

Sarifa Khatoon Chowdhury's Poems

How strange an aspect the forlorn shadows wear

How strange an aspect the forlorn shadows wear
Nobody knows where the bodies have disappeared

The desert is gradually devouring the hearts,
Brimming with contemptuous vanity
While running over cadavers
Are the opulent motorcars.

The eyes have lost the sense of sight
The rivers have run dry
The fields have turned fallow
In the forest no trees and branches remain.

Then ... what remains?

The apartments with shuttered doors and windows
The agonised laments of pain
The pangs of unrequited love writ on faces
Endless funeral processions and sighings remain
Appalling levels of contaminants remain
Insincere conversations borne of lukewarm friendships, etcetra,
Among many other things
Remain.

The strange aspect of the gradually enveloping
Forlorn shadows too remain.

Ask the flock of birds navigating through the smoky haze

Ask the flock of birds navigating through the smoky haze,
How they go in search of forests, fields,
And—
Clasp in their beaks blighted blue-speckled seeds.

Place your hand on the breast of the parched river and ask,
How will she hear
The sound of the flowing stream,
The pebbles will don the water's robes
The songs of the waterfall will become a lost cause.

Rivers running dry

Forests bereft of flora -
Hugging tight a bare, craggy mountain
Inquire the earth gasping in agonised throes
How long—
How long will it take to assume a Saharan form
Lying strewn and scattered everywhere
Are heaps of mangled skulls and bones.

Time quipped, "Relax, don't fret,
Let's witness the apocalyptic scene of the final act."

Though the heart is torn asunder, we only live once

The rivers are desperately crying out for water
The ocean levels are receding
The moon is seeking its reflection in a water body
In the thick of a concrete jungle.
The birds are wallowing in the briny lake
The fishes are swimming back and forth
Laving it up to make up for lost time.

My beloved friend

Open your arms wide towards the sky
Let despair, hopelessness and pain get washed away in the rain

Close your eyes

May a deep forest come unleashed from your eyelashes
Place both hands over your chest and feel
The metronomic pulsations of heartbeat
The hand working in unison with the noble heart
Build a bridge of trust
Looking intently in the eye, move down to the core of your breast
Lift up the radiant face suffused with love
And lock the earth, forest, human, all in a powerful embrace

Though the heart is torn asunder, we only live once.

Translated by **Mridul Bordoloi**

Sarifa Khatoon Chowdhury is an Assamese poet and novelist based in Doomdooma, Assam. She has two collections of poems to her credit. She is a Consulting Editor of *PWF*.

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