

HT Saturday

LitStream

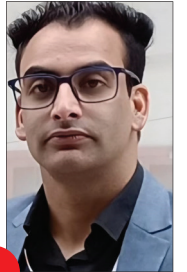
BILINGUAL WEEKLY LITERARY SUPPLEMENT OF DAILY HEADLINES TODAY

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The Sigma and the Sepulcher

3



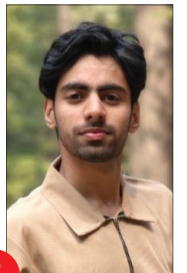
100 Days of Resolve

4



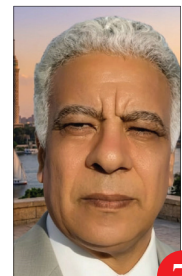
Ruskin Bond: Dehradun Shaped his Fictionscape

5



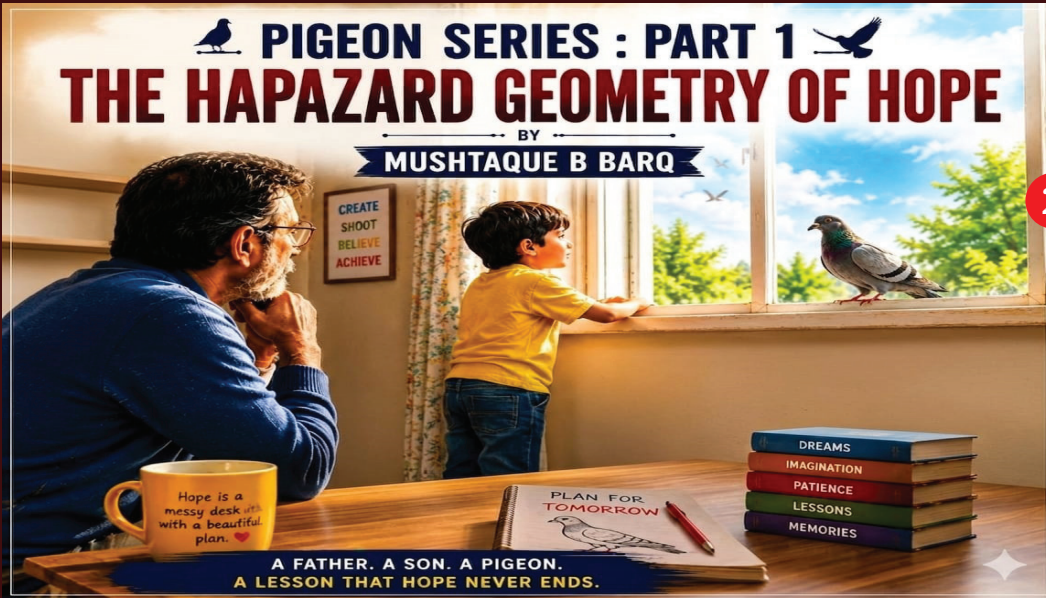
The Ordinary Witness

6

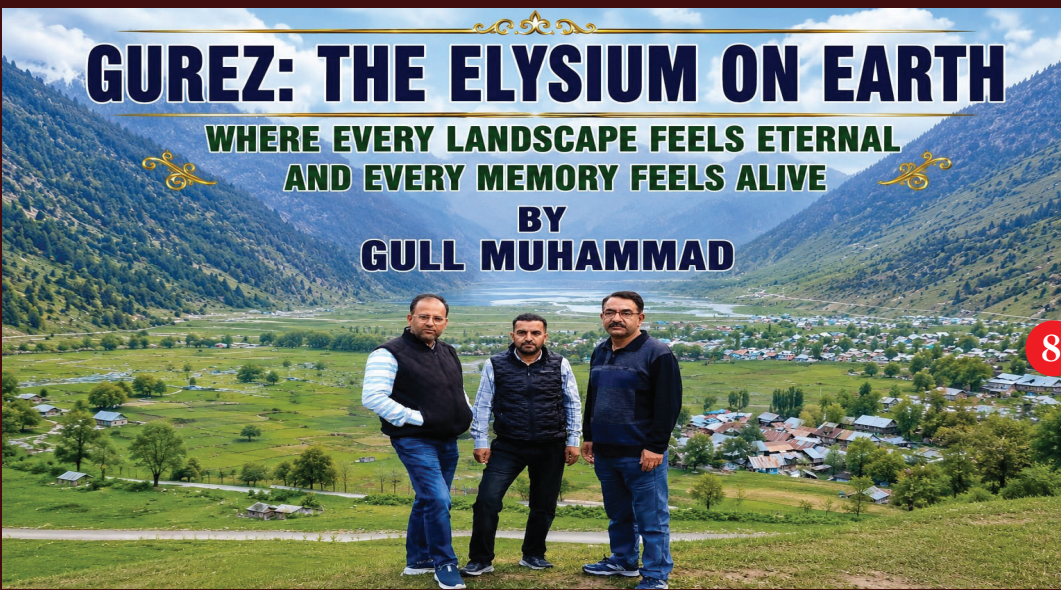


Treasuries of Sorrow

7



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8

POETRY CORNER

PAGE 10,11 & 12



Imran Yousuf



Nayeema Ahmad Mahjoor



Uzair Mushtaq Dar



Dr. Priyanka Jalan



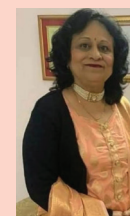
Rayees Ahmad Kumar



Zulfi qar Naqvi



Majrooh Rashid



Rita Chugh



Mustafa Moin



Dr. Perwaiz Shaharyar



Malikzada Salman

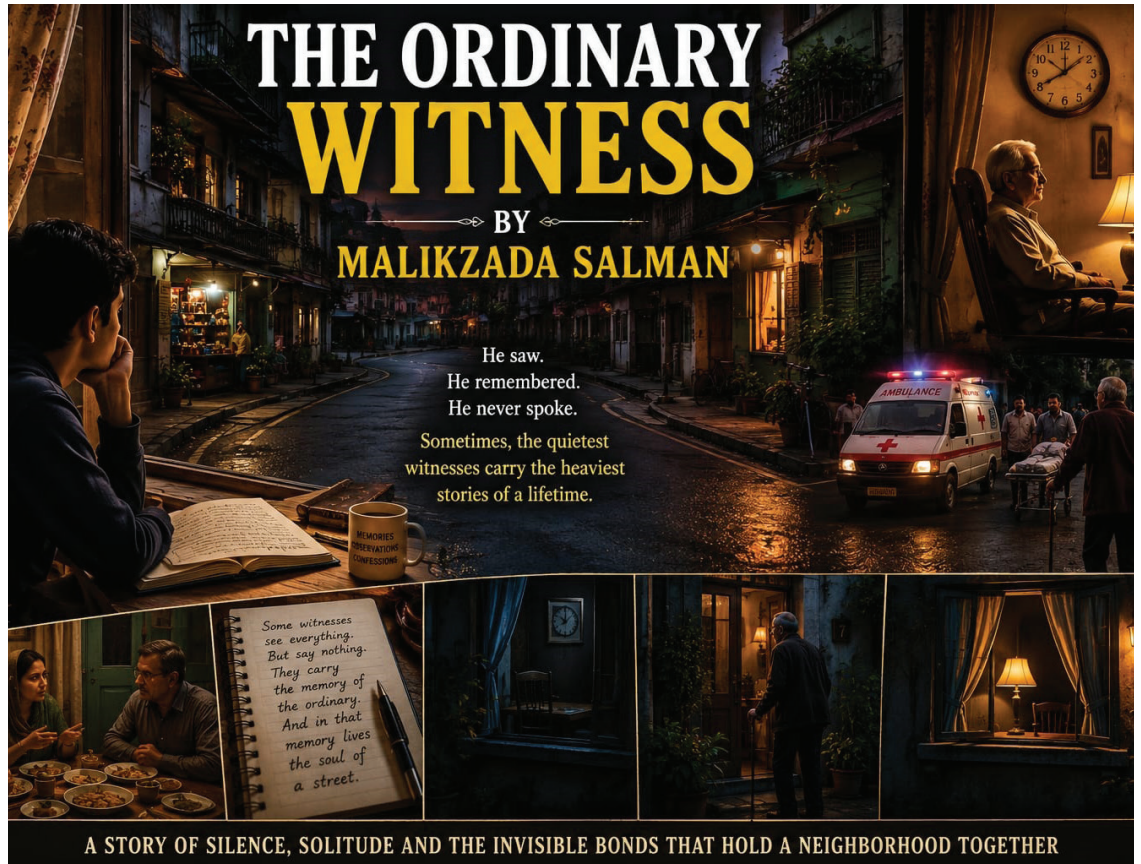
The curve of the street was like a horseshoe magnet. The houses pressed so close together that you could read the time from the neighbour's kitchen clock, if you cared to look. Even the aroma from the adjacent kitchens wandered freely past the curtains hung between the homes. The muddled configuration of the houses was bound to give a stranger a tough time finding allotted destinations.

Habib uncle had lived across from our house ever since I was born, slowly turning a permanent fixture of my eyes. Just as a tree becomes part of the window frame, his daily movements became a twinkle to my eyes. The lamp of his sitting room always marked my awakening and the chair aligned exactly at an angle of my view point that filled every thought he held. The creak of his chair, the occasional cough, and, more often, his yawns were sensory niceties I would freely hold onto.

For some reason, he was a topic at our dinner table. My mother would often describe him as a man from another state living in a vacuum, traceless and clueless. He lived like a dot in the cosmos, completely devoid of family. He was the very epitome of tranquillity, held together by stillness and solitude. It was evident from his room that an infinite calm and silence was the family he had left.

The wheel of time eventually landed me at a university campus out of state. That four-year gap was more than just a stretch of time spent with books and campus friends; it was a void where Uncle Habib still lingered in the furthest corner of my imagination. When the turning wheel finally dropped me back in my homeland, it was enough to show me how relentlessly things shift with the passage of time.

Returning to the street, the changes were stark. I noticed, for instance, that the Kapoor



A STORY OF SILENCE, SOLITUDE AND THE INVISIBLE BONDS THAT HOLD A NEIGHBORHOOD TOGETHER

roof had been patched with a slightly different tile—the way a wound heals in a shade that is almost, but not quite, the original skin. I noticed that the elm outside number seven had been trimmed on one side only: the side that had once blocked Habib's view of the far corner. But the washed-off walls, the little street shop, and, most visibly, the water tap at the end of the street had all faded into oblivion.

None of these announced anything. They just pointed out for serious reflections.

As things began to unveil, I realized our street possessed a collective memory that lived entirely within him. It wasn't a recorded history, nothing written, nothing spoken aloud. It was simply the memory of a man who had remained constant, while the rest of us were swept up in the restless hustle and bustle of our own lives.

To a bard, these vague descriptions might have served as living verses; to me, they were just another page of the journal I had left behind four years ago on my writing desk, perhaps a lingering memory carved onto those glossy pages, revealing my secret confessions and observations. He held his eyes on us the way gravity holds things: invisibly, without intention, simply as a consequence of what he was. Deep within his sunken eyes,

he carried the faint impression of an elusive hope, God knows for what!

Until the lamp failed to ignite one random evening, grey Tuesday in February. It remained off that night, and the next. By the end of third day, I noticed the curtains still hung in the same position as always, but the chair was empty, and the room behind it held nothing but the tickling wall clock and the heavy presence of his absence. There was a continuous conversation between the ticking wall clock and the surrounding silence. Every stroke was heard, every quiet breath felt; more than that, his absence became the very medium through which the emptiness of the room was translated. Without him, the street looked different almost unfinished, like a sentence left suspended by a dying man on his deathbed...

Days passed, and his absence finally became undeniable when a neighbour I barely knew mentioned to my mother, in a casual tone, that he had been hospitalized five days prior. A fall. On our street, a fall was a fracturing metaphor. His fall was purely physical, but ours was moral and ethical. A fallen angel with broken wings may no longer soar in the heavens, but his dignity remains uncompromised. He had lain on his kitchen floor for nearly a full day,

unnoticed, before anyone even thought to cross the threshold. Perhaps then, God sent another angel to carry him away. For though our houses stand neck-and-neck, our hearts live too far apart to carry a fallen man to the hospital.

I stood on the pavement in front of his house and thought about every moment I had witnessed from my own window, every ambulance, every argument, every pocket of grief the street had generated. I understood then, with a shame that washed over me like icy water, that there had been one person on this street who always noticed, yet never spoke. That solitary lamp, those still curtains and Habib himself had held the custody of the ordinary.

The silence was monstrous, swallowing up my degree and the collective wisdom my professors and co-scholars had infused in me. I felt the burden of the document labelling me postgraduate, but within me the inclusiveness had not yet been cremated. It was breathing, however feebly.

He survived. He came home six weeks later, leaning on a walking stick. For the first time, I stood at my window deliberately, with the intention of watching for the taxi to emerge over the ridge. I watched him pay the

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The Crown of Attitude



Dr Priyanka Jalan

The lion wears no golden crown,
no throne where jeweled kings sit down,
yet when he walks through forest deep,
the winds grow still, the shadows sleep.

Not by the strength of claw alone,
not by the roar that chills the stone,
but by the fire within his gaze,
he rules the wild in silent ways.

The elephant, with mountains' might,
could shake the earth, could dim the light,
could crush the lion in one stride,
yet walks with doubt, his power denied.

For strength that sleeps

inside the bone
is less than courage fully known;
the soul that trusts its hidden flame
can rise and carve a deathless name.

The river breaks the ancient hill,
not with fury, but with will;
the sky bows low to wings that dare,
not to the strongest standing there.

So wear your scars like morning's pride,
let storms awaken you inside;
for kings are not by birth defined—
they rise first in the fearless mind.

The world will call you what you show,
a seed becomes the tree it knows;
believe your worth, and you shall see—
the crown begins in dignity.

(Dr Priyanka Jalan is a homeopathy doctor, motivational speaker, poet, and author of three Bangla novels and one English poetry book.)

Ashes of War



Zulfikar Naqvi

Everywhere was smoke to make us weep unto the most,
When the hamlet caught the fire, left neither guest nor host.

A strange, radiant heat enveloped me all around,
Whose flames clung to my dust like a grieving ghost.

My voice echoed deeply within those chests of stone,
Till the dragons in their hearts were moved from innermost.

O God! Send Thy man, before whose lasting love and fear,
The Ego faints, and the

Lord of Cruelty flees his post.

I was born to weep alone, I did, but why?
At the end, King and Beggar mourn from every coast.

The rivers carried blood for miles beneath the crimson sky,

While every wounded soul sought refuge at some distant coast.

The swords proclaimed their fleeting pride before the trembling crowd,

Yet dust shall be the final fate of every ruthless boast.

(Zulfikar Naqvi is a prolific Urdu/English poet, writer and former announcer with All India Radio. He has served as the Chief Editor of Insight Weekly and is the Founder-President of Muntaha-e-Fikr, an international literary organisation. He is a retired Principal of the School Education Department, Jammu & Kashmir.)

MOTHER



Rayees Ahmad Kumar

I was once a king,
with a crown of gold resting upon my head.

There was no worry, nor any sorrow that troubled me.

No storm in the world could ever harm me.

Even a sky filled with clouds and raging winds would bring tidings of spring for me.

I was never afraid of seasonal floods, nor could the changing colors of autumn steal away my happiness.

I always felt as though I rested beneath the shade of a Chinar tree, where I would ease my fatigue, find comfort, and live in peace and serenity.

All of this was possible, yes, possible only because my mother was alive.

The endless shade of her mercy and blessings was cast upon me.

Her prayers were always with me.

That great soul of the universe, who always asked about my well-being, was there.

The one who eased my pain, my sorrows, my worries, and hardships—my mother was alive.

But now, as she has answered the call of death, departed from this mortal world, and journeyed toward her eternal abode,
I truly have become an orphan.

I have been deprived forever of my mother's loving and compassionate gaze.

Now it has become difficult to understand what love truly is.

When I leave home or return,
whom shall I bid farewell to?
Whose blessings shall I seek?

When I leave in the morning and return home late at night,
who will wait for me now?

Those blessed hands of affection, which rose in prayer for me morning and evening,
those divine mercies that poured upon me like rain from heaven,
perhaps have now ceased forever.

In the darkness of the night, lying on my bed,
even at midnight,
I keep thinking:

If only my mother could come back to life,
sit beside me,
look at me with loving eyes,
and ask about my well-being.

If only she would place her caring hand upon my head.

How fortunate I would be, how truly wealthy I would become.

But now nothing is in my power. I can do nothing. I cannot bring my mother back.

Except for sending rewards of prayers and supplications for forgiveness,
I can send nothing else to my beloved mother.

Oh my mother!
May your grave be filled with light,
may your resting place remain forever a home of peace and tranquility.

May Paradise be your destiny. May Allah forgive you,
grant you the vision of the Prophet,
and bless you with his intercession.

Ameen, Summa Ameen.

(Rayees Ahmad Kumar is a Writer/Poet based in Qazigund Kashmir)

