

Two Poems by Geeta Hansepi

Women Vendors

Along the steep bank near the bourn
That flows through the bosom of the craggy hill
Come down daily Kadam, Basapi and others
Each carrying a wicker basket of dreams.
Laying out their commodities wait for buyers
Countless speculations in their eyes
On every tuft of vegetables depends their family budget.
Bargaining for the tufts priced at rupees ten or twenty,
For want to small coins the buyers go away leaving behind
The unbought polythene bags full of vegetables.
Hiding their flaring up anger
And arranging in order the commodities again
They wait for the next buyers.
Instead of showing a little compassion for
The whimpering babies in their laps
The buyers take away one or two chillies
And okras asking for these as extra.
If they have to carry the vegetable baskets back
Their calculations go away
They keep back the list of items for the baby they were mulling over
With the yearning to live life
Carrying with them new and newer dreams daily
They come down in the early morning everyday
Over the steep banks of the bourn.

Sarhepi

She is *Sarhepi*
She is known by this name
Her emotions and feelings are dedicated to the dead.
Singing *Kasarhe Alun*
She becomes one with the soul of the dead
Narrating virtues and vices in life of the dead
Suddenly she sheds sorrows,
With *Towar Kethan* song
She informs the soul of the dead about the way to heaven also.
This is her burden of responsibility
But then, she is speechless today with pangs of loss
The tune of her song has lost its rhythm
For
She knew the dead long since
When they knelt down together before the people
Seeking blessings and became one
Bound to each other by pledge
To walk the path of life and death together
Apprising him of the way to heaven
How would she bid him in her song

To go to the unknown world leaving her behind
To begin life anew
And tell him to live life happily.

Sarhepi: Woman who sings dirge for the dead.

Kasarhe Alun: Keening song/dirge.

Towar Kethan: To give information about roads and locations.

Translated by Uttam Duorah

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