bed-spread darkness, moon slowly melting on sofa; mysterious solitude soaking in waving familiar curtains, crippled senses seeking another life. Distress of anxious time drift and float like ignored corpses for the assurance of heavenly chime.



Kakoli Ghosh: She is a poet/short story writer from Durgapur, West Bengal, India. She wears many hats—a freelance writer, painter, beauty advisor and jewellery designer and has a keen interest in music and art in general. Apart from contributing to various anthologies, she has also published a poetry book.



SWEETY'S CHILD

At one point in time,

My mom disowned me;

Quite out of spite (mock!)

She would say, she was glad,

That she didn't have to bother about me anymore:

I was being watched over and followed around by another;

The slightest sound from me, brought her rushing to my side,

Enquiring what was wrong...

I was being pampered with very visible signs of affection,

And when I slept, she sat 'guard'

No one dared try come near, such was the barrier she set...

Sweety, my cat-mother, who treated me like one of her own kittens...

With her purrs and paws, her head-caresses, her feline kisses all over my face,

She made it clear, I was her child,

Or rather, that she was my very possessive mother!

I never understood it at that time,

But later realized, what a privilege it was,

To have been Sweety's child.



Kamar Sultana Sheik: She is a poet, writing mostly on themes of spirituality, mysticism, and nature with a focus in Sufi Poetry. Her professional career spanning 18 years has been in various organizations and Institutions including the IT sector. She is a self-styled life coach and has currently taken a break to focus on her writing full-time. Sultana has contributed to various anthologies and won several prizes in poetry contests. A green enthusiast, blogger and content-writer, Sultana calls herself a wordsmith.



CREATION

These are days I live now,

surrounded by ailments, pain, old age, death in shrouds of white.

The promise of youth shackled and broken

And the solace of oxygen a rarefied supply.

But I hold on to love inside.

The familiar heat and dust of summer outside.

It's May.

I carry in me orchards of summer fruits and desires,

cascading fragrant blooms dripping with sweet nectar.

Death is in the background,

yet the Koel sings with yearning, of life and sweetness of Creation.

I creep into that bit of my heart, carry you and love in me,

with blossoms of abundance, dancing ghungroos and tinkling wind chimes.

I am touched by the senses,

I feel the scents, the tastes, music and that touch of life, deeply.

I breathe, as if today is my last and I must gather my harvest.

I journey for water.

I dance and stay alive,

in the symphonies of the mind,

my eyes are on Creations, beautiful horizons and life.



Ketaki Mazumdar: I am a poet, a dreamer and an author. I reside in Mumbai, India, but grew up in Kolkata. After an amazing thirty-six years of being an educationist, receiving a National Award from the then President, Dr. Abdul Kalam, I now indulge in my passion for writing poetry and authoring children's books. I have contributed my poems to many poetry sites and authored a boutique book of hundred poems, for private circulation. I continue to learn, be awed by nature's beauty and mystery, human relationships and the spirituality of life and death.



DR. APJ ABDUL KALAM

Death is always an unexpected visitor at the threshold; the last breath is too priceless a gem to be gifted away. Yet it is ever on lease.

The visitation came on him, at an hour leaving all in numbed silence, the moment reality dawned that their gem was stolen by stealth. A gem that sparkled with an inborn glow and was cosmic in its radiance. He was loved by all, for his spotless charm, sombre gait and cherubic ambience.

In his smile or gestures was a skein of simplicity that dwarfed his greatness; He never blotted his trail even once. No wonder the trail will lead us far...



K.S.Subramanian: I am a poet and short story writer living in Chennai. I have published two volumes of verse through Writers Workshop, Kolkata. I have nine published short stories and also poems in several anthologies. 'Dreams' got the Asian Age prize.



PEAHEN PASSIONS

To make my small point I do not need to flirt with Your fanned, oversized, ruffled, Exotically anarchic, coloured feathers On your empty crown.

My grace talks, walks, States and remains stable with My puny, almost invisible top-knot Riding on a formidable foothold Of regal infinitude.

The sense-blurring beauty Of corn-strewn, dusty tracks, The green aesthetics of The torn foliage and mud around me Make my statement.

The muffled hues of my world, My dainty, wobbling gait With a sureness of treading, Despite the slime and dirt sucking me in, Have an intensity, a conviction.

If you care to soothe Your great, chaotic, hubris-laden plumes You may perhaps, still see The reveling leaves in the storm, Still feel the bliss of pot-holed roads Or the laughing oysters merging in love With the endless equity Of the seas.



Laksmisree Banerjee: Prof. Dr. Laksmisree Banerjee is an established Poet, Writer, Literary Critic and Educationist. She is a Senior Fulbright Scholar &Professor (USA), Commonwealth Scholar (UK), National Scholar & Gold Medalist of Calcutta University, India, UGC Post-Doctoral Research Awardee and Founder Vice Chancellor of Kolhan University, India. She has seven published Books of Poetry and several Research Books and one hundred and twenty Academic Publications including books in diverse areas of Literature and Culture. Dr. Banerjee is also a Gold Medalist in Indian Classical Music and an established Radio, Stage & TV Vocalist of India, having performed globally.



MEET A NEED

young kids help me to clean the street week after week never giving me a sign of payment that they seek they pick up rubble

which consists of bones, paper and plastic

and show no fear

that they might get sick

they do it with so much

diligence, joy and laughter

and don't ask

for payment after

so i started a charity

and there's always someone who sponsors me

I call my charity, "Meet a Need"

so please feel free

to sow a seed

i give a sandwich and juice

every Saturday

and because of God's grace and love

He always makes a way

I can truly say that I've found my passion through this and i pray for steadfastness in the Name of Jesus



Leroy Abrahams: He lives in South Africa, Port Elizabeth, Helenvale. He currently works as a Spot Welder at a Motor Industry Firm. He is a Published Author and enjoys writing poetry. His first book entitled, 'Verse en Inspirasie' was published by Selwyn Milborrow (Milborrow Media). His second book entitled, 'Testimony in Poetry' was published by Bevan Boggenpoel, and the third book entitled, 'In Pursuit of Poetic Perfection,' which he wrote together with Bevan Boggenpoel, Selwyn Milborrow, and Don Beukes was published by Milborrow Media. His poetry describes himself and how God has transformed his life. He is also a member of a Master Class group of writers as well as Afrikaanse Digters.



SENSES PERCEIVED AS MY LIFE'S REVIEWED

- (Part One)
- Perception 1
- Memory floats like a
- river's flow designed,
- to carry what was seen
- with my eyes, seldom blind.
- Observations through time,
- events witnessed by

orbs forever enshrined,

in this pure church of mine.

Perception 2 The smell of Spring or snow long appreciated. The thought of either borne by recall, unabated. I do remember names of old friends known awhile, each scent plays out the same now, as in prior days.

Perception 3 It's there within sleep that I hear that voice dreamt. The long ago timbre that has so often been, attuned to by my ears in the bright sun's day, thinking back through the years while at night, sounds so keen.



Linda Imbler: I am a poet residing in Wichita, Kansas, USA. I am a life-long learner who has spent the shutdown learning the location of all 197 countries around the world, and learning how to read Braille. I have contributed to various anthologies. I have nine published poetry collections and one hybrid collection of short stories and linked poetry. Learn more at lindaspoetryblog.blogspot.com.



POWER OF SILENCE

Silence screams, when one is tortured Silence is quietest in serenity Silence is harshest when one is grieving

When lovers meet there is music in silence

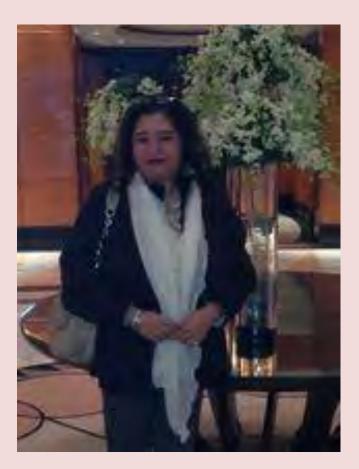
When one mistrusts there is bitterness in silence

When there is misunderstanding there is annoyance in silence

When one hates there is anger in silence When lover cheats there is punishment in silence When heart breaks there is loudest pain in silence

Silent person prays quietly in solitude Silent person doesn't talk much, but act instantly Silent person meditate, for self-worth

Silence is empowerment over quarrels and fights Silence kills when one is guilty Silence, sure is, very powerful



Lubna Ahmed: She is a Certified Master NLP (Neurological Linguistic Programming) Practitioner; NLP Workshop Facilitator and Soft Skills trainer; and Certified Advanced Life Coach. She conducts SuperKoolKids Art Therapy workshops. She resides in Delhi with her family. She has managed to carve a niche for herself in the literary world by her ever so simple 'Love poems'. 'Princess Lubna' is her pen name, her writers' identity. Her love poems are spiritual and have a Mystical Aura. She has written many poems for National and International Anthologies. She is an avid traveller.



One needs to dive deep In the waters of life to find the pearl embedded In the hard shells

Turbulent or slow The highs and lows Hold you sometimes but often throw Sometimes victorious

often defeating

The Ship of Theseus

Sailing cognizant

In unknown oceans

Ebb and flow

Gradually increasing the pace

To let you live and grow



Madhu Jaiswal: She is a poet, writer, editor and a social worker based in Kolkata, India. She has got published in various national and international anthologies and is regularly featured in popular literary magazines and ezines. As an executive editor of The Impish Lass Publishing House Mumbai, she has 5 anthologies to her credit. Madhu is a friendly, optimistic and compassionate person who believes in humanity and volunteers for the upliftment of the underprivileged and destitute. According to her, hope, belief, and perseverance are the powerful mantras that have the ability to pave our path towards success no matter what. Her writings often revolve around these keywords. She can be contacted at madhuj2203@gmail.com.



SILENCE

The eerie silence,

An invisible presence,

Ramshackled and tense,

A sight less perception.

Flags of a monastery flutter,

Unsaid words the breeze utters,

Silence broken by the gong of the bell

Casting an uncanny magical spell.

The calm waters of the mystical lake,

Moved suddenly due to an invisible shake,

The night owl screeched,

Along with it the silence shrieked.

Out of the kohl dark a light did glow

Far away, like an angel's halo,

The breeze with utterances spectral,

Trees swaying to the beats of paranormal.

Whispering hush

As grey clouds rushed,

To cloak the radiance,

Overshadow the luminescence.

The silent footsteps,

At the night's doorsteps,

Followed the halo of light

Into the disturbed tranquillity of night.

To understand and find solace

As the shadow with the light volutes,

Seeking enlightenment and elucidation,

An understanding and edification.



Madhumita Bhattacharjee Nayyar: She is a bilingual writer (writing both in Hindi and English). A poetess, blogger, lifeskills counsellor, healer, she is also a social commentator and works with women and children. She is the author of "THE NIGHT JASMINE AND OTHER LOVE POEMS". She is the winner of ICON OF THE YEAR-LIFESKILLS COUNSELLOR 2015-2016, CREATIVE WRITER OF THE YEAR 2016, and Indian Women Achievers Award 2016 for Creative Writing.



My Krishna

With his two eyes, shut

Resemble the bloom

On a wintery day

Unveiling the darkness

Of thunderous clouds

His two eyes then rupture

Like the beads of sun

The garland of moon

Breaking into a celestial shower

And from there erupts

A magic manna

A sugar syrup

Springing up

Birds and flowers

Constellations and stars

Sparkling glow-worms,

Dancing honeybees,

Tunes of flute,

Magic waterfalls,

Mammoth skies

Bathed into the glory of

Rainbows; galloping over wings

Butterflies bemoaning

For the Mercurial moon

All I wonder is Whether He who rules my life Is a sun in sky In its playfulness Or the universe itself Standing on its two feet

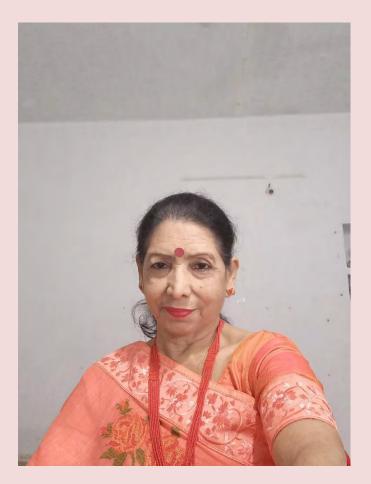


Manisha Manhas: Manisha is a Poet residing in Pathankot. She has been published in many national and international journals. Writing poetry is a cathartic experience for her.



...SOMEWHERE

As if lost in some unknown city Like unwelcomed mist Sometimes ashes of past Smoulder somewhere Every bit of it, glitters like glass Rising sometimes, drooping towards dark, As if, time is competing with me Wish to win the race, Find myself running, strange Lost somewhere, in a place like city In search of destination, at road, Jumping on turns, as flooded river, Bewildered to see, Sea in desert But Sea vanishes in the crowd of sand, Nurtured a dream, in corner of heart, To be felicitated here, Dawn turns dusk, in a wink of eyes, In running busy city, Few expectations of my own, Sitting as a visitor, in my own city As if tired hopes, waiting For someone for relief, to boost up In a city, like my own city, somewhere Lost existence...



Manjula Asthana Mahanti: She is a bilingual poet, author, translator and editor. She has worked in a prestigious college as Head of the Department, and she last worked as a Public School Principal. She has published six books, in both English and Hindi. She has published short stories, poems, and articles in many national and international anthologies, e-magazines, OPA, Glomag, Setu, etc.



MAYBE

Maybe God has his own reasons But why so much suffering Why is there so much pain

Maybe

He chose me for the test But why I cried and hollered To be on the verge of congest

Maybe All I see is grief The sky has turned Faded the light around Still From the roots, I shall grow Leaving behind the rotten body

Still I shall bring myself back Leaving behind the scar

Still I shall carry trust And get rid of the frown

Still I shall wake up from ashes And keep the hopes high



Mehak Varun: She is the author of three books - THE HUMANE QUEST (volume-1,2 &3), published by Authorspress, New Delhi. She is born and brought up in Jammu and settled in Chandigarh. She has been bestowed with '100 Inspiring Authors of India' award in Kolkata. She has also been honoured with the 'Women Of Influence 2019' award. Recently, she has been awarded Gitesh-Biwa Memorial Award of excellence for her article on woman power "I Just Need A Chance".



THANK YOU

- Forever is a very long time
- Above time and space
- Until death do us apart
- All the time with me
- To you is too boring
- I can sense it my love
- You giving me excuses
- Saying you feel sleepy
- Even if you don't
- I ain't here

To fight baby But to wish you Happy moments Of love and cheers With your new friends Who make your life worth As for me all throughout this Journey of life I found you to be The best of best than anyone else You made me see the world better One of the nicest thing that happened In my life to treasure as memories now I deeply appreciate your love for me Though for a short period of time



Merlyn Alexander: I'm a poetess residing in Nagercoil, India. I'm a housewife. My passion includes writing, cooking, and painting. I have contributed to many anthologies. I have published six books in Haiku Poetry. I'm currently waiting for my first anthology of English poems to be published soon.



FAMILY FEUD

Break

in the rain,

thunderstorms;

bolt angular lightning

slithers away west.

Walking,

nanosecond flash

family memories,

personal,

revert,

tautology fault of style

acerbic chats

daggers in heart these words,

confused,

dicey dungeon sharp spike.

A labyrinth, ruined passages,

secret chambers, cellmates, now

for life.

Wind storms move away,

young willow trees natter-

smallest branches, still snap.



Michael Lee Johnson: He lived ten years in Canada during the Vietnam era and is a dual citizen of the United States and Canada. Today he is a poet, freelance writer, amateur photographer, and small business owner in Itasca, DuPage County, Illinois. Mr. Johnson is published in more than 1098 new publications, and his poems have appeared in 40 countries, he edits, publishes ten poetry sites. Michael Lee Johnson has been nominated for 2 Pushcart Prize awards poetry 2015/1 Best of the Net 2016/2 Best of the Net 2017, 2 Best of the Net 2018. Two hundred seventeen poetry videos are now on YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/user/poetrymanusa/videos



https://in.pinterest.com/pin/51509989476739208/

RITUALS: MORNING

There had been beautiful autumn mornings

When waking up from dreamy childhood slumber hearing my father's radio

Blaring ' pratyahiki' had been a routine thing,

Then going out to the backyard

Right there where mother stood under that shiuli tree

Collecting tiny starlets of white flowers,

I got drenched in dew

And the mist of autumn would drape me.



Moinak Dutta: I am a poet and novelist, residing at Kolkata. I work as a teacher. I have contributed to various national and international anthologies. I have got two published fictions to my credit. My third fiction will be published soon. I have worked as editor of several anthologies.



Time only knows to run

Presenting a one-way ticket

To everyone.

It's an invitation to see

What happens at the end.

Time doesn't wait.

Doesn't break a schedule

Just to take a deep breath and see

How far the past is left behind or

How close the finishing line. But, the box, the wooden box Engraved with golden leaves Hid golden memories inside. The letters that are safeguarded in it Wrapped in love, caressed with fondness, Pretty envelopes and scented inks Have the time-stamps! Witness to all the chapters that have been closed. Love, heartbreak, prayers, tears Laughter, advice, celebrations, mournings Letters that proved that life happened. Letters that captured some snaps of time. Letters that played the role of a time machine Telling the story of life.



Nazia Islam: I am a teacher, currently residing in Dhaka, Bangladesh. As an Early Childhood Educator by profession, my dream is to make a difference in the world by shaping the minds of the future generation. I write out of passion and sometimes, out of whim. I love nature, books and simplicity, and the sound of rain.



GOODNIGHT DEAR AFRICAN QUEEN

In Memory Of Late Mrs. Evelyn Agbonma Onyido (Nee Umelo)

Gorgeous, plumpy and beautiful

Robust, pure and wonderful

Amazing, enchanting, and dazzling

Like the blazing sun,

Full like the moon,

Sunlight, moonlight, and daylight

Sacred and consecrated.

Ever loving, humble and genuine Sane on and in her lane Sound and unbound.

Breasts that fed handsome men Womb that bore beautiful women, Home that raised rare breeds.

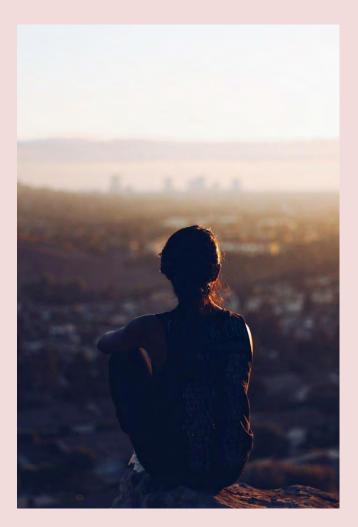
The African queen, black and blue A natural scene, park and dew The African queen, pack and glue Rainbow rose, colouring thorns Yellow goose, erecting horns Hollow nose breathing into morns.

Life is work, work is life Beyond stress and strife Beneath strain and knife Boundless train; a wife.

Rest in peace, black queen Living is done, done living Humanity, ahead with your giving Mankind agog with your caring, Rest, sleep, rest and sleep Untold, unknown, we weep Heaven echoes, mystery not deep. Goodnight dear African Queen.



Ngozi Olivia Osuoha: I am a poet/writer/thinker residing in Nigeria. I currently enjoy my work as a writer; I have contributed to over forty international anthologies. I have also published three poetry books and co-authored one, and published over two hundred and fifty poems/articles in over twenty countries. Some of my pieces have been translated and published in different languages too.



MIND O MINE

Strife not so

Nor fight or whine

Let's go home

Mind o mine.

We have wandered afar

what a wild charge you are!

Unruly, wild out of the veil Perched on a gale you set assail Ignoring my heart's wails Mind o mine.

I staggered at the threshold Pursued you on trails frosty and cold Nimble-footed and light Uncontrollable is your flight Sweep me not in your stride For rules, I must abide. Mind o mine.

Wearily I chase and wallow In vain, I seek and follow Mind o mine. The doors they bolt for rovers You know no boundaries Neither my quandaries The sun's down the cows lo O let's go Mind o mine.

Let dreams be scattered Aspirations be fettered Let hopes moan and die And ambitions in stillness lie Shackle them do not roam Let's go home

In endurance you still prevail Choose not, live it all For I pray you prevail

Let's go home

Mind o mine.



Nikhat Mahmood: She is an English Lecturer, a short story writer and an occasional poet, she has translated from Urdu to English and also transliterated in Hindi, a book of poems 'Zard PattoN ki Shawl' written by a prominent Pakistani poet, several of her stories have been published in various anthologies and magazines. She is currently working on her debut book of short stories, Scent of the Bitter Almonds and a novel, Revived Oaths. She lives in Karachi with her husband and two children.



IN MOTION; ONE MUST GO ON...!

The old smiles are bobbing up;

Secret incentives for all evening laughs,

Meaningless cry and their cheap pleas,

Those special talks,

Far from the understanding of the world...!

Out of bound for all,

Perhaps life wanted that way,

Let all stay veiled beneath the earth,

lf,

In the hope of a new way,

Walk decides to move towards the direction,

Direction of light...!

They were not all out of beat,

Pulsating words; those were emotions,

Alas...! Like the valueless,

Got erased from the palm of time,

Only residual noises of my footsteps,

They felt like very own,

Like the sweet voices of dear ones

Whisper of my walk in the empty mind...!

As mind walks on the street of time,

Putting step after step,

Life goes on drawing the curves of rising sun,

Following the voice of eyes,

Still awake; the eyes of the bard in horizon,

One must move on; one must go on...!



Nitusmita Saikia: Nitusmita Saikia, a bilingual writer from Assam, India is presently working as instructor in National Cadet Corps; world largest youth organisation. She is a keen worshiper of literature. She has been writing for magazine like FM, GloMag, Tuck, and for local newspapers in both English and in her mother tongue Assamese. Her poems have been published in many national and international anthologies.



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THAT MEMORY

The wild overgrown hedges of your mind gleam a ghoulish green through the foggy mist beckoning you closer and enticing you with glimpses of That Memory you just can't resist.

The wheels are whirring inside your head until finally the gears click into place and a bulb lights up atop your head That Memory

when long ago you roamed free

free through the woods behind the house

with Bear by your side and a sandwich in your bag

ready to unravel mysteries

A wannabe Indiana Jones.

And now here you are

back again in that zone.

And in the split second between sleep and wake

when all is frozen

you clearly see the past

in all its magnified glory

You and Bear stopping by the woods on a summer morning.



Nivedita Karthik: I am a poet residing in Gurgaon. I work as a medical/scientific editor/reviewer. I have published many poems in various national and international magazines. I am a professional Bharatanatyam dancer and amateur photographer. Random thoughts that buzz through my mind are penned down for eternity in my blog <u>https://justrandomwithnk.com</u>



A MOTHER'S GIFT

One sleepy sun glazed afternoon, A young girl of nine explored the attic Rows of boxes filled with curious treasures, Faded dresses, old photo albums that Revealed her smiling mother, young bride Large brown eyes filled with hope and a heart filled with love born of duty. The young girl tried to read her mother's eyes, Wondered fleetingly as to why those limpid eyes

were now dull and tired, her mother still a young woman

The child, with the attention span of a wayward moth

Moved on to open a chest that had

Books of various genres and writers with fancy names.

She picked one up, then another, then another

until the entire attic was a smorgasbord

of imagination and fantasy

The girl delved deep into the stories as days merged into nights

And life became a long sentence punctuated with

mundane things like school and outside time with playmates.

She now was filled with joy, understanding of why mother had told her to read

Her mother had no riches for her to inherit, save for the books around her

To delight her and calm her when life became stormy.



Padmini Rambhatla: I am a poet, teacher and homemaker residing in Chennai, India. I work as a high school English teacher. I have contributed to Glomag and my children's school magazine. I have not published anything so far but in the near future, I will. I also enjoy painting in different mediums, watching movies and listening to music.



He wants a victim So he can feel like A knight in armour. He wants her sad So he can lift himself As he pacifies her. He keeps her dark So he is her light As she stumbles.

He curbs her voice

And her circles

To be her only hope.

His voice, sensibility

Is what governs her

Soon, she suffocates.

She wants more

Her wings are tangled

Her feet are chained.

In time, she knows She is not a victim, Sadness passes, Her eyes are sharp She finds her way Through her own Light, hope, will, She sets her wings, Unchains her feet

Learns to fly again.

As for him,

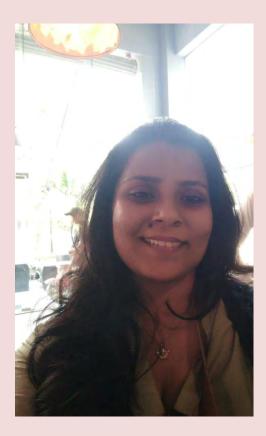
He looks for another

A shadow partner

To dance to

His dark tunes

His hopeless self.



Panjami Anand: I am an occult practitioner by profession. Sometimes it helps to know that we are all fighting secret battles and we are not the only ones in pain. I love to observe human relationships and nothing inspires my writing more. Thus, the dominating theme of all my writings are conflicts and triumphs of the same.



I SEEK WISDOM

It would be great to seek wisdom not alone from the books but from kids who with a godly smile give away everything, forgiving, forgetting and ever cheerful no sin or vice of any kind they keep; I seek wisdom from the birds that migrate, their caution , care and confidence make me marvel; from the weaver birds building nests opening upside down, a skill so startling.

I want to seek wisdom of the deer running swift from the chasing lion; Rivers flowing calm, single minded with the only intent to join the sea; and that of the flowers for their patience and forgiveness, hard to imbibe. It would be great to gain wisdom like that of the sea, wish if I could see wisdom in oneness, mutual faith, smiles and gentleness.

I want to see and listen more, speak less, else I expose my ignorance, turn my experiences into wisdom to enrich the repertoire of my wealth, the only one that depletes not, but multiplies on sharing.



Pankajam: Pankajam, retired from BHEL as DM/Finance is a bilingual poet and novelist settled at Chennai, India. In addition to several poems, book reviews and articles published in national and international journals, she has twenty-four books to her credit, including thirteen books of poems, a translated poetry collection in French and three fictions in English. Three books on literary criticism, namely, Femininity Poetic Endeavours, History of Contemporary Indian English Poetry-An Appraisal and Socio-Cultural Transition in Modern Indian English Writing & Translation discuss her works in detail. She has won many awards for poems and short stories including Rock Pebbles National Literary Award 2019.



SEARCHING FOR THE SILVER LINING

I am a simple woman with a simple heart,

Who tries to keep negativities apart.

With a goodness shield stops all poison darts.

Absorbs all pain and hurt.

I am a simple woman with a simple mind.

Like a banyan root, nourishment of positivity finds.

Reaches out to all and is to them kind.

Tries to keep the happiness balloon afloat in this grind.

I am a simple woman with simple thoughts.

Many a beautiful dream have I caught.

Many dishonesties and wrongs have fought.

Keeping my mind fresh, stopping all rots.

I am a simple woman searching for the silver lining always.

Overlooking the clouds of gloom in my happy ways.

Remaining cheerful even in bad days.

Faith in good things overshadowing all greys.



Paramita Mukherjee Mullick: I am Dr. Paramita Mukherjee Mullick and I live in Mumbai, India. I am a scientist transformed into a poet. My poems have been widely published in India and abroad and a few poems have been translated into 39 languages. I started and am the President of the Mumbai Chapter of Intercultural Poetry and Performance Library (IPPL). I am also the Cultural and Literary Convenor (West India) of the International Society for Intercultural Studies and Research (ISISAR).



The Moon swayed

some saw the Moon shining in glory

most people were trying to shoot pictures

I sat down and looked at the Moon

inhaled her energy

aroused my self

spread my energy around

passed it on to friends

I am Moony today

Stay away from me

Or Join with me

Let us be Moony today.



Parasuram Ramamoorthi: He is a poet with three published volumes of Poetry. Norwich Musings (2003); Fire courts Water 2009; Neem Gita 2011; Playwright with twelve plays published and Performed. Autism Advocate and Pioneer in the file of Drama for Autism. Chairman VELVI www.velvi.org



A MUSEUM

of Waxwings, Silktails, Chatterers, earful of bells trill from berried branches, some drunk on fermented juice, perhaps a jugful. Concentrate on hearing voices, those sunk into your head. Blake tells us the flea told him ghosts of fleas are souls of bloodthirsty folk, so behind flea in powdered gold paints comet falling majestically. The fallen star of a dog is hugged, licks face of care, as if it is kissing warmth. Soon it will leave earth to be a cold nick of light in a night sky, and care will mourn. Voices of those we have lost can be heard, preserved as a much treasured phrase or word.



Paul Brookes: I am a writer residing in Wombwell, England. I work as shop assistant. I have contributed to various anthologies. I have also published five poetry books. Forthcoming is another poetry collection called Ghost Holiday (Alien Buddha Press, 2018). My book 'Please Take Change' was published by Cyberwit recently.



A BOATMAN'S SONG

This poem is inspired by a Bengal folk song. Ore ore shundoira nober maazi.

Oh, dear! It is a beautiful stream, my sailor

Now, sometimes and every day;

I drift across the waters

sailing and rowing away Oh dear sailor, hear me sing re re re gama...

O'er the sky flies the moon along with crystal-like stars

0000.....0000....

And on another day oh sailor!

and on another day I will row again,

without knowing no directions and boundaries.

Oh! Dear sailor, it is a beautiful stream

Just like life, just like a dream, my soul wanders

As I row every day, these waters wash away my worries and anxieties of tomorrow...

0000 00000.....



Pooja Suresh: Hello! I am Pooja Suresh, an upcoming Carnatic music vocalist and I perform concerts along with my sister. We sing as vocal duets and I also play the instrument Veena. I started writing as a hobby, and now, take part in various writing prompts and programs. I also recently completed a NANOWRIMO camp setting myself a goal of 10000 words and received an honorable mention for one of my poems on togetherness written for On Fire Cultural Movement. I aspire to write more and read more.



Sometimes I wonder

If words that emerge and escape me

Gather wings

And fly away

Weaving stories of their own

So much so that

The faintest tinge of acquaintance

Doesn't seem to tickle my senses-

And I meaninglessly

Search my own inner confines

To find the writer

Who faded away

With the words.



Prabha Prakash: I am a poet residing in Kochi, Kerala. I am a Chartered Accountant and work as Senior Auditor at EY. My first poetry anthology "Lost Monsoon" has been published by Writers Workshop Kolkata. I have been selected for the Reuel International Poetry Prize 2019.



DRIFTING APART

Standing still

with an open heart

For the love we had

in recent past

Gone too soon

gone too far

Left imprints

on my arms

Often recall

those lovely nights

Long talking sessions

those silly fights

When your fingers

intermingled with mine

Gave a feeling

deep and divine

Beautiful memories

you gave so far

will be the ones

close to my heart

Yo' wait changed me

and changed my heart

imprints of you

now feel like scars

feel like we are

drifting apart

now it's too late

to restart.



Pragya Sharma: I am a poet based in Delhi, India. I'm an engineering student. I have contributed to monthly online poetry / prose magazine.



A LOG OF DEAD WOOD

Nobody knocks at my door these days

No one peeps even through their windows

Only a newspaper, a hawker and a blood splattered morning with a reddish sun greet me.

My body has become a log of dead wood Birds do chirp at times from their cage The voice too is cracked, wounded. Where are those dangling limbs of trees,

Where are those leaves?

No nest I can see in me

Feathery birds fly away from me.

Only bodies of houses I see, no inmates therein

Eyes of houses are closed

Hearts enclosed

No passage I could see,

all those roads enjoining eyes to nostrils, and even to lungs are either narrowed or blocked.

No room for air even

Gasping for air the earth is in search of an oxygen parlour.

The sky looks like a vulture snatching away dead bodies to satiate hunger.

Wherever eyes go, only Burroughs

Snakes, reptiles sans human beings.

Whom to ask, where is our good earth?



Prahallad Satpathy: Dr. Prahallad Kumar Satapathy, who hails from Odisha (India), is a bilingual poet writing both in Odia and English. He is a retired Associate Professor of Economics. To his credit, he has four published anthologies in Odia language. His poems are published in many national and international journals. Twice he has represented Odisha Sahitya Academy as an honorary member.



DILEMMA

Head's heavy,

Brain's dumb,

Can't write,

Fingers numb!

Oh for a coffee cuppa,

To coax that Eureka!

Nothing seems to work,

Glory's glowering in the dark,

Eyes eyes everywhere,

But not a spark anywhere,

I give up!

I have my hands up!

In abject surrender!

Never did I miss the deadline,

Minutes, seconds, hurtling by,

Oh Muse mine,

My thoughts do streamline?!

I am rattled,

Mind is fractured,

Words in a jumble,

Incoherent mumble,

Glory is my cheerful taskmaster

Open this rambling passes muster,

Next time round, I should do better!



Pratima Apte: She is a poet residing in Pune, India. She is a homemaker and a grandmother! She used to write sporadically in the Pune edition's Women's page of the Indian Express. She loves reading and writing, and words are her world.



LORD, HEAL OUR WOUNDS

Heavenly Father,

You are the source of all goodness,

love and power

Thy earth is suffering

Let's heal with your mercy and grace.

Be filled with your presence and tender love

Eliminate the darkness from our path,

Praise be to you!

You are the creator,

Give peace to thy earth,

Peace among hills,

Peace in our hearts.

O Heavenly Father,

Help us to protect all life,

Help us to fight with the evils,

Shine in the darkest hour

Praise be to you!

When nothing seems visible, give us light

Guide us with your Holy Spirit

Keep alive within us the flame of hope

Let love and forgiveness reign in the hearts of all,

Enlighten everyone with your divine wisdom

Praise be to you!



Preety Bora: Hailing from a beautiful state 'Assam' (India), the poetess, Mrs Preety Bora started writing from her college days. She lives in a city called Golaghat with her family. Nature inspires her to write poetry. She writes in both languages: in English and in Assamese (her mother tongue). Her poems have been published in various anthologies and magazines in India and in foreign countries.



CONVALESCENCE

It hums in the whiteness of the whole place, The only rhythm to be had anywhere. Beneath, As if corpses, the convalescents sleep, in an Injected peace. Empty plastic bags of saline Twist in the eddies of the fan, having poured Out elixir or false hope or none or both into the veins; Syringes and Iyophilized vials of Remdesivir lie about, spoils of a triumph or the Remains of a battle where neither victor nor Victim care any longer — or do they? The dustbins Await a cleaner in the morning, who will also Double up as Sexton perhaps. The silence continues. On the switched off airwaves they talk of cytokine Storms and Mucormycoses and what else; in This witched hour perhaps a dram of sleep Stolen is what hope means today. I look at The white walls again. There could have been Pictures — between the oxygen fixtures and the Curtains and the blankets, but perhaps the Desolation was the aesthetic, of time gone and Time to come. The fan still provides the only rhythm.



Raamesh Gowri Raghavan: I am a writer residing in Thane, India. I work as freelance copywriter. I have contributed to various anthologies. I have also published poems in many magazines and poetry anthologies. I was felicitated at Amaravati Poetic Prism 2016 for writing poems in 11 different languages.



MASK

A thin flimsy material A must for all these testing times Tied to your face and nose accompanying you wherever you go; Running after you, tied up

with you like a bondage,

to avoid another blockade

possibly these testing times;

who cares if cotton or silk who worries if showy or ornamental or gorgeous as long as mask is handy

to protect you from awry unexpected splashes and bouts pouncing all around these days of Covid testing times.

Step out of house, mask, like currency or debit card from your purse pops out a necessity who ever denies!

The other day a bin overflowing with caps

for insects or cute kitten all from thrown masks;

pray for a day, for a time when the very word is erased in our dictionary, in our blessed homes .

mask for self-interest ok but not compelled by tests like this.



Radhamani Sarma: She is as student of Ethiraj college, Chennai. She specialized in the plays of W.H. Auden for her doctoral thesis from the University of Madras. She obtained PGDTE from CIEFL from Hyderabad. She served in Pachaiyappa's college and is a retired professor of English with 31 years of teaching experience. She has published four books of poems and one book of short stories. She is widely published in various anthologies and is a reviewer and critic.

Her blogs:

pearlradhe.blogspot.in

pearlradfhe.wordpressf.com



ARIEL'S LAMENT

(To Professor Singh)

You taught me language and we had not talked for a year, and more, won't now, ever.

Traces, faint, of your twinkling eyes and wide grin, will never die, until I do. Lesser men

grabbed higher thrones as we looked on, I in dismay and you with a smile. I demanded,

wanted; expected more for you, thus more for myself, if the law of proportionality between

intellect and rise held. I discovered that there are more exceptions than proofs of the law.

You have left and I grieve impersonally for a personal tone you'd not approve of, I know.

My song had to be objective, diamond-hard. I'd have detailed those infinite flights,

spanned by those distant bells, but then, you wanted the singer hidden, singing "darkling"

pure strains. "Only the song matters". I rebelled and wrote "The air I breathe in".

You didn't mince words in your short review. "Too subjective and mushy". I never showed

you my poems after that. You'll never get to see this one.

Our faiths were similar sometimes, only sometimes. Yet I needed my

"points of departure" and for them, I needed you.

"Create a system or be forever a slave", you said.

The Satan-poet lived smiling and left with head un-bent.

Did you know what you were doing back then? The old "grammarian"

did not fully know what his disciples did. It takes an eagle's soaring heights

to take in a glance the stretched land of gold. You liked standing aloof, for you

never belonged to the likes of them and Coriolanus would never let the sheep forget that.



Rajnish Mishra: He is a poet, writer, translator and blogger born and brought up in Varanasi, India. He is the editor of PPP E-zine, a poetry e-zine. He has a blog on poetry, poetics and aesthetic pleasure.

https:/poetrypoeticspleasure.wordpress.com



NATURE IS THE BEST ANTIDOTE

Nature provides the best antidote, For human sufferings on this earth; It makes no difference whatsoever, Be it faith or place of birth;

We are the humble forest-dwellers, Shorn of any glitzy urban trappings; Nature is our tutor best,

Who taught us about natural blessings;

Corona is hounding human race,

And they are wearing man-made mask;

Nature is our unfailing protector, Which provides us leaves for similar task;

We are ready to fight

With the unknown and invisible foe;

There are natural herbs abounding,

Which can exterminate corona in one go;

Corona is the nature's curse,

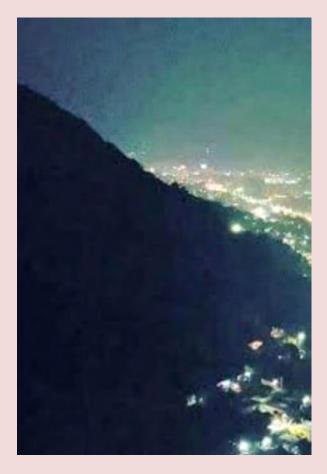
Sounding the death knell for many;

We need to follow diktats

Of nature to survive its unprecedented fury.



Rakesh Chandra: Mr Rakesh Chandra is a retired civil servant. He is currently pursuing his PhD in Law from Lucknow University. He has two published collections of poems, titled 'Moon is Black' and 'Circle Of Life'. He also has one collection of Hindi poems. His English poems have found place in different poetry journals and newspapers' literary supplements. He also has authored two books on Law.



A SURREAL EVENING IN VIZAG

8:45 p.m.

Deep breaths of darkness!

Through the window of my cab

I see the rocky, mountains—

towering and awe-inspiring

within a dense cloak:

Silent under the soundless waltz

of a few gleaming stars;

I can't see the moon!

The untrodden summits in a serene solitude seem to come close and erupt in my mind— The molten rocks of thoughts!

They fascinate me, but the blurred shadows of my waving hands can't touch them— They remain unattainable beyond my small control amid an "ebon mass"! The descending darkness— A pyre of rainbow spring swallowing the silver asters and the malachite-green trees happy in a carnival cruise amid a vodka - clear atmosphere!



Ranjana Sharan Sinha: Poet-author-professor, Dr. Ranjana Sharan Sinha is a well-known voice in contemporary Indian poetry in English with a number of literary awards to her credit. Widely anthologised and published, she has authored and published 09 books in different genres. She is associated with many literary organisations and poetry groups. She is one of the members of the Editorial Board, Our Poetry Archive(OPA). She is the research supervisor (English), RTM Nagpur University, Nagpur.



LAMENT OF A PETAL

News item: A cruel man who tore a rare blue live butterfly to pieces sued in Court

Felt sad at the end of my morning walk to the park

I was actually happy when I went

Trees greeted me, sensuous flowers dated me

My clouds above were waiting to waft me

Life joyous as usual I thought as I walked past

That weeping Rose petal checked me

At first I thought it was a downy dew drop

But saw a raw pain on this half bent petal that melted me Tear was for real, woe was palpable It was deeply missing the kiss of that blue butterfly Which just yesterday was so deliriously amorous...?

He could have torn me to pieces she moaned For I have only a few more hours to live I could have been his target, she wailed Why my Love was picked, why so brutally torn apart? It would have bloomed my entire breed With its sensational touches and flourishes It would have groomed a whole new clan So frenzied was its romance, so passionate its elan...

I bent down eagerly, touched it ever so softly Propped up the delicate petal with my forefinger Whispered in a tone which it surely understood 'Nobody will dare touch your Love again 'He is now being sued for his gravest crime'... Light flickered brightly on the petal so long in grief 'Now I will die in peace', a pause and it withered in brief.

I mourned the loss of the bird and the flower

I no longer wondered why I felt sad

As I trudged aimlessly out of the park...



Ravi Ranganathan: He is a writer, Poet and critic. He is also a retired banker settled in Chennai. He has to his credit three books of poems entitled 'Lyrics of Life' and 'Blade of Green Grass' and 'Of Cloudless Climes'. He revels in writing his thought-provoking short poems called 'Myku'. He loves to write on Nature, Life and the human mind. His poems are featured regularly in many anthologies. He has won many awards for his poetry, including recognition in 'Poiesis Award For Excellence' by Poiesisonline and 'Sahitya Gaurav Award' by Literati Cosmos Society, Mathura and 'Master Of Creative Impulse Award' by Philosophyque Poetica. He contributes poems and articles regularly for weekly webzine 'Literary Vibes' and monthly e-magazine GloMag and quarterly international magazine 'Metverse'.



A CHEWBACCA DEFENSE

I take the flowers I love best and strew them on the streets I do not pluck them off their stems nor their stems off the bush nor the bush out of its earth so it often confuses you

"Are those flowers for me", you ask

I can only smile

for if I say yes, you might pluck them for real and kill them off If I say no, it irritates you to see a bush bloom 'all for nothing' as you like to say

They are what I want to keep in view, in my life

and when I find them

I keep them

and myself alive

You are a flower too

if you must know

My kind of love

knows only to twine around its bush

all for nothing



Reena Prasad: Reena R's poems have been published in The Copperfield Review, First Literary Review-East, Angle Journal, Poetry Quarterly, York Literary Review, Lakeview International Journal, Glomag, Duane's Poe Tree, Mad Swirl, etc. She is also the Destiny Poets UK's Poet of the year for 2014 and one of the editors of The Significant Anthology released in July 2015. She was adjudged second in the 'World Union Of Poet's' poetry competition, 2016 and won an award for poetry in 2016 As 'You Like It International Poetry Contest', commemorating the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare. She won the Reuel International Prize for poetry, 2018.



CROSSWIND

another crosswind blows through his life,

this time an honest impact from her modest breath

refreshing his angel within,

cooling his singed hair,

awakening his sperm,

reviving transformations

without encountering

doubt,

fear,

disbelief.

this crosswind challenges his tenuous path coated by the strength of empathy.

this time a wind redirects his energies back to the core of his revolution, teaching him about courage, demonstrating a certain surrender flowing unabatedly simply reminding him of his misplaced smile, despite the desolation storms swirling outside his eyes.



Robert Feldman: Inspired by members of my hometown Paterson's (New Jersey) literary tradition, most notably Allen Ginsberg and William Carlos Williams, I continue to write/publish/present my work (most recently 'Hineni'; 'Sunflowers, Sutras, Wheatfields and other ArtPoems'), make fire paintings, and play tabla. The body of my writing and paintings can be accessed at:

https://sites.google.com/site/robertfeldman23/



BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

Born in poverty

Raised with dignity

And respect for others

Never feeling better

Or lower than

Anybody else!

I struggled to reach

My desired goals

Sometimes I felt weak

Or very strong

I shaped my own

Destiny as I grew up

Learning very well

The bitter lessons

In my humble life!

Embedded with love And peace for always I faced the time When I had to move One step backwards To later three forwards!

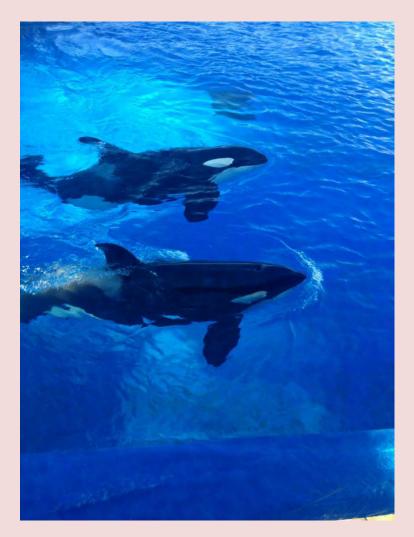
Still I felt trapped Between two worlds

But I let the bygones

Be the bygones as I Became citizen of Both worlds with A humble soul until Forever I am gone!



Romeo della Valle: Born in a beautiful island named Quisqueya or Hispaniola and from Italian and Spanish parents and coming to America very young with a goal, mainly, to succeed in life and be happy. I am a man with a Vision and a clear mission: 'To spread my message of Love an Peace throughout the World and if my poetry can touch a single soul in the World, then I would gladly die leaving my clear footprints behind!



THE ORCAS

below

the

waves

sing

twice

as
beautifully
as
anyone
on
America's
Got
Talent.



Ryan Quinn Flanagan: Ryan is a Canadian-born author residing in Elliot Lake, Ontario, Canada with his wife and many bears that rifle through his garbage. His work can be found both in print and online in such places as: *Evergreen Review, The New York Quarterly, GloMag, The Poet Community, Red Fez, and The Oklahoma Review.*



<u>https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/south-asia/families-allowed-to-bury-</u> <u>dead-in-their-backyard-with-crematoriums-overwhelmed-by</u>

DEATH LIVES IN STREETS

Heart-shaped leaves of Banyan trees

Beside the main streets, shivered like the sword of-

Oracles, as they receive ashes and smokes emerged

From pyres, where the naked corpses have been buried in streets.

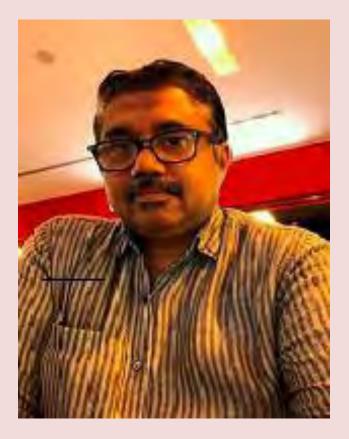
It's under the nose of our so-called 'majesties'

But who cares!?

Mass creations of victims of the great pandemic

Been risen to the peaks, echoes of hearse's sirens Hanged out in the air, as if the cries of a fowl of death! But who hears!?

City streets seemed like cemeteries, white uniformed Bodies lied randomly across the streets Waited for their term of cremation. Nature become wet of tears Slumped from the eyes of their dears City allies stand in tense and fears Carcasses floated in Sacred rivers Shadow of horribleness reflected in all faces They screamed and shouted for air to breath No one responded; instead, the uncivilized Unsympathetic Autocrats threatened those innocents Mortals have increased in hours, street graves piled up; Carrion floated in holy waters Gulmohar trees blossomed with red Corona flowers Cannibals cleared the path of yet another business Leaves of Banyan trees trembled of fears; as they Witnessed for deaths living in streets.



Saleem Raza (Saleem Kattuchola): He is a freelance writer and painter from Kerala, India, working as a Franchise General Manager. He writes short stories, poems and travelogues in various regional language magazines (Malayalam), periodicals with a pen name as 'Saleem Kattuchola', and used to write English poems and articles in International magazines and newspapers.



THE WORLD IS BURNING

The world is burning, incensed, And the inferno rages on.

As it destroys everything in its path,

As it wrecks everything like a storm.

The world is burning, screaming, Gasping for air, unable to breathe. Millions die as families sob, Crowds of people weep and weep. The world is burning, crying out,

As little innocents are slaughtered.

People cry and call for family,

Parents are separated from son and daughter.

The world is burning, pleading, As nature becomes our nemesis And man slaughters man; The world pleads for catharsis.

The world is burning, suffocating, As humanity fights many forces at once While praying for some semblance of relief, As constantly as the daily rising sun.



Samixa Bajaj: I am a fifteen-year-old poetess residing in Guwahati, India. I am a student of Class 10. I am a regular contributor to GloMag and also have had my work published in the annual school magazine. I hope to be able to pen even better verses in days to come.



CATHARSIS

Alabaster dreams Blend in with the silken sky Chromatic hues of fading beats Dance away to a lullaby of a funeral march Effervescent nostalgia sends smoke spirals From the flickering flames of the last sunset Gliding past gilded whorls of a wanderer's heart Happiness splattered in bits and pieces along the serrated edges of this precarious journey

Innocence and its blissful ignorance now too expensive a luxury to afford...

Juxtaposed between two realms - aphelion perihelion shifting stands

Kites of a lost childhood flutter past the translucent veil of memories

Languidly the present and past swing through the melancholic air

Momentary bliss and a gnawing ache juxtaposed against the complex paraphernalia of trailing thoughts

Neatly the last dregs ink themselves on paper

Ochre memories and epitaphs of dreams long lost

Poetry bleeds in crimson hues of scribbles

Quietly her wanderess soul weaves itself between the lines

Relinquishing the last strings that still held her back

She is now ready to let go and venture beyond

Tenebrous spiral staircases of time

Unfolding with a flourish, the final lines that rise to a crescendo

Verdant are the skies that await her return

Walking past the pages where she's said it all, left it all - unsaid aloud

Xeric air now satiated with tears of love she bestows upon all and the rhythm of her verses

Yellowing twilight greets her with a smile

Zillions of years of waiting for this day, she finally leaves behind her life, well lived, bittersweet memories everything in poetry - her catharsis...



Samrudhi Dash: I am a poet, novelist, editor and motivational speaker, currently residing in New Delhi, India. under the pseudonym "Inara". Along with write contributions to over two dozen anthologies, international e-zines and magazines, I have published till date five solo poetry anthologies and three novels and conceptualised and edited four anthologies of different genres. I have completed my Masters in English literature from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. My signature words are "Hope, Live, Believe". I have recently published my third novel "Letters from A Stranger - A Life Changing Map", a blend of a medical thriller with epistolary and philosophical underpinnings which is now available as an e-book on Amazon Kindle and figured in the Amazon Bestseller List at Rank 10.



SUFFER IN SILENCE

To suffer in silence is a conscious decision made not by a meek and docile person it is a thoughtful choice made from a position of inner strength courage and compassion one suffers the sabotage and destruction caused by someone who was deeply loved and cared for once how can you hate take revenge retaliate or harm someone you loved as your twin soul unconditional love is all about acceptance hope that someone would heal one day someday soon and learn to accept love with grace miracles do happen may someone stop sabotaging and destroying their loved ones

knowing that it leads to

self-destruction

to suffer in silence

is a conscious decision



Sangeeta Gupta: She is a Delhi-based bilingual poet, artist and film maker, who has served as an IRS Officer, and retired as Chief Commissioner of Income Tax. She has worked as Advisor (finance & administration) to Lalit Kala Akademi. She has to her credit 35 solo exhibitions of paintings, 25 published books, and has directed, scripted and shot 17documentary films. She has 14 anthologies of poems in Hindi and 6 in English to her credit. Song of the Cosmos is her creative biography. Ten of her poetry collections have been translated to Greek, German, Mandarin, English, Urdu, Bangla, Tamil and Dogri. Sangeeta has been adjudged as highly commended poet of the year 2020 by Destiny Poets International community Of Poets, UK.



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SHRAVAN KISHORI

Shravan has come like bereaved Radhika

Tears roll down from those eyes,

kissing her cheeks.

As rain alights to kiss the land.

Shravan has come like crazy Rai kishori

Whom the sweet flute song churns and Smoulders

Like the monsoon breeze that heals but burns.

Oh Rai, hladini! Braid thy long curly hair Adorn it with monsoon's loved blossoms. Shed not tears from those kohl dark deep eyes. Nawal Kishore will soon arrive.

Shravan has come like Abhisarika Who left her home to embrace Mohan.

But, Oh! Madhava, a charade, why you didn't come?

Shravan has come like Shyama

Tired of waiting who sat beneath Tamal.

Surrendered her soul to love.

Gently lifted up her face and Lo!

Found her Shyam just in front of her eyes !

In those showering dark clouds!

Loving and laughing mischievously!

Note

Rai kishori, Rai, Hladini, Shyama: Different names of Sree Radhika. Nawal kishore, Shyam, Madhava: Different names of Sree Krishna



Sanhita Sinha: She is a native of Tripura, is a teacher, and a bilingual poet. Her poems have been published in different prestigious national and international anthologies, journals & magazines. Apart from writing, as an elocutionist and as an actor, she is actively engaged in cultural activities. Along with stage, she is a regular artiste of television and radio too.



THIS HOUSE...

As I sit and watch this broken down

house which once was our meeting place to exchange our love notes written with the ink of our hearts

It was love at first sight

which turned into an eternal romance !

Now all alone I sit here watching the building no one cared for

and listening to the flute from afar

soothing my innermost feelings digesting the divine flute of Krishna!

Oh my love

Why did you leave me without notice If only you had told me you were ailing I would have sat with you for long making you hot coffee and soups You never wanted to hurt me I know as your love for me was so pure Oh God don't remind me of those days which are aching my heart You bore all your hurts by yourself leaving me alone to face this cruel world! This broken down building was the witness of our love And, and now me alone sitting here my mind fixed on God Almighty To take away my pains which I am unable to bear !

My violin lying idle on the corner

with dust piled up

I am unable to play my favourite violin which I loved much sitting by your side

apart from the sweet sound of your bamboo flute!

Now nothing left

Only those sweet memories and

this building where I come and sit

for long hours savouring our past

and by bosom wet with tears of agony!

I wipe my tears and walk as fast as I can

to reach that shore where too we

met several times leaving our footprints of love!



Sarala Balachandran: I reside in Kolkata, West Bengal, with my family. My poems have been published in national and international anthologies. I am a contributing poet for Different Truths. I write free verses.



One shower of rainfall Make all the plants stand tall Open their arms wide And there is joy in everyone's stride

Swaying to the gentle wind Going round and round like whirlwind Smiles in the air We always got to bear So is Mother Nature refreshed with a sprout

And in joy let's out a shout

Deeply inhale and smell the earth

Who deeply ensconced has created a warm hearth



Sara Bubber: I am Sara Bubber, holding a postgraduate degree in Human Development and Family Studies. Human beings and my love of stories came together and made me a storyteller! My poetry and storytelling also came together and made me a poetic storyteller! I write the story of my life through a spiritual journey and love spending my time in meditation and hosting webinars in my spiritual organisation too!



EMPTY CALORIES

Sugar in the wounds Sugar on the scabs Sugar in the eyes Sugar through the blood Sugar in the chocolate

Sugar on the tongue

Sugar in the bread

Sugar from the lips

but the bones need minerals else they become brittle

and the potion must be bitter if it's brewed to truly heal

Sugar in the sermons Sugar on the mountain

Sugar in the oranges

Sugar through the teeth

spit into the dirt where all good seeds must grow

planted in the soil with candy and herbs alike



Scott Thomas Outlar: He lives and writes in the suburbs outside of Atlanta, Georgia, USA. His work has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. He guest-edited the 2019, 2020, and 2021 Western Voices Editions of Setu Mag. Selections of his poetry have been translated into Afrikaans, Albanian, Bengali, Dutch, French, Italian, Kurdish, Malayalam, Persian, Serbian, and Spanish. He hosts a podcast, Songs of Selah, that airs weekly on 17Numa Radio and features interviews with contemporary poets, artists, musicians, and health advocates. More about Outlar's work can be found at 17Numa.com.



LOSS

The world is full of woes, entangled unable to move Lose your hate now; Gain forever, immeasurable love.

The world is full of greed, a powerful aphrodisiac Lose your greed now; Gain forever, immeasurable love

The world is full of poverty, of compassion, of pity Lose your sense of want; Gain forever, immeasurable love

The world is full of hunger, amidst a land of plenty Lose your blindness to pain; Gain forever, immeasurable love

The world is full of bigotry, in the name of religion and God Lose your partisan belief; Gain forever, immeasurable love

The world is full of wars and strife, slaughter of innocent millions

Believe in yourself, Shankara says and live with peace and love



Shankar N Kashyap: I am an artist - author, poet and painter residing in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. I am a Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon. I have contributed to various anthologies, both National and International. I have also published 8 books so far including Medicolegal, Historical, Thriller as well as books on Poetry. I was declared "Author of the Year" on consecutive years 2017 and 2018.



SHADOWS IN THE DARK

The playful child in all his playfulness Drawing shadows with his hands Forming beautiful pictures In a plethora of activity

Shadows merging as it were Into the vast spectrum of reality A blissful awakening

Transcending life and destiny

Shadows, lengthening in the Course of life and creativity Wherein the saga of Life and death continues In a twilight world Of fantasy and sobriety



Shobha Warrier: I am a poet residing in Chennai. I am a housewife. I have contributed to a few anthologies. I have also published poems and also one collection of a few poems written by me.



I bathe in the rain, my eyes and kissed body, triumph in this wave of existence, there's a cat out at sea, a frog in the sky, a lion's mane trapped in violin strings so a candle flickers and the music roars.

As if a silence will soon descend completing the wave as this generation winds itself to a vicious cycle where past and future face each other like twins, and the curtain falls on a shy cuckoo struggling to sing as my spirit soars...



Shreekumar Varma: He is a poet, novelist, and playwright residing in Chennai, India. He is a writer. He has contributed to various anthologies. He has received the R. K. Narayan Award for Creative Writing.

www.shreevarma.com

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shreekumar_Varma



Taking a stroll in the open passage

of my house pleases me the most.

It had rained last night and the pathway stood strewn with fallen leaves......

red brown yellow and light green.

I picked up the broom to sweep

them aside

said somebody from behind

-they are the fallen ones

walking over them won't hurt

-let them be!

I stopped but then decided to carry on

—where is the necessity to trampleover, the already fallen? I asked myself.

Who knows carried by the wind later they might get to see newer pastures,

Who knows they might become a part of some manure to nurture more like them,

Who knows they might become an inspiration for a painter, an author or a poet like me

Who knows the gardener might pile them and make them a part of some campfire

Who knows...

But till then...everybody everything

stands a chance—especially the fallen ones, so

Sparing a couple of minutes, patiently

I swept them onto the sides—

With them I had a happy talk

Then I indeed had my happy walk

and

That is what made my day come alive!!!



Sindhu Rana: I am a poet and writer residing in Jalandhar, Punjab (India). I have contributed to various leading newspapers n journals; e-zines and anthologies. I am a script writer and voice-over artist for documentaries. However, reading and writing remain my first love.



I AM AT MY BEST

I am at my best

when I am with me,

talk to me,

listen to me,

the voice within.

I am at my best

when I interact

with plants and animals,

meadows and mountains, sun and moon, rivers and rivulets and listen to their voice of silence and innocence.

I am at my best when I am lost deep inside in the beauty of peace and solitude, closely identify with me, forgetting the world surrounding

I am at my best when I see myself in others, others in me and visualise the universe as 'I' expanded I am at my best when the 'I' melts in bliss and consciousness. When nothing remains except He, the big void.



Smruti Ranjan Mohanty: Smruti Ranjan Mohanty, is from Padmapur, Jagatsingpur, Odisha. He works as Finance Officer in Govt of Odisha. He is a multilingual poet, essayist and writer whose write ups are published in newspapers and in more than two hundred national and international magazines, journals and anthologies. He writes extensively on life and its intricacies which are widely acclaimed. He is a featured poet of the PENTASI B World Friendship Poetry and Year of The Poet, U.S.A. His collection of poems and prose are published in his blogs under the heading A LOOK AT LIFE, SOMETHING I LOOK AT, A LOOK, THE RIVULET, THINK ONCE MORE, THE JOURNEY, AU THARE, AU EKA GAPA, SROTASWINI, JATRA, THE JOURNEY etc.

Website-smrutiweb.wordpress.com

smrutitanuja.blogspot.com



SOLE CURRY

Mr. Dutta was the guintessential Bengali bhadralok. A Sunday lunch without his favorite fish curry? Absurd and ludicrous. He had returned home from Sunday morning fish marketing, infuriated. The image of the medium-sized, shining, silver-colored Pabda (Indian Catfish), a culinary delicacy, cooked with a paste of grounded green chillies and fresh coriander leaves, garnished with mustard oil, was enough to set his palate and taste buds tingling and he was salivating. But where was Samir? almost To his bewilderment, Samir, the fisherman was missing, and no other fishmonger had the quality or size he wanted. "Was it not just last Sunday when Samir promised me that he would get the fish?" thought Mr. Dutta, angrily. Well, Sunday lunch had now lost its charm, and he was certainly

not hungry. He considered skipping lunch, but that would anger his wife. He frowned when his wife asked him to sit down for lunch around 1pm.

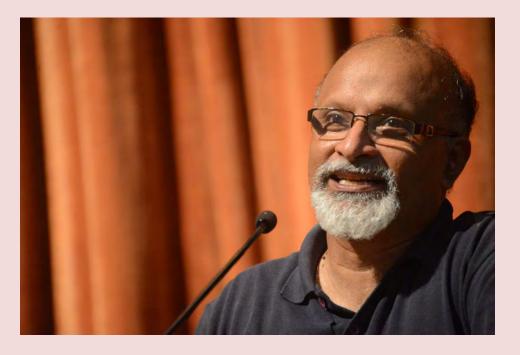
He snapped, "What is the hurry?" and was annoyed to see his wife, Seema, smiling to herself. "What is so amusing?" he scowled. He sat down grumpily, frowning, asked only for a spoonful of rice, but what was this? He stared in disbelief as his wife brought out the large microwave bowl with the Pabdas in front of him, just the right size, made with fresh coriander paste, with a little mustard oil on it. He rubbed his eyes and touched the vessel, to reassure that it was not a mirage, and then smiled benignly, his face lighting up with genuine happiness. After much more than a spoonful of rice, his wife informed him that Samir had kept his promise and had someone deliver the fish home as some urgent work prevented him from visiting the market that day.



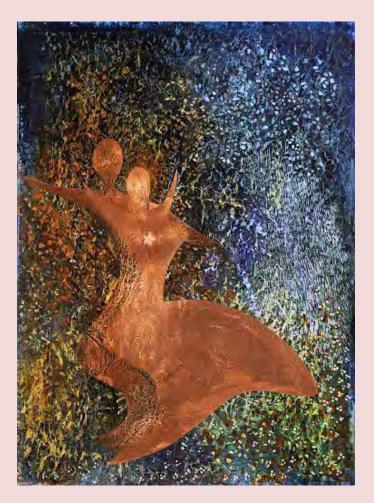
Someeta Das: She is a retired Professor from Maharaja Manindra Chandra College, Kolkata, with twenty-eight years of teaching experience. She is interested in writing short stories and stories on travel. She has published in The Statesman, Setu, Woman's Era (March 2021 issue) story in Jugalbandi An Anthology in Culture World Writer's Forum and a number of e-zines.



The days are getting longer. Nights do not seem to end. We can no longer pretend to be untouched, inert. This farce seems to blend altogether well but not offend. The rains have stopped and the air is warmer. It is time, perhaps, to get rid of the armour. When was the last time we cried? Or laughed or even tried? Every time we lied, again and again we died. We continue to play yet our parts so well that few could ever tell what resembles heaven is well camouflaged hell.



Sri N Srivatsa: Born and brought up in Madras of yore who moved to New Delhi in 1978. I am a Physics graduate who spent more time dabbling in fine arts before a career in banking. I've been singing with the Madras Youth Choir for almost half a century. I have worked both behind and on stage in Tamil, English and Hindi productions of Arangam, Yatrik and Madras Players. I pursue translation of good poetry from Tamil to English and vice versa plus a few in Hindi as a passion. Three volumes of Tamil poems by three different poets translated by "moi" have been published.



Painting: The Vault of Heaven/Copyright © Salma Arastu/ Acrylics, paper, and copper on board

THE FIRE OF LOVE

If I could I would ...

reach up into the night sky

rearrange the stars with a poetic hand

until it is written in fire on the vault of heaven

that you are mine

and I am yours

until the end of time.

If it were allowed in your land ...

for west to pursue east and east to pursue west we would chase each other's hearts around the fire of love until I catch you and you catch me orange sparks winged glow and swirl ignite the black night bright.

In my dream undying...

inside a stone temple carved for our love

twin flames naked burn on a bed of rose petals spread a god's goddess unveiled from ringed toes and ringed nose to vermilion head stripped down to nothing but tradition's scars her old gold and silken threads red an offering at the foot of my bed two arranged into one flesh a beautiful thing a violent thing our lovemaking a sacred dream in a field of yellow flowers blooming under the fiery stars of her ancestors the prayer wheels spin and sing ancient mantras that repeat like snowy mountains ancient mantras that echo of our wedding song: The Fire of Love



Stefan Bohdan: Stefan Bohdan lives in Orlando, Florida USA. He is retired from the architectural/engineering/construction world. He now spends his time writing poems and novels. His English poems have been published in multiple books, anthologies, journals, newspapers, e-zines and translated into Persian (Farsi), Arabic, Urdu, Nepali, Hindi, Bengali, Estonian, French, Spanish, old Japanese, Dutch, Afrikaans, Turkish, Italian, Malayalam, Assamese, Tamil, Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian, Hebrew, Filipino, Hiligaynon and Kinaray-a. He also writes reviews for poetry books. He is internationally published and has collaborated with poets, translators and artists from around the world. He is the founder of Third Eye Butterfly Press.



TWILIGHT

Twilight shining on a gem rock.

Brooding on yard hours to turn dusk, imprisoned by Nature's clock

Chiselled by the torment storm sky.

Then beauty comes back to the inquiring eye.

Not a stone gets a turn.

To cry out in pain from the Suns burn



SUN CATCHER

Sun catcher catch me through my windowpane.

In rainbow colors after the rain.



STANDING TALL

Corn lend me your ears listening how to grow.

Standing tall in a row.



BOUNTY OF THE EARTH

I'm blessed with the bounty of the earth.

Opportunities given to me at birth.

I can lay on a log.

Clear my mind of fog.

I can dance and pray.

I can see miracles every day.



Stephen Goetz: He is a poet from Lincoln City, Oregon, USA. He has poems published online, and is still perfecting writing skills. He has award certificates from Motivational Strips poetry group.



THE WELL-ROUNDED ART

Those roundels are round hells of making the perfect 'phulka'

over indulgence can make you too a rotund 'phulka'

the trick it seems is in the dough

the flour is taken in good measure

you've to gradually add water and wreck you fingers round it

it's time to bid food bye to your nails

once you have messed around

and managed to make it a glutenous lump

you lump for some time to settle it

not to forget the liberal doses of oil or ghee or malai you've slathered on its pliable self

once it's settled you take your rolling board

and the slim trim much handy rolling pin

take manageable portion from the settled dough to unsettle it

dust it with dry flour now start rolling

into thin rounds for which you've to make many rounds

till you get the perfect round

roll roll till you rock

serve the different cartographer's delight hot smeared with ghee or just dry glutenous gluttonous delight.

The rolling pin otherwise can

be put to more effective use!



Sudeshna Mukherjee: Sudeshna Mukherjee's poems deal with varied human nature. A keen observer, she chronicles the happenings around her and writes with a tinge of humour. 'Meanderings of the Mind' and 'Mélange' are her published collections of poems. She loves 'words' and loves to play with them.



THE SILENT CORRIDOR

The corridor falls silent no chirp nor whisper found... in the adjoining classrooms and compartments once bustled with sounds of brisk footsteps vacant spaces now delineate saga of dread and fear eerie silence speaks loud another time smile hides face in the crevices of second wave laughter is caught in the web of hung verdict palpable everywhere The swing no more giggles nor bursts into peals of laughter the strong bough looks weak and emaciated having been deprived of cutie pies' innocent demeanor

The school bell does not ring nor does it send alarm for change of period the desks, benches rue their salad days faintly sobs the black board

yet hope lurks...in the melodious oeuvre of cuckoos perched on the adjacent mango tree as they try to regale our wretched souls hope rides... the steps of horizon pairs with dawn and morn sprinkles positivity in the vistas forlorn faith too sprouts...

when the swing moves to and fro to the tunes of wind even if no one inhabits

a rhythmic whisper fills the silent zone

validates strong belief's desire to move on

for this winter is about to leave

and spring cannot be far behind.



Sujata Dash: Sujata Dash is a retired banker. She is passionate about poetry and music. Nature remains her first love and she is enamoured by its beauty and subtleties. She is a regular contributor to anthologies published both nationwide and worldwide. Till now, she has one published anthology of poems, 'More Than Mere' (Publisher-Authorspress) to her credit.



HAVE CONFIDENCE WITHIN

This is to let you know that

You care for yourself first

Or you will be unable to do the same for others.

This is to let you know that

You are brilliant

You are awesome

You have the capability to overcome all the odds.

This is to let you know that You have the confidence within You could succeed in every way.

This is to let you know that You have never quit the field Until you get victorious

You are exceptional You are the role model You are the inspiration to many You are you, a phenomenal woman.



Sujata Paul: She is a trilingual poetess residing in Tripura. By profession, she is a teacher. She is a Founder of Creative Tripura. She has published three poetry books. She has been published in special anthologies. .She has been conferred Sahitya Academy Award, 2020 by Gujrat Sahitya Academy in collaboration with the #MotivationalStrips, Literoma Nari Samman Award, 2020, Most Influential Women Award, 2020 by The Spirit Mania, and the Literary Excellence Award by Suryodaya Literary Foundation, 2020.



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BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING

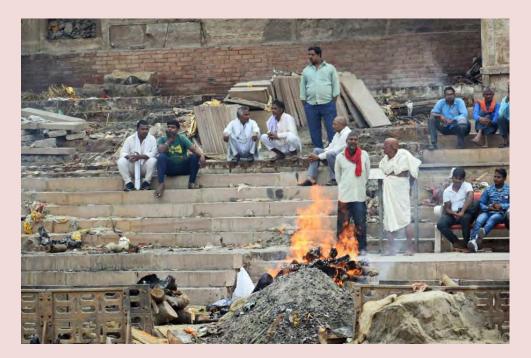
When you said 'no' To all my desires I denied every denial!

You tried to block My advancing steps But I didn't stop at the gate With a smile and closed eyes I rejected all restrictions, climbed Up over the fences and reached the top, For me obstacles were always fun! When you closed the doors Like mad, I knocked and knocked Till my thumping sounded like the gong You looked curtly from behind the curtains I asked, "why can't you hear me?" There was no answer.

I knew you didn't care I knew I have to advance and dare I have to break the glass ceiling And get out of the tower To fly higher.



Sumitra Mishra: Major Dr. Mrs. Sumitra Mishra is a Professor of English who retired as the Principal, Government Women's College, Sambalpur, Odisha. She has also worked as an Associate N.C.C. Officer in the Girls' Wing. She is a life member of the Odisha Lekhika Sansad and the Sub-editor of a magazine titled "Smruti Santwona". Her poems and short stories in both English and Odia are widely published in literary magazines and e-zines. To her credit she has twelve published books; four collections of poetry in English. She lives in Bhubaneswar with her family.



ILLUSIONS

Claiming to save the planet, genocide, paranoia, starvation strangles. Political masks suffocate, struggling for nano breaths lose the battle for oxygen, my last gasp.

Every second countless mirrors shatter.

My perfectly sculpted body

decimated to putrid lumps of flesh

head eyeballing a gutter swallowing excreta in a sewage drain a goatskin bloating by the minute on Ganga waves desperately seeking to embrace the shore or a small ditch of a sandy grave among corpses abandoned, contagious death sitting on live shoulders no wood or space to cremate but wait, wait, perhaps where garbage incinerates will I be half charred half baked?

stench pervades the pavement,

What of my beloved?

too low a caste

for an apology of a cremation even.

Alive was scorched, was torched

beyond that holy line of fanatic reason,

in the land of the dead

chasing life's illusions.



Sunil Kaushal: I am a poet-writer residing in Pune, India. I am a retired gynecologist now working as a writer having contributed to more than 25 National and International anthologies. I have published my memoirs recently. Besides several other awards over the years, I was awarded the Literoma Women Achiever's Award, 2019. I have received the the Nissim award for 'exquisite prose' from TSL in 2020.



SKY: TWO SCENES

The sky at evening is a canvas Created by Dali Against the electric blue Splashes of dull orange That finally dissolve into A red-streaked horizon. Gloom gathers around An hour of change!

II

Early morning

Crimson-faced

It peeps into the windows

Of the high-rises of Mumbai.

Clear cobalt blue dipped in splotches of

fiery orange.

The bright disk of orange appears

Dominating the horizon obscured

By increasing smog.

A day of change!



Sunil Sharma: Sunil Sharma, a writer-freelance-academic from Mumbai, India, has published 22 books, solo and joint. He edits Setu: http://www.setumag.com/p/setuhome.html

Please visit for details:

website: http://www.drsunilsharma.blogspot.in/



I have not met my soul or that of any other

I have no soul nor does anyone else

We only have bodies

hungry and thirsty and wanting

soul-less eyes gazing

at the lynching of people who we call 'different'

mascara-ed eyes watching babies being discarded and exploited

wearing a mask of respectability to keep quiet

burn marks and kicks wrapped up in sarees

hollow doll-bodies stitched up for pleasure

soul-less hearts, un-hearing the cries of a thirsty young boy,

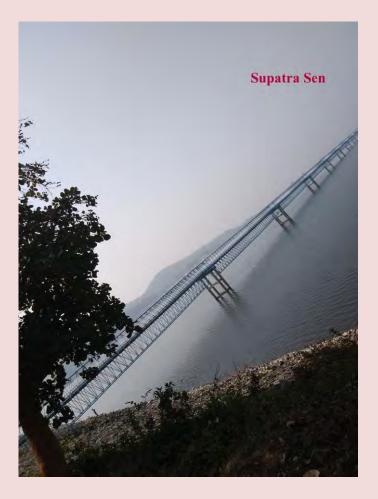
kicked for entering the kingdom of stones

Dividing skins—in colours and classes, treating them as pariahs

Soul-less, heart-less cadavers roaming the face of the earth.



Sunita Singh: She is a bi-lingual poet and writer, writing in English and Hindi. Her poems feature in Indian and International Anthologies and e-magazines. Many of her poems have won awards on on-line forums like Kaafiya, Poetry Planet, The Significant League etc. A few of her Hindi poems have also been turned into lyrics for private albums. She is an active member of Katha Kathan, a forum for reviving Indian languages. She lives in Delhi and is fond of travelling, music, reading. She finds inspiration from nature.



BRIDGES

What goes on at the other side Is oft thought of far and wide Blue skies meet bountiful land Boats sail and rivulets flow Perhaps men rejoice and women glow To the young a fascination Unleashing infinite imagination In youth an open dare That needs be crossed or burnt With little thought or care

Bridges separate to re-connect All that is meant to remain apart To look forward to what awaits With gratitude to those that depart

Yet some may never be crossed However hard one can try A million times in the mind But never in fact Though tears you may cry The bridges we build

Are what we leave

When travelling beyond no return

Are all that which remain

Of bonds and stories we weave...



Supatra Sen: Dr. Supatra Sen, Associate Professor is a veteran academician, teaching and researching in the fields of Botany and Environment. Her international books, papers and reviews are chiefly in her professional field. Of late her poetries have been published in Setu, Muse India, Inkspire, Indus Woman Writing, Café Dissensus, Literary Yard, Indian Periodical, Tech-Touch Talk, Glomag, Ode to a Poetess, Bombay Duck, Story Mirror and others. She is also the founder and Chief Editor of an ISSN peer-reviewed multi-disciplinary academic journal 'Harvest' since 2016.



acrylic painting by Suzette Portes San Jose

FOR ONLY THE DAFFODILS KNEW...

for the love and passion, i hold deep in my heartmy every thought of the day is how it comes to start the giggles and laughter shared as i open my eyesalong with my every breath and sighs for the dreams of hope and fate to have you nearthe longings that i keep for so long and forever to have you, feel you... in the air of my every breathto keep holding on to the memories even after death for only the daffodils knew the whispers of my silence

....my soul moans with the wind among the star's existence

.....the whining sound with the whirling leaves on the ground

.....a body in spirits high lay there waiting just to be found

for only the daffodils knew the steadfastness of time

.... as it stood still motionless with words that won't fall in rhyme

.....every beat of this heart behold each word of my song

.....in the rhythm that only you and I can dance along.



Suzette Portes San Jose: She was born and raised in Cebu City, Philippines. She was born with a passion for writing and living in her art forms. She now has joined 23 book anthologies internationally. She is also a recipient of multiple awards for her ART works and Literary works. She also founded her own Poetry Group of artists and poets writing Ekphrastic Poetry. She is also a founder of Artist Kids charity project all for free. She is also a Publisher and is now publishing her own book along with other book anthologies of her group.



https://in.pinterest.com/pin/811985007787730150/

A HYMN TO MA BHABATARINI,

A DEVOTEE OF THE HOLY MOTHER

My choppers of logic became futile to deny your existence—

As I feel you're breathing affectionately on my forehead,

As I realise the supreme consciousness that's beyond my sense,

As I hear a caveat for abstaining myself from the call of mermaid.

Your bountiful hands reach after crossing thousand boundaries—

To save my drowning boat amidst the deepest part of the sea.

Your loving fingers reconstruct me with myriad scattered derbies

Collected from the vastness beneath your feet for my perpetuity.

Oh Divine Mother! Now all flutes are playing to amplify the cruelest

Song and all conches have been employed to distract me from my goal.

But, I know that your kindness is enough to bring the end of my unrest—

As your signalling eyes know how to direct any misleading soul.

Dear Mother! I'll never play the oldest sting of the lyre to praise you.

Rather, praise differently that's unknown to devotees of every hue.



MOM-MOM

A mom is always alive,

She shines through her child's eyes.

She's the smile on their lips,

She's the light in their dark streets.

Her name brings a smile to my lips.

Her image makes me bow my head.

Coz she's been the guiding light,

Coz she's made me shine so bright.

Her guidance gave a direction to my life.

Her composure gave strength to my character.

I am, today, what I am

And it's all because of her.

I wouldn't have been here.

Unless the best in me was developed by her.

She's my mentor, my guiding light.

May she always shine so bright.



Uma Agarwal Bajaj: I am overjoyed to be in another edition, yet again, and I hope I am able to make meaningful contributions regularly. I am a Company Secretary by qualification, a homemaker by choice (since the last 20 years) and a budding businesswoman. Having been occupied with family and kids, I never realised that I had the ability to pen some of my thoughts, a phenomena I chanced upon about 5 years back. I write both in English and Hindi and hope to better myself with each passing day. I read fiction whenever I get some time. Apart from this, I love to cook and have a fascination for growing plants in my balcony.



Bloom is a range of three sketches investigating the effect seasonal change has on our perceptions of us. Autumn and winter are often perceived as morose, dark and dreary. The poetry focuses on the belief of alternative new life budding during these two seasons as a positive influence on our past perceptions.

BLOOM 0321

The moon of calm autumn

floats full over the inky mass of blooms;

their tendrils in a knot of beauty

Mellow coolness is answered, by their fragrant breathing and the loving profusion of dew

Nestling in the gloom,

the soft light

is silvering this autumn evening



Val Smit: VaL Smit is a South African artist and poet based in Cape Town. She writes ekphrastic poetry per artwork created and uses various media in portraying images that she feels fitting to deliver the message of the words she pens down. She focuses on the inner turmoil experienced by our disconnectedness from nature and each other. Her work has been published in various online journals including GloMag India, The Chachalaca Review, The West Review, The Raconteur Review, Literary Garland and Valiant Scribe.



SURVIVING RIOTS

I came home late that day The city and its Google maps Tend to mislead often Gauging time to reach home Often way of the mark

They don't take into account How much smoke a city Can conceal The ghettos

No longer safe

To bury heads

In proverbial sands

A generation somewhere On the globe Fed children bedtime tales Of hate

And we

Look at affairs

Day to day

Survival kits

In place

Asking menu of the day



Vandana Kumar: I am a poet residing in New Delhi, India. I work as French teacher and translator. I have contributed to various anthologies. Few of my poems were recently published in 'Spillwords' and 'North of Oxford'.



I find

"Introduce yourself",

to be such a difficult question,

I am the woman you saw behind the window tracing raindrops,

I am that burst of energy

you shuffled through in the cafe,

I am the silence

you occasionally crave in between

chaos,

I am the silhouette floating through your favourite bridge

taking photographs of pretty sunsets,

My mind and I are at so many places at once

how do I tell you where I live,

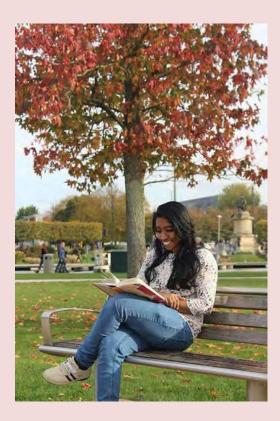
I am words I haven't written yet

and when you ask me to introduce myself,

I don't know what else to say

but that

my name means spring and I am mostly in search of all seasons that look like love .



Vasanthi Swetha: She is extremely passionate about the art of poetry, dance, reading and dreaming, and she believes that every poem that she writes is a result of a conversation with her soul.



THE QUINTESSENTIAL TRUTH

Sunshine to sunshine,

Each syllable, each burst of light —

A note of the heart, orchestrated by the Flautist,

The years of our life—His sheet music.

The score He wrote, though undecipherable at first,

In time, became readable.

The tryst with divinity,

What began as a futile endless search,

A rendezvous of emotions-

Sometimes the octaves accented with happiness,

And sometimes dropping dropping several scales low,

But eventually reaching a crescendo,

Converging with the intrinsic being,

A full circle having achieved

With images speaking volumes,

And the words flowing into optical manifestations,

A conscious awareness illuminating the Truth

That the divinity so sought after

Lay in that quintessential word-

Me!



Vidya Shankar: I am a widely published Indian poet, writer, English teacher, a "book" in the Human Library, and an editor with Kavya-Adisakrit (an imprint of Adisakrit Publishing House). The author of two poetry books, *The Flautist of Brindaranyam* (in collaboration with my photographer husband, Shankar Ramakrishnan), and *The Rise of Yogamaya*, I have received several literary awards and recognitions. I find meaning to my life through yoga and mandalas.



THE EDGE OF TOMORROW

Walking through the mist

Of unmasked memories,

Distances disappear when I hear

The catch in your voice—

And though my eyes are worn-out,

Staring at the screen,

I wash my hands and wait. I have a crush On your poetry, and in the way You rescue words from slaughter

And have mercy on our souls During this quarantine recitation From two cylinder-hungry towns—

Your tired smile brightens my night With your spectacles perched over The edge of tomorrow.



Vijay Nair: I retired as an Associate Professor of English and I was awarded the Reuel International Prize for Writing & Literature in the year 2016. I was the 'Critic of the Year' in 2016, 2017 & 2018 at Destiny Poets, UK and was also adjudged the 'Poet of the Year' in 2018 by the same poetry group. Three of my poems have been included in the PG syllabus of BBMK University, Dhanbad.



THE ADVANCEMENT

The advancement of the human species

From discovering fire and making wheels to flying high

From hunter-gatherer to farmer and beyond

From weaving cotton and wool to weaving synthetic fibres

From theories of gravity and relativity to missions to Mars

And other planets

We have it all

But

I am waiting for the human species

To look inwards

To quell the inherent violence

To do away with the greed which makes us reach out for the skies

Yet makes us deaf and blind to the hungry and the hurting

Something that neither religion nor science has so far been able to do

Yet

When we know peace within and without

When we know equality of all creation

Only then, only then

We will be human



Vineetha Mekkoth: She is a poet, writer, translator and editor from Calicut, Kerala. She works as Assistant State Tax Officer in the State GST Department. She has been translating for the Kerala Sahitya Academy since 2014 and has also contributed articles for the Malayalam Literary Survey, a quarterly brought out by the academy. She has published poems and short stories in various anthologies. She is co-editor of two anthologies. Her debut poetry collection 'Ashtavakra and Other Poems' was published in August 2017 which is available on Amazon.



A POET'S FUNERAL

There he was Lying in a black coffin With a white shroud on Still with the same smile That won hearts He looked as if he were to get up Perhaps the very next moment He would rise to write another Of which he has written many Even today while he was halfway With a poem he was penning The Grim Reaper knocked his door Awaiting an embrace To transport him to Hades The disciples all came Circled him with mourning garlands Four lifted the four corners Got on the way To place him in the last bed Made of dust As they placed him In the deep pit of the grave They heard a voice Resembling his saying This is my last poem With this I give up the pen.



Zulfiqar Parvez: He is the Head of Academic Affairs cum English Language Teacher at Tanzimul Ummah International Tahfiz School, Dhaka. He has done his Honours and Masters in English Language and Literature from the University of Rajshahi.



ciao! 🙂