

Zinia Mitra

## **Amphan**

A page of a wet notebook is easily torn  
like the mind  
old aches lie scribbled on the leaves of the trees  
uprooted by the cyclone  
a cosmos of events rewind on them.  
Each of us had a window  
that opened to a tree.  
Each of us had a little sunshine that brightened our days  
like leaves after the rains.  
When the branches of the fallen trees are cut  
after storm to restore electric supply  
the cries, the despairing cries  
that we hear are ours  
they are our pains that the trees had absorbed  
with our exhalations.

Some of us still have their leaves preserved in old books.

*\*Amphan was a cyclone that hit West Bengal on 16th May 2020.*

## **Yellow Long-Stalk Flowers**

We should be glad we lived the moment—  
the moment of your picking a long-stalk yellow flower  
and clipping it on my longish brown hair. You said,  
you wanted to collect all the yellow flowers that grow  
on Tindharia slopes throughout your long sunburnt days  
bring them to me on a soft silvery moonlit night  
hold my hands till the rising lurid sun cleared your gray convex horizon.  
It was such a limpid dance of words!

Thank heavens (if there is one)  
I am no Mrs. Dalloway. I hate clinking glasses.

But in a sense we are all Clarissas  
absurd perhaps in the eyes of our own Peters, organizing our grand parties  
with words and thoughts and ideas  
that eat and drink and dance and blather throughout our lives.

Our lives are like scratches on the surface  
of our wet-soil minds made by wolves' claws  
scrapes on our bare skins when we stand unclothed dripping water  
tiny points of ache forming on our old scars. We greet them  
like old friends, look for them in the throng of concealed memories.

The autumn leaves fall outside my window.  
Ravens caw. The yellow flowers are dead, my hair white.  
We should be glad we lived that yellow- wild -flower moment  
when the hills lit up in amber Diwali.

## **The Trees Are Buddhas**

The trees are Buddhas.  
They stand rapt in intense  
meditation together and make forests.  
When the melancholic winds break against their firm feet  
they preach peace.  
They shed their memories  
like autumnal leaves.

Born on the moist earth  
The trees bloom fragrant flowers  
like love. Greener leaves sprout like sutras in spring  
to whisper truths.

The seasons dance their melodies on tree branches  
adorn them with new leaves, new fruits  
then strip them away  
the trees live the furrowed barks  
and yellowed leaves. Ripe seedy fruits fall on the earth  
each seed is wooed to grow a tree. Spring arrives

to fulfill them. The trees grow old secretly after every spring  
they draw coded rings deep inside their trunks  
and wither away.

We die many times in our lifetime like the trees,  
are renewed with every spring  
that comes our way and after a season of fruits' and flowers' burden  
carrying our own floral memories  
we die.

The gust rolls the fallen leaves  
across the forest floor.  
Bamboo flutes make some painful music.  
The tall green trees quietly embrace the seasons  
we are all undeciphered rings in the end.

## Sorrows

*Thamma* asked me to pinch up her sorrows  
like red ants from the bark of her tree  
they climb her long brown arms  
one by one from the imprisoned nights  
when saltwater overflows her pores  
and the rain disorients the shape of the girl  
who floats trapped in a form  
in her dreams she has kept her young.  
I reach out across many ages to touch her hands  
her dry skin peels off  
a strong cinnamon smell in my fingers  
memories of spices waft through the air  
like flipped pages of her recipe books  
basmati rice, ghee, saffron, cardamom,  
milk and honey drip from their dog eared edge.  
I warm a glass of clove water, vapours collect on my glasses  
white clouds form around the distant cold moon  
my fingers take in the warmth  
adamantly repeating the cinnamon smell.

## About the Poet

Zinia Mitra teaches English in the University of North Bengal. Her travelogues and articles have been published in *The Statesman*. Her poems have been published in National and International journals including *Muse India*, *Ruminations*, *Contemporary Literary Review*, *Kavya Bharati*, *East Lit. Indian Literature* (Sahitya Akademi), *Asian Signature*, *Teesta Review*, *Setu*.

Her translations have been published in books and journals including *Indian Literature* (Sahitya Akademi). Her translation of Abanindranath Tagore's *Khiner Putul* has been published by Parabaaas. Her translation of "Jatiner Juto" by Sukumar Ray as 'Jatin and his Sandals' is included in ICSE text book, *A Magic Place*. Her books include *Indian Poetry in English: Critical Essays*, *Poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra: Imagery and Experiential Identity*, *Twentieth Century British Literature: Reconstructing Literary Sensibility* (co-edited), *Interact* (co-edited) and *The Concept of Motherhood in India: Myths, Theories and Realities*. She is on the editorial board of *Teesta Review*.