



When He Dived into a Utopian Realm

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Poem

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"Can I not just put this tilak
Twixt my brows?
If I would rub --
A tiny little streak in red?
I'd be called names and scorned by many!"
Speaking to himself, swallowing woe
He dusted the residual cones
Off his accidentally consecrated fingers
A mingled sheen of red, yellow and white
Orphaned, looking away mourned.

Clicking his tongue, he doffed his turban off
And faced himself in the oval mirror;
Curly locks dangled across his bushy black beard
His countenance shrunk recollecting snapshots of violence
As he peered deep into the center,
An internal call from the upper planes
Summoned his barren self
And he bowed to the command
Of the pointed Supreme Light
Pervading the All-Universal Cosmos.

"Where all men, women and children
Splashed in multicultural attires

Feasted in communion amongst the diverse congregation
Where fish and peas, beef and kheer, honey and chilli
All harmonious like a salad bowl cheerfully together
Patted on the back of each other receiving affably..."
Closing his deeply tormented eyes
He dived into a utopian realm;
Then he envisaged an incredibly marvelous tableau;
The Hindus clad in saffron dhotis visiting the mosque
The bearded Muslims lighting candles at the St. Paul's
The frocked priests anointing the idol of Lord Shiva
And all of them stepping out embalmed
Meet at a common junction in the premises
Belonging to no hefty hegemony but all!
They shake hands, greet and exchange sweet pleasantries.

What a soothing spectacle ahead!
For a Hindu would borrow the Quran
While a Bhai would recite verses from the Geetha
A Christian would carry a pocket-sized portrait
Of Lord Waheguru, yet praise Inshallah underneath!
While a Sikh would preach verses from the holy Bible
To his Parsi and Hindu brothers.
Sensing ominous, he stirred from the utopian dream
When danger lurked teetering at the brink
Threatening the inter-regional harmony;

Rupturing identities, cleaving cultural, religious and social ties!
Like Lenny, the little Parsi girl in Cracking India,
He earnestly wished that India had never cleft apart
Why India, Bangladesh and Pakistan?

"If our country were a Brobdingnagian mirror
Capacious to capture a multitude of us
Impartial of the acquired social marks
Race, caste, religion, region and culture
It is alarmingly broken and we are so horribly split
That ourselves we cannot lucidly spot
Where do we truly belong, our family is lost!
How meaningless is vasudaiva kutumbakam
If it were not for embracing rich diversity peacefully
Accepting, assimilating and preserving homeliness?"

With a plate bearing camphor and tulsi agarbatthis
His red-veiled mother circled about the house
In the dressing room, he stood terrified
Cupping his hands before an imageless wall,
He began, "I do not want to go, Ma
Carrying a face that is not culturally mine
Midst those who proudly wear their crosses and caps
Why cannot I with my turban or tilak?
They will bully me, beat me, curse me
I cannot cry, it is the last day of my college."

About the Author



Naganandhini N.R., a passionate literature student, is a poet since her late teenage years. She hails from a town in Tamil Nadu recognized by the epithet "Niagara of India". Her pen, the penchant wand she calls, is a witness to more than thousand literary pieces. A varied range of quotes, poems and fragmentary anecdotes embody her literary spectrum. In addition, recently she has produced a humorous series of thirteen stories written in the manner of episodes encompassing her campus life at EFLU, Hyderabad. Her poems endorse people, places and events that either affect or attract her in an uncommonly striking manner.