

HT Saturday

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HT Saturday - LitStream

A weekly supplement of Headlines Today dedicated to celebrating the literary spirit of Jammu and Kashmir. It showcases the works and contributions of eminent and emerging voices, with a discerning focus on fiction, criticism, translations, short stories, poetry and prose, feature writing capturing the vibrant pulse of the JK's literary landscape.

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Between Wound and Word: The Poetic Vision of Zahid Mukhtar



Professor Muhammad Aslam

The Poet

Zahid Mukhtar, a multifaceted writer, poet, playwright, and broadcaster, passed away a few days back. Born in Anantnag (also called Islamabad Kashmir (incidentally, rekhta.org shows him from 'Islamabad, Pakistan'), in 1952, Zahid (he used it as a nom de plume) had an illustrious career with the Doordarshan and All India Radio. People knew him more as a broadcaster than a writer. Zahid wrote in Urdu and Kashmiri and carved a niche in the literary circles here and in India. Some of his Urdu writings are: tishnagi (Thirst), tahreerain (Writings), sulagte chinar (Blazing Chinars), and Ajnabi shehar ke Ajnabi raaste (Alien Roads in an Alien City). His Kashmiri collection of poetry is titled tenbri halam (Lapful of Sparks, 2009). Although he is no more with us, he has left an indelible mark on the literary world.

I have chosen three ghazals of Zahid from his Urdu collection, *tishnagi* (Thirst), as a tribute to this great son of the soil.

Disclaimer: I do not claim to be a scholar of Urdu poetry. I am only a learner, sharing my understanding and interpretations as a student of the art.

Ghazal 1

Transliteration

larazti raat baagi hai abhi tum saath mat choro
abhi to baat baagi hai abhi tum saath mat choro
yeh maana subah se pehle bikharna hai tasavur ko
ajal ki maat baagi hai abhi tum saath mat choro
abhi to maine khannar ka kiya ek raaz hai afsha
lahoo ki zaat baagi hai abhi tum saath mat choro
teri raahon ke bakhshé aable phooté nahin ab tak
abhi saughaat baagi hai abhi tum saath mat choro
main ab bhi teri palkon par wahi thehra sa aansu
hoon

meri barsaat baaqi hai abhi tum saath mat choro
junoon dil ki waadi se sukoon dil ki sarhad tak
abhi sakraat baaqi hai abhi tum saath mat choro

Translation

The trembling night still lingers — don't leave
me yet.

Our conversation isn't over — don't leave me yet.
Yes, I know that before dawn, imagination must

لرزتی رات باقی ہے ابھی تم ساتھ مت چھوڑو
 ابھی تو بات باقی ہے ابھی تم ساتھ مت چھوڑو

یہ مانا صبح سے پہلے بکھرنا ہے تصور کو
اجل کی مات باقی ہے ابھی تم ساتھ مت جھوڑو

ابھی تو میں نے خنجر کا کیا اک راز ہے افشا
لہو کی ذات باقی ہے ابھی تم ساتھ مت چھوڑو

تری راہوں کے بخشے ابلے پھوٹے نہیں اب تک
ابھی سوغات باقی ہے ابھی تم ساتھ مت چھوڑو

میں اب بھی تیری پلکوں پر وہی ٹھہرا سا آنسو ہوں
میری برسات باقی ہے ابھی تم ساتھ مت چھوڑو

جنون دل کی وادی سے سکون دل کی سرحد تک
ابھی سکر ات باقی ہے ابھی تم ساتھ مت چھوڑو



scatter.

Death's final defeat still awaits — don't leave me yet.

I have only just revealed one secret of the dagger,
The essence of blood still remains — don't leave
me yet.

The blisters gifted by your paths haven't burst yet,
The pain's final gift still remains — don't leave
me yet.

I am still that tear resting upon your eyelashes,
My rain hasn't ended yet — don't leave me yet.
From the valley of passion to the borders of calm,
The last agony still remains — don't leave me yet.

Critical Evaluation

This ghazal is about longing, parting, and resistance against final separation. To me, it seems to be a love poem, and a contemplation on mortality.

memory, and living emotion. The poet seems to be in utter desperation, for he repeatedly asks, “abhi tum saath mat choro” (“don’t leave me yet”). He shows his despair by using contrasting images and symbols: raat vs subuh (night vs dawn), khanjar vs lahoo (dagger vs blood), aable vs saughat (blisters vs gift), aansu vs barsaat (tears vs rain), and junoon vs sukoon (madness vs peace). Each of these images gives a sense of some unfinished thing. It could be love, a confession, a transformation, or life itself. The refrain abhi tum saath mate choro is a heart-beat and manifests the deep emotional crisis that the poet is passing through. The plea becomes universal, moving from romantic to existential. The use of abhi (still/yet) seems to be a lover’s hoping against hope.

Zahid's diction is traditional yet vivid. Words like

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The Bicycle



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In those days, the roads were quieter. The air carried the scent of ripe mangoes in summer and the smoky chill of winter evenings. Motorbikes were rare, cars even rarer. But bicycles—ah, bicycles were everywhere. They were not just modes of transport; they were companions, confidants, and sometimes, silent witnesses to the rhythm of life.

My father had one. A black Hercules, sturdy and proud, with a silver bell that chimed like a temple ghanta. It stood by the veranda wall, leaning slightly, as if resting after a long journey. That bicycle was more than metal and rubber—it was my father's shadow on wheels.

He rode it every day. In sun and shower, through muddy lanes and dusty alleys, his bicycle was his constant companion. Whether he was going to the post office, the market, or the school where he taught, the bicycle carried him faithfully.

I remember watching him from the gate, his dhoti tucked up, his shirt fluttering in the breeze, pedaling with a rhythm that seemed to match the heartbeat of our home.

There was something poetic about the way he rode. He never rushed. His bicycle never groaned under haste. It moved like a thought—steady, deliberate, and full of purpose. I was a child then, curious and mischievous. The bicycle fascinated me. Its curved handlebars, the rubber grips worn smooth by years of use, the way the pedals turned like clockwork—it was a machine of magic. But it was also forbidden. My father was possessive about it, not out of pride, but out of necessity. It was his daily bread. His routine was predictable. Lunch was at one. Puja at one-thirty. A short nap followed. That was my window. I would tiptoe to the veranda, gently lift the bicycle, and wheel it out to the lane. The first few times, I only sat on it, feet barely reaching the pedals.

Later, I learned to balance, to push, to glide. The lane was narrow, flanked by hibiscus bushes and the occasional barking dog. I would ride in loops, imagining I was flying, the wind in my hair, the world blurring past. The bicycle creaked under my weight, but it never complained. It was as if it knew I was my father's son. Sometimes, I would hear the temple bell ring, signaling the end of puja. I would rush back, park the bicycle exactly as it was, and run inside, pretending to read. My father never said anything. But I suspect he knew. Perhaps he smiled inwardly, remembering his own



“

It was a Sunday. The sky was clear, the birds unusually quiet. My father sat at the lunch table, his plate untouched. He looked tired, not physically, but in a way that words cannot describe. After puja, he lay down for his nap. I went out, as usual, to take the bicycle for a ride. The handlebars were cold. The seat felt unfamiliar. I rode slowly, unsure. The lane seemed longer, the hibiscus dull. I returned early, parked the bicycle, and went inside. My father was still lying down. His eyes were open, staring at the ceiling. I called him. He didn't respond. My mother rushed in. There was panic, then silence, then the sound of a phone call.

childhood, his own first ride. One monsoon afternoon, the sky broke open. Rain lashed the earth like a thousand drums. The lane turned into a stream, the hibiscus bowed under the weight of water. I stood by the window, watching my father return from the market, drenched but smiling. His bicycle glistened, water dripping from the spokes like silver threads. He parked it, wiped it gently with an old towel, and placed a small packet of sweets on the table. "For you," he said. "You've been good this week." I looked at the sweets, then at the bicycle. I wanted to ask him—why do you ride in the rain? Why not wait? But I didn't. I knew the answer. The bicycle was not just transport. It was his resolve, his rhythm, his smiles.

Years passed. I grew taller. The bicycle grew older. Its bell lost its chime, the paint chipped, the tires wore thin. But it still stood by the veranda wall, proud and patient.

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He was gone. Just like that. No warning, no farewell. The bicycle stood outside, unaware. Or perhaps it knew. Perhaps it had carried him through life, and now, it stood still, waiting for a rider who would never return. We didn't move the bicycle for days. It stood there, like a monument. Neighbors came offered condolences, shared stories. Many remembered seeing him ride through the village, waving, smiling, always on time. I couldn't look at it. It felt too heavy with memory. One evening, I went out. The sun was setting, casting long shadows. I touched the bicycle. The rubber grips were still smooth. The pedals still turned. I sat on it, not to ride, but to remember. Sometimes we feel good to have a window view of our past. I recalled Robert Lynd's essay 'Window View' and now feel the inner meaning of what Lynd says of the value of memory. The painful event of the past seems sweeter when recalled later. It is like a man reaching the other shore after overcoming the danger of drowning. My father was not a philosopher. His bicycle was his message. Simple living and high thinking can make one happy. My grand daughter who lives in America is a girl of six year. She misses her father when he goes to office. She asks why he stays in office fo long. Her father says, to earn money. She says, Dad you say money cannot bring all happiness. Why then do you stay so long outside? To make you happy my daughter. She replies curtly, I do not get all I want. But I am happy. You need not stay so long outside. The boy in D.H.Lawrence's story used to hear all day the sound of dollars around him. But dollars could not make him happy. My father;'s bicycle taught me many lessons.

When I walk on the street alone I feel I see him again—his dhoti tucked, his shirt fluttering, pedaling with purpose. I hear the bell chime, the temple ghanta echo, the rain tapping on the spokes. I feel the wind, the rhythm, the resolve. And tears come to my eyes. Not because he was gone, but because he had left behind something so simple, so profound. Today, the roads are crowded. Motor-bikes roar, cars honk, buses groan. But sometimes, I see an old man on a bicycle, pedaling slowly, deliberately. And I smile. Somewhere, in some quiet lane, my father is still riding. In memory, in rhythm, in the silent turning of wheels. And the bicycle waits.

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How married am I



Nayeema Ahmad Mahjoor
Author and Senior Journalist

The day was designated initially solely for reading, with no plans for conversation, meetings, or gossip. However, it was later reorganised by a group of marching women, who arrived with the urgency and determination reminiscent of a Salvation Army unit, aiming to address the disturbances caused by wartime soldiers.

Their intervention transformed the day into an active effort to restore order and discipline among those affected by the war's chaos, emphasising a collective commitment to recovery and stability. But it was somewhat different with the fair sex.

Women, with their laughter, smiles, and elaborate layered attire, appeared to be on a specific mission, with me seemingly their target today. I prepared myself mentally for their probing questions and observations.

It was not an easy task to avoid their gestures or the mind games they had played with other women.

I found myself unable to move or protest, perhaps because the audience was unaware of my discomfort. They might have perceived me as one of them, all engaged in deciphering the complexities of married life. While listening to others' struggles often seemed straightforward, introspection within proved more challenging.

These women were not ordinary; they were extraordinary—intelligent, perceptive, and challenging to outwit. I couldn't determine which among them was the most remarkable, as their curiosity led them to explore the lives of every woman within their circle. Their community was large, yet the stories of its members were remarkably similar, passed down through generations over five thousand years, with minor modifications along the way.

We often hear discussions about breaking the glass ceiling in conversations or seminars. It was a moment to discover and explore the most influential and empowered women.

This discussion was unconventional, akin to peeling an onion—each layer revealing more profound truths, often bringing tears. Such tears, whether genuine or feigned, flowed effortlessly, reminiscent of scenes from Bollywood films. It was impossible to distinguish authentic emotion from pretence, as women often carried an abundance of tears—an emotional reservoir that seemed endless.

I was informed that they had



already spoken to dozens of women, some of whom laughed at the absurdity of it all, while others felt embarrassed to discuss it.

Those with covered faces giggled, and those in denim jeans raised their eyebrows. They still inquired about the challenges of being single, whether before or after marriage.

Despite our advancements in digital technology, increasing purchasing power, and our ability to reach great heights, we still hesitate to discuss women's issues openly in public forums. Such conversations could empower women to embrace their freedom of being single and even celebrate it. Society perceived it.

Marriage remains a sacred institution in our society, even as we have undermined it from within.

The intention was not to advocate for singlehood; instead, they aimed to reveal the hidden stories behind marriages or broken marriages. One older woman, abandoned by her husband in the early years of marriage, snubbed them, saying, "Have some mercy on our society. Do not try to ruin our culture. We are a value-based community. Avoid this rubbish of free womanhood; this is not our cup of tea." This did not deter their mission.

Having them around my coffee table felt ominous—not because I didn't enjoy their company, but because I didn't want to discuss my life, which had many grey shades hidden within vibrant colours. They seemed determined to peel away my layers.

I offered them tea and biscuits. Most of them didn't like tea; instead, they requested black coffee or some hot drink, which my cupboards lacked. My faith proved helpful, and they didn't ridicule me.

The lady in the yellow sari, Lata, asked me to close all doors and win-

dows so we could have a private all-girl talk without interference from my domestic maids, who were clearly curious to join. I had to ask them to leave and stand at the gate to avoid visitors, as I didn't expect anyone that day.

After sipping their tea or black coffee, they all turned to me and delivered a challenge that had been posed to dozens of women before. I was ranked number 220 in the survey. The question? Yes—the question?

It was not the question. It was a bullet coming straight out of the AK-47 that pierced my heart and created a big hole.

I started to feel blood oozing from the internal organs of the body. The pain was so intense that I did not dare to sigh. The wetness of my bones made me shiver. I could sense the deregulation of my body temperature.

Maybe they noticed the wrinkles getting into dark circles on my face for the first time.

They all fell silent. Their eyes turned to stone. Either they were staring at me, or I was staring at them; who could tell? Both sides were testing each other's patience, waiting to see who would speak first. Was a speech therapist needed?

Was the question too heavy? Or was it that I couldn't find the words to answer, or perhaps the courage to delve into the past? I felt that if I responded to this question, it would erupt like a volcano in my heart and destroy everything that was left. But they were waiting.

"How married am I?" What kind of question was that? I asked myself. Was I married one hundred per cent, fifty per cent, or five per cent? How could I measure it on a scale?

My heart started pumping too much blood to my brain. Perhaps I was losing myself.

The burden on my mind felt heavy and unshakeable. I looked at Maya, whose eyes were fixed on me, sunken and pale, devoid of life. Every time I glanced at her, my heart felt lighter, as if the lava had retreated into the core of my being, leaving behind the destruction and silt caused by flooding.

I had turned into a still sea. The turmoil had calmed. She wanted to respond to the question, but they were waiting for me to answer. The silt had settled.

Maya let out a laboured breath and said, “This question has defined my last thirty years of marriage, during which thousands of stories have been created and hundreds of poems recited every minute of every day. Yet, I left it untitled, untold, and buried. Perhaps I didn’t want to expose myself. How can I possibly summarise thirty years of my life in thirty words in thirty seconds, a journey that has been etched into the vast landscape of my soul? I never had the chance to express it, so it remained shrouded in darkness.”

My gaze unsettled her. She sighed deeply and began to murmur, "I was my Baba's doll, never having seen my father's eyebrows rise; that doll was ultimately trampled. Baba invested his fortune in my education, which cost him family, their connections and support."

She looked at me intently and said, "I dared to step outside the house, but I had to prepare myself for being labelled a 'market woman,' a title bestowed upon me by every family member."

Her eyes filled with tears as she covered her face with her hands.

"I was a mother, very delicate and fragile. My motherhood was tarnished when I was accused of having an illicit relationship with my son. I was a faithful wife, but over time, I became nothing more than an ATM."

I passed her a napkin to wipe her face, but she seemed lost in her despair. "I'm not even sure if there were any celebrations thirty years ago that I mistakenly believed were for my wedding. A few people attended, wrote up the papers, gave a sermon, and then left me with the document in hand. What was written on this paper? I didn't bother to read it; it wasn't our custom to do so. I followed the customs, but I was criticised for my ignorance. I was kicked out of the house. I became like a leaf on a poplar tree, constantly falling in the wind and turning to dust after every rain."

Lata took her hand and squeezed it gently.

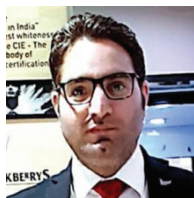
"Had I ever been a bride? Did I misbehave? Or did I believe in consent before stripping off?"

Didn't I try to fix myself or improve myself? Her questions bombarded me with so many ifs, and I had no memory of anything. We were exchanging looks, consid-

We were exchanging looks, consid-

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY, 2025

Access to Services : Mental Health in Catastrophes and Emergencies



Dr. Tasaduk Hussain Itoo
Physician/Public Health Expert

Mental health is a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. However in the current times, there is a huge surge in mental health problems across the globe among people and is becoming an issue of concern. Therefore, it becomes necessary to raise awareness of mental health illnesses while educating the population and mobilizing efforts to support mental health.

The theme for World Mental Health Day 2025, announced by the World Federation for Mental Health, is “Access to Services: Mental Health in Catastrophes and Emergencies.” It focuses on the urgent need to make mental health support available during times of crisis, including natural disasters, conflicts, and other emergencies.

Burden of mental disorders had risen over last few decades. WHO estimated that globally over 450 million people suffer from mental disorders. Currently mental and behavioural disorders account for about 15 percent of the global burden of diseases. Major proportions of mental disorders come from low and middle income countries. In India, the burden of mental and behavioural disorders ranged from 9.5 to 102 per 1000 population.

As per a recent research study, most strongly associated factors with mental disorders are deprivation. Lifetime risk of affective disorders, panic disorders, generalized anxiety disorder, specific phobia and substance use disorders are thought to be other factors. Psychological factors such as headache and body ache, sensory symptoms and nonspecific symptoms such as tiredness and weakness also makes people vulnerable to mental disorders. Biological factors affecting mental disorders are genetic origin, abnormal physiology and congenital defect.

Disasters are potentially traumatic events which impose massive collective stress consequent to violent encounters with nature, technology or mankind. A meta-analysis showed that post-traumatic stress disorder, generalized anxiety disorder and panic disorder were



common among disaster victims. As per WHO estimates, 10 percent of the people who experience traumatic events will have serious mental health problems and another 10 percent will develop behaviour that will hinder their ability to function effectively, in the situations of conflicts.

Drug abuse is becoming a serious issue of social concern during current times and the percentage of indulgence is witnessing an upsurge since last many years. Young population in particular are indulged into various kinds of social evils -- prominent being drug and substance abuse -- a way towards ruining a purposeful life and career. Drug abuse has been a factor in creating violations of multiple -- from domestic violence, sexual violence, violence of the community to violence of personal ambitions including emergence of suicidal thoughts, besides posing multiple health risks. One of the direct or indirect manifestation's of drug abuse is the rising incidence of suicides among people in general and youth in particular -- which is emerging as a grievous public health cum mental health concern.

Suicidal behaviour is found to have more predilection with female gender, working condition, improper decision making, premarital sex, physical abuse and sexual abuse. Ongoing stress and chronic pain heightened the risk of suicide. Living alone and a break in a steady relationship are also significantly associated with suicide. Work environment, school environment and family environment plays important role in pathogenesis of mental disorders.

Suicidal ideation has been shown to be linked to a higher risk of death by suicide, and openly disclosing suicidal thoughts or plans to friends and family or through social media platforms – is becoming a serious social challenge since last few years.

Therefore, there is a serious need

to track suicide risk in real time together with a better understanding of the ways in which people communicate or express their suicidality. Recognizing the warning signs in people who have suicidal thoughts and ensuring to them help in the form of positive support networking is the moral responsibility of everyone of us.

Moreover, stigma related to mental disorders, lack of awareness in common people, delayed treatment seeking behaviour, lack of low cost diagnostic test and lack of easily available treatment are the main hurdles in combating the problem of mental health issues. In addition factors pertaining to traditional medicine and beliefs in supernatural powers in community delays diagnosis and treatment. Lack of political commitment to non communicable diseases, further aggravates the load of mental disorders.

RECOMMENDATIONS (THE WAY FORWARD)

Burden of mental disorders seen by the world is only a tip of iceberg. While going through a recent research study I acknowledged that the authors have validated and enormously worked on mental health. To promote mental health, there is a need to create such living conditions and environment that support mental health and allow people to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyle. A society that respects and protects basic, civil, political, and cultural rights is needed to be built to promote mental health.

Mental health policies should not be solely concerned with mental disorders, but should also recognize and address the broader issues which promote mental health. This includes education, labour, justice, transport, environment, housing, and health sector. For attaining this, inter-sectoral coordination is a mainstream.

There is a need to aim at improving child development by early

childhood interventions like pre-school psychosocial activities, nutritional and psycho-social help to give roots for a healthy community. Presently, the community is also demanding the skills building programme and child and youth development programmes.

Moreover, there is a need to do socioeconomic empowerment by improving access to education and employment opportunities. Social initiatives should be taken to bring people together for social, health and educational reasons as well as income generation activities. Society needs to be free of discrimination and violence. Reducing discrimination against sex, caste, disability and socioeconomic status is an important aspect to reduce mental disorders. Social support for elderly people needs to be strengthened. Programmes targeting towards indigenous people, migrants and people affected by disasters and armed-related violence need to be established.

Another key to reduce mental morbidity is to strengthen the treatment of mental disorders at the level of primary health care. There are multiple interventions needed to prevent the progression of mental disorders from early manifestations to more serious and chronic cases. There is a need of simple, easily available diagnostic test and low cost treatment to provide better primary health care.

Reluctance to drug abuse could be a reforming initial step to change its course for the benefit of society. Besides working on thoughts of people addicted to drug abuse, positive motivation, vocational guidance, educational-deaddiction counselling could be revolutionary steps to alleviate them from such abuse.

Inclusive and accountable institutions of social justice, health and social reformation need to work hand in hand to provide integrated

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Access to Services : Mental...

and highly intellectualized solutions for eliminating drug abuse from the society. Every sector of the society has a crucial role to play in addressing the rising incidence of social evils – including Government, civil society, NGO's, religious scholars, teaching community among others.

Moreover, social stigma associated with mental health issues is unfortunately a big challenge and we need to put our efforts best in breaking this stigma so that people who suffer -- shall reveal their illnesses and ensure help.

More to say, psychiatric spe-

cialists, clinical psychologists and epidemiologists need to reorient their research in such a way that true burden of mental disorders are estimated at community level. This would provide true situation of the mental health problem. Secondary prevention must focus on

strengthening the ability of primary care services to provide effective treatment.

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FROM PAGE 5...

How married...

ering exposing ourselves, but Maya had struck a nerve and unleashed a flood of emotions.

“How were my babies born? That must be the joyous memory every mother treasures in her heart. Was I hospitalised, or did I endure labour at home? What a fool I had been—not keeping a record of my children’s birthdays, their first smiles, their first steps, or their first days of school. I had some diaries stored in the attic, but I was told they had turned to dust. I knew those diaries had been burned when I was declared an ashtray.”

She lost her balance on the chair. "Have I lost my memory, or have I killed my sense of feeling? I think the memory loss began the day I fell down the stairs, or maybe I was knocked down by some invisible force. Baba would say that my mother died of a ruptured vein in her brain. I'm not sure if she was also pushed down the stairs."

She wept bitterly, calling for her mother through her sobs. “Your question has buried me deep under the debris of thirty years.”

All twelve eyes were fixed on her, probably regretting or questioning why they had asked me such a thoughtless question that had touched a deep chord in her heart.

She had miserably failed to hide

her inner turmoil. As for me, I was an actor, skilled at concealing my own struggles. But she couldn't manage it; she laid her life bare and exposed.

Lata handed her another cup of tea to help bring her back from her trauma. I shrugged and stepped closer to her, noticing tears falling like a torrential rain.

It was challenging to find the courage to say anything to her. Finally, she spoke in a broken voice, "How can I answer a question I haven't even considered in the last thirty years? Have I truly not considered it, or have I just not had the time?"

The other women were scanning her every feature, as if probing for signs of her marital status or, if she was married, the extent of her obligations.

Her fingers were bare; she wore no ring, which in many cultures signifies a married woman. Yet, our society had no such custom.

I never considered buying jewellery like the other women in my family. I wore no earrings in my ears, nor did I have a golden chain gracing my earlobes. I am not a Kashmiri Pandit like Girija, who followed the custom of wearing a long gold chain (Deja hour) around her ears. That chain announced her

marital status, signalling to others that she was unavailable. Yet, men still pursued her regardless.

I looked at Lata's finger, wondering if wearing a golden ring was truly enough to showcase the joy of marriage. Lata's golden ring seemed to cover the shame of revealing her husband's mischief and extra-marital affairs.

Girija never removed her gold chain after getting married, even though she had made several unsuccessful suicide attempts due to her husband's infidelity and indifference. Sitting in the courtyard in the dark of night had become her routine, counting the stars and asking the moon why it seemed to dim more each night. The doctor had advised her on multiple occasions to seek proper medical help.

It's said that the shimmer of a ring can measure the degree of happiness in a marriage. Lata kept staring at me in silence, rolling her eyes and aligning them with my broken expressions and the ups and downs of my dark circles.

Her gaze made my breathing shallow, the pressure building in my veins as if I had just run a marathon. Sometimes I have seizures, and I've learned to manage them, just as I've become skilled at hiding everything from everyone.

Lata stood up from her chair, approached me, and started caressing my chest. I gestured for her to sit down. She held my hands; strangely, I was not the one shedding tears. Those tears, perhaps, had left a crying woman to caress me instead.

Rita, Atiqa, and Girija felt remorseful for creating a sombre atmosphere by asking questions that women could hardly answer. I regained my composure, yet I couldn't shake the guilt of being so gullible in front of these women, who had supported me through every situation since I moved into this neighbourhood.

My mental struggle to answer their question was daunting: “If marriage is meant to advance one’s generation, then I have achieved that. If it is about establishing closeness, respect, and love between two families, then I have erased my existence to allow this seed to grow into a mighty tree.”

Rita muttered, "I was never considered a woman, let alone a wife, but I've always been projected as a superwoman." Her words resonated deeply with me, moistening my eyes as well as those of the women around me, perhaps all of us searching for answers to questions we had grappled with throughout our lives.

FROM PAGE 3...

Between Catastrophe and...

after the “death of God” come into play. Even when historic buildings are crumbling apart, people still talk about judgement and tragedy. ancient structures are “a burden of legacy even as the old structures fall apart.” Arendt’s studies of dictatorship can be seen in the bureaucratic displays and mass panic, while McCarthy’s dark surroundings are similar to decay.

Krasznahorkai's story is quite expressive, full of moments of amazement and important truths. The main character's realisation of connectedness is nearly spiritual as he says, "he would discover the enormous joys of mutuality ...

threading the planets and the stars.” These times of insight are fragile and depend on somebody else. They do show that people can concentrate, recognise things, and make moral choices. When you experience the warmth of a fire or see how important a window is, things become clear like “everything about him regained its original significance ... the window became a window you could look out again.”

The book doesn't try to make complicated decisions easier. People often feel stuck and try to make sense of things when progress slows down. The main character sees their life as a series of escapes, going

“from meaninglessness into music, from music to guilt, from guilt and self-punishment into pure ratiocination.” Finally, the main character starts to accept a simpler view of life, one that is basic and real, when he realises that “it was enough to notice and observe that which he actually possessed.”

Existential needs including moments of amazement, moral awareness, and being present, which demonstrate little acts of affirmation in the midst of deterioration. The *Melancholy of Resistance* by Krasznahorkai is a deep look at how we see things, what is right and wrong, and how people keep

going. The book raises questions about how we comprehend things, from the heated criticism of excessive language to the bright epiphany of cosmic interconnection. People can fight against chaos and decay by paying attention, observing, and being aware of what is right and wrong. The *Melancholy of Resistance* is a deep look at what it means to be human. Does human meaning last, even if it's weak, in a world that is always falling apart? Krasznahorkai sounds like a real person who is attentive and insistent to confirm existence itself is as easy as perceiving, attending, or resisting.

Dreams of Tomorrow



Dr Mallika Tripathi

I often dream about the future
not as a place I must reach,
but as a quiet unfolding of light
after the long patience of night.
The dawn does not rush;
it arrives with purpose,
painting the sky in gold
as if reminding me that renewal
is the nature of all things.
I move through life surrounded by people,
not to possess their love
but to awaken their smiles—
for in their joy, I find my reason to be.
The darkness of the past follows at a distance,
powerless against the light I now carry.
Each step forward is an act of defiance,
a choice to live without fear.
And when I sing,
it is not merely a song—
but a quiet offering
to the vastness that listens,
a melody that touches hearts,
and in its echo,
purifies the soul.

(Dr. Mallika Tripathi is Professor and Head, Department of Applied Science & Humanities at Feroze Gandhi Institute of Engineering & Technology, Raebareli. A celebrated poet and author of Whispers of the Soul, she is the Founder & President of Anjani Welfare Society. Recipient of the Best Language Teacher of the Year and the Emily Dickinson Award, Dr. Tripathi's works beautifully blend intellect, emotion, and spirituality.)

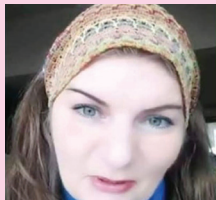
Poems are poems

Rafiya Sayeed

Poems are poems
no poem is a lesser poem.
No poem is bad
no poem is gratuitous;
yes, it can be raw
like a foetus in womb,
it can be crude
like rough-hewn stones.
No poem is silly
no poem is a prank;
yes, it can be hilarious
like gestures of clown,
it can be abstruse
like first words of a toddler.
Poems are frames
of ink and silence.
Poems are tapestries
of the poet,
woven with his chest beats,
with flashes of his thoughts.
Poems are poems
no poem is a lesser poem.

(Rafiya Sayeed is a writer and educator. She writes English poetry and also composes lullabies and children poems in regional languages. Her work has been featured on various online literary platforms and magazines, reflecting her deep love for poetry.)

Pollution And Poison

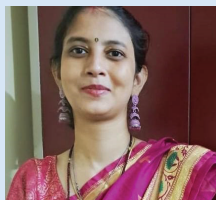


Eva Petropoulou Lianou

Eva Petropoulou Lianou
Water,
Air,
Pollution everywhere
We breathe the plastic
People are swimming among the garbage
into the Ocean
We expect to have a clean atmosphere and
be happy
But people are bombing citizens and coun-
tries with Poison
We are taking for environmental health
But we humans
We pollute
We don't respect our selves
We don't respect nature
We play God
We create earthquakes
We create rain
We create typhoon
One day Earth
Will say enough
and human will be rejected
For his bad behaviour

(Eva Petropoulou Lianou is a Multi Awarded Author of Greece Children Literature International poet and official nomination for Nobel Peace prize 2024)

Sunday Bonanza



Dr Purnima Singh

The world exhales in soft zephyr
Temple bells and Azan ring soft in the air,
tea curls steam into sunlight,
a sparrow rehearses her hymn
on the edge of my balcony.
Time forgets to hurry.
Red chilies glisten,
oranges glow like lanterns,
the air tastes of coriander and dust.
Children chase kites over stalls and vendors
and bargains are sung louder than prayers.
Sunday smells of earth and laughter.
Golden hours slip
into a blue silence of Ganges—
shadows lean longer,
dreams of Monday tap
at the closed window.
But for one last moment,
the heart rests in stillness.
Let the week's burdens
be folded like laundry,
neatly tucked away.
Let silence mend the frayed threads.
Let love walk barefoot,
slow and unashamed.
Let this Sunday be enough.

(Dr Purnima Singh is a Assistant Professor at Vasant Kanya College Varanasi)

Garden of Dreams

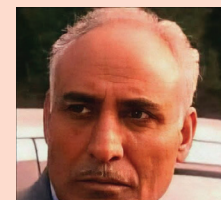


P.V.Laxmiprasad

In the world seized of dreams
A gardener of dreams
That germinate and melt
chain of mountains
She's the beauty of rainbow
That mesmerize the sky of hearts
Like a swimmer on lakes
of full-moon body
Like a player in the ground
to standing ovation being
cheered
Down her cheeks
the river of love betokens royal honour
the sprouting twigs smile
Upon
Her majesty
Like chirping birds that greet every dawn
Like million sun beams that radiate the
garden of greens
She hosts dazzling exhibition
In the charming display of footsteps
Like a tune smith
to compose hits of
Loving butterflies
A captive of love
In the empire of bewitching queen
Like waves of whirlpools
That Bay
of Bengal kisses
A bubbling soul awaits
to invoke her garden.

Dr. P.V. Laxmiprasad is an eminent academician, erudite scholar, and senior editor. He has published 44 books in English and approximately 300 publications overall, including 120 poems and 40 book reviews. A strong contributor to literature, his expertise includes Indian Writing in English and English Language Teaching. His research papers are preserved by E-Harvard University Library, USA.

A Gossip With The Dead



Ali Shaida

We won't meet again,
For, you left for an unknown bay,
Beyond the reach of my sigh,
Let's gossip the unspoken silence,
Your grave is yet to be finished,
Prayers to wait,
Cries unsoftened,
And the silence unanswered,
So enough time we have to whisper,
The pain and agony we shared till now,
Were our mutual bonds,
Betrayed by the Angel of Death.

(Hailing from Nepora, Qazigund, Ali Shaida is a retired banker and an accomplished writer who weaves prose and poetry in Urdu, Kashmiri, and English with equal grace. The author of eleven books—six in Kashmiri, four in Urdu, and one in English—he has carved a distinct place in contemporary regional literature. He also led the Maraaz Adbee Sangam as its President from 2022 to 2025)

Between Wound...



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