

Whispers Of The Earth

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India | USA | UK

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Dedication

I dedicate this book of poems to my mother
who has always believed in me
more than I believed in myself.

Preface

Happy to be sharing my debut collection of poems. These are some poems which try to speak of my observations of the world around me, life and living, and also my experience and perspectives of them.

They dip into the themes of love, loss, pain, hope, my searches, progressive realizations and the cusps between them. They acknowledge a seeking for inner resolutions and freedom, the pull of the spiritual and the refuge it brings. Through my poems, I try to trace my internal travel across life and living.

I call my debut collection Whispers of the Earth: This is my first, humble step into sharing my poems with the world. These rookie poems are mere whispers from my inner journey. I hope my lines resonate with you. And I would love to hear feedback from you !

With Love.

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1. Fellowship of Tea Leaves

Tea leaves- freshly plucked, leisurely dried.
Leaves-not ground harsh like beans
But gently brewed and warmly steeped.

Each with a vein-written story,
They bring in their mountains and valleys
Through alleys of flavours,
Distilled to their essence and glory.

Assam, Darjeeling, the Nilgiris and others
Arriving in white, green and black
Simply meet here for a girlie banter
Over a no-agenda sunset tea party.

A slim bamboo tray waits on the hilltop
And the thick blue China tilts the rim,
Leans in, eager to eavesdrop.

But they speak soft between sips,
In their mother tongue
Strange to his cold, hard-glazed ears

In a language of the Earth itself ,
Aromatically varied, implicit and brief,

Tales of calm contentment
Whispered in vapours from leaf to leaf.

(Who says a lot can happen
Only over coffee?)

2. Temples of Hampi

Ancient city of ruins,
Where frozen residues still mourn
A well past glory
In every bend, corner and stone.

Grieving over the gods taken away,
Orphan temples with old scars stay
-Each with a wounded heart
Wrapped in rock bodies of intricate art.

Saraswati quit her rare shrine hallowed
And Lakshmi left her abode
Empty at the knee-seat of Narasimha.
Vitthala relocated without a rue,
They say, Hazara Rama vanished from view.

Some mutilated deities stand mute
With no temples but only bars, grills
And a few flowers at the frills.

Idols which could not become deities
Wait with name-tags at the local museum
-Pantheon-like, cold and numb.

When gods are driven from their homes,
Trauma travels centuries
And lives long in the vacancy of domes.

Bats have laid siege to sanctums-
The stench pervading the sacred spots,
Barring any return of the missing gods.

3. Post Covid New Year

A roller-coaster year has zipped past
Things birthing, dissolving and moving on.

A world of war, virus and other woes,
Also an undying human spirit that knows
An unearthed resilience to last.

.
The high of work well done, joys big and small
And then the loss of a loved one, wiping it all.

This constant living with grief
Right through firecrackers and greetings,
As the year customarily turns a new leaf.

Time strikes with the pendulum of polarity
Happy, unhappy, happy, unhappy.
And in the midst, a still space of mortality!

A pause pursuing happiness no longer
But a poise beyond, as the sun rises up clear.

Here's wishing the world within and without,
An equanimous new year!

4. Thinking Life

Life has its own process to run,
And often invites us too
In ways more than one.

But we must pay no heed nor partner,
Declares the Mind, the boss.
For Life is to be lived through the mind
And blamed for all our loss.

We think, therefore, we are,
And hence, with those who don't
Or can't, we should be at war.

While flowers and fountains,
Meadows and mountains
Spring and stand in naked innocence,

We must bear, on behalf of all,
The responsibility to think and brood
Until our tomb's cold finality

Which will feel quite the same
As does our boxed-in mind,
Neat and sealed with our name.

Dancing aimless instead, mind-free
Like wild grass around the grave
Or blooms with nameless glee,
Would be regressive orthodoxy.

Hence, through our mind, forever,
We must live Life, by proxy.

5. Slender Pain

How slender Pain appears,
When seen through the corridor
Of long past years!

I met her first in copious tears
Over a juvenile dismay
Borne upon an unyielding stone.

That was when feeble hope
Still stirred in her delicate layers.

She has grown since then,
And with her shadow in tow
I've strutted around the globe.

Silent and traced with sunburn signs,
Her face fills up with fine lines,
The way scarlet wine steadily matures.

This time she takes me by my hand,
Walks me to the evening sea sand,

Whispering to me:
When she jumps in with the sun,

The afterglow will gift me
A heart beyond fears.

6. Arguing

Your dreams and mine, both sit up
And argue all night when we fall asleep
In different hemispheres.

Rebutting each other and bickering with Life
That endows the night-sky with a thousand eyes
But indifferent ears.

If pining for what could be is your aggression,
Measuring the distance
From what should be, is my frustration.

But how the night rolls up her eyes,
Mocks us and walks away with our bliss
Still unborn.

Forsaking us in our ongoing neurosis
Even after the dawn.

7. Ask me not.

Oh, ask me not
Of the pain of child birth
For it's nothing at all- honestly so.

Given all the hype around the earth,
A truth tough to confess, though.

Ask me not of its pain
For it feels but like a wasp-bite
Compared to other kinds
Swallowed without a fight.

Ask me of the pain, instead,
Of subtle slight, often slyly fed.

Of smug complacency in company,
Of refined inequity cloaked as equality.

Ask me of the ugliness of power
Unkind against soft vulnerability.

Ask me of the umbilical cord
Of endurance still unsevered
Across a family tree line,

Between all grandmothers,
Theirs, yours and mine.

And if all this be quite familiar,
Ask me which of all pains
Is the most intense one,
A welcome one.

And I'd say none
To beat the dark night agony
Of the pressing of the soul,
The breaking of the shell,
And the nameless pain

Of birthing self.

8. Every month

Every month
The diligent womb
Readies her room
For an event that ensues not
And shrinks to shed
Tears in red

-Drops of deep regret.

Now and then
The expectant heart
Gathers her art
Towards a poem that poises not
And slumps to toss
Into a deep abyss

-Lines you must forget.

9. Reclamation

Freedom isn't any new place you reach
Or a feat you fervently beseech:

It's the same primordial space
Which forever travelled in you
-Only usurped so long by fear.

Fear of loss at first,
and then when you go near,
Fear of freedom itself
-Freedom to be true, to be just you.

Fangless fear snaking up the dark slope
Against the break of day.

Just flip around, look it in the eye,
And it's a phantom rope
Shrinking, fading,

Now routed away.

10. Knowing

Knowing the spread of that sky,
 The span of your wing,
The voice of your soul
 When you etch it all in ink,

Knowing how clouds can block
 But not bury a sky,
How they just have a habit
 Of lingering in passing.

Seeing the night filter the blue
 Only to make it clear enough
For stars to shine through.

Under the Chinese bamboo
Waiting to sudden- spurt high,
I know what you're born for
May well bide its time
 But can never die.

When the East wind blows
 In answer to your call
I will see you sing and dance
 Among the clouds and fly.

11. Forgetting

Each act of forgetting
is a deliberate tearing away of a part.

Each arc of the axe is an art
of chipping away things not meant for.

Which do not disappear
but pile up in the backyard debris.

To go into fire as heavy logs, into lungs
as cold grey ash, into hearts as history.

Stubborn rings on the tree stump
indicate there is no moving on.

But the feet search beyond the bygone,
where no woolly dreams can cloud a sky.

Memory learns to go quiet there
with an old knowing behind a sigh.

Before blades of new grass cut their teeth,
and green sap flows into the buds
--A deep heaving of the wet earth beneath.

12. Middle age

My dear old friend
in middle age, menopause,
and a sudden power outage today,

I see you.

Filling your heirloom wine glass,
and lighting a lone candle,
 Sitting alone at home
on your birthday.

Growing old, dear,
 is all about knowing
where to dwell, where to drift
 And where to dissolve.

And by resolve,
 where not to.

Ask your wine for its name,
 and it can tell,
All solvents are not equal or same.

And therefore,
Are to be chosen well.

Tell your candle,
There isn't any price
Put on ash or smoke as such.

Hence, see where to burn.
Which end, and when.
And just how much.

13. Adieu

Moon bends bold towards me tonight
And brims over my head and spine
 Raining soft silver,
Rendering the night all mine.

And you have fled,
Not waiting even for a sip of the river,
Chuckling over your fear of the dark.
 Nyctophobia, you said.

I sit alone here with my silence
In the bountiful night, the resilient earth
And the promising star glow
 -Intimate in one embrace.

Dawn is when dreams have receded with you,
And tiny birds with wings of red and blue
Come enliven my terrace-

All their chirping teeming inside me
And not a note for you.

14. No Man's Land

Home and office and back,
Constant commutes and patterned walks.
Point A to point B,
Hopping from one box to another.
And fingers of skylight
 Pinched between tall concrete walls.

The onslaught of pressing roles,
One ask, and then, the next task,
 And a nakedness waiting
Between change of robes.

The endlessness of the three dots...
And in between, capsules
 Of blankness of thoughts.

Spots of role-less anonymity calling,
With a redeeming tag of un-belonging.
 Where invisible islands of peace
Float amidst all performing.

Those liminal zones
Brimming with the sacred silence
of nothingness of blackholes.

That No Man's Land, languorous
Between borders of asks and identities

: My sanctuary, aptly reserved
For the endangered self.

15. Bhikku on the go

If you have held in your hands

 Your ancient bowl,

Begging to give away in love,

 Your gift-wrapped soul,

You must have tried

Knocking on unyielding doors

 A million times or more.

And waited endlessly.

Begging is a good blow for your ego,

Says the maroon-clad bhikku on the go

 -And you somewhat agree.

‘But giving needs

Neither an object nor a subject’

 -This one, more difficult to see.

The way earth, fire and the sun,

Also wind and water touch all as one,

 Yet exclusively none,

 He says, when you just ‘are’,

Your gifts reach afar.

But it takes an offering though
You see,
There is this age-old bowl still,
To burn and smoke.
And ashes to let go.

16. Boat on the River

I see a slow boat sailing
on the river that I hear inside.

This nearby bank of beige granularity
seems shallow, making
an age-old futility stark clear.

That bank of a silver white expanse
lures from afar, and fades
when grey storms re-appear.

But deep blue currents flow
steadily in the middle here,
steering to the waiting sea-cruise.

So, why fear ?!

17. Carrying Home

Home was once where I lived
 Holding myself safe and small.
Then it was what grew beyond belief,
To travel inside me to a sprawl.

Wandering lonely as a leaf
 Blown in storm after storm,
Feeding from places landed and left,
Circling in cycles of unrest.

 Then spiraling above tall grass,
Perching itself in the still eye
Pierced inward amidst all chaos.

 Its blackness and star glow,
Its revolving planets and the steady sun
 -A nano-cosmos in silent flow
I have come to carry wherever I go.

18. Stories

All stories are to be brushed aside
And tossed one day, like thick old moss
From a lake under long-due revival.

And let the sun sprawl himself thin
On waves waiting for an open poise-
Truth wearing only its golden skin.

Robes worn long on the world-stage,
And scripts to be disowned, peeled off
Along with make-up, in one final rage.

As the curtain falls and lifts the veil
Back stage when the matrix melts,
You lightly step out of them all- wordless.

19. Coming into view

For decades and more, nothing hibernates.
Yet, something did, here.

A waiting, in a deliberate dimming of its light,
For others to pass through self-importantly.

A suspension, like limbo after life
Not knowing there's another next.

Only a sensing, in a scaffolding
Of a familiar aloneness, just waiting.

Then one day a whole cosmos
Swirls around and comes rushing

Looking back at me
With an intimacy shocking and bare.

And suddenly, we are too much
To be contained in there.

So, we step out, coming into view.

20. After You came home

I heard the trees only after You came home.

Or they posed mute so long

And only now buzzed in the breeze.

Invisible so far the air, suddenly spurts a wing.

Along with it, my breath grows one too,

And completes the pair.

Dark and light mural designs by the sunrays,

And this heart learning to lean and live across,

Simultaneously, in multiple ways.

Moments become buds gestating destinies

Pulsating in my earthy brown spot,

Seem set to bloom with an intriguing ease.

My home resides now in an alternate view

Where the song and the silence are You.

And both dance and stillness too.

21. Pain sculpts you

Pain sculpts you like no comfort can.

Every betrayal, blow or bleed
Mutated in the mind, can strangely lead
From wounds to wisdom within a lifespan.

Every severance can end a clinging,
Each shedding drops a baggage.

Every chisel chips away chunks and debris
So you can shift, shape and own your story.

Storms come raging and clear your path,
First to silence, and then to your own voice
-An unexpected aftermath.

Once the gaze goes inward, the heart knows
You cannot unsee what the lifted veil shows.

Shadows and light, when embraced,
Both dance and make it a whole
With inherent songs of the ego and the soul.

After the anguish of endless longing,
A deep due dissolving.

Only then, infinite belonging.

22. Whispers of the Earth

Carrying us in circles gently around a blazing sun,
So softly we do not even know we move.

 Soaking up wild rains and storms,
 Making the most of depleting stocks,
The sacred sap she makes for soup,
Fed into our twigs, leaves and veins,
 We feast, frolic, fatten and fly
Looking for airy castles in pursuit of profits.

Not once she claimed her gravity kept us secure
Or told she summoned the winds to hold our wings.
 How Mother becomes just a hazy background
 Receding rapid in our scheme of things.

Wait, we are not done yet with our forgetting.
 Plundering our own home with no remorse,
 We have set fire to our collective sense-
The heat reaching glaciers, raising the seas to wrath,
 We still wage wars in endless offence
And expect her to stoically absorb the aftermath.

But she has whispered enough in the dark nights
 To back off from self-sabotage and scorn.

And return to our residual home, to rebuild,
When sentience comes up with the sun at dawn.