

'Humans vs Non-humans in Lockdown'

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Brief profile: Waheeda Bi Khan is from Karwar, Karnataka. She works currently as a Teaching Assistant at the Karnataka University P.G. centre for the English department. Her qualifications are M.A, B.Ed, NET & SLET. She has been in the teaching profession since 2003. She has been writing poetry since her teens as a hobby. In her writings she uses her pen name Soulfulheart. Recently she has published a book of poems titled: FROZEN SMOULDERS. Her poems have also been published in the annual journal of The Poetry Society India in the 2015, 2016 and 2017 issues. She has been also publishing poems and research papers in many journals like Ashwamegh monthly journal, The Literary Endeavour, IJELLH, Contemporary Literary Review, IOSR JHSS and The Tajmahal Review. Her poems are also part of a few anthologies. She has published a few articles in newspapers too. She basically writes in English but also likes to translate them into Urdu. She is also part of many online poetry sites.

Epidemic to pandemic
China to continents
Planned trips to lockdown
Political accusers to adapting citizens
Panic hoarding to social distancing
Daily wagers to homeless trekkers
Micro virus to macro deaths
All these and more to worry about.

Yet, for a few months
Glimpses the world has seen, of
Transition, in shallow, busy society From,
Self-centered to compassionate
Greedy to charity
Socialising to distancing
Corporates to home dwellers
Healthy bodies to COVID victims
Doctors to soldiers of life
Stadium concerts to balcony music.

In all this human upheaval, ironically
Non-humans, that waited since long ,
For, 'Apna time kab aayega!'
(When will our time come)
Now have won temporary rights;
Rights to be free on this planet.

The earth heaves in core relief
For not being plundered, off
Its coal, gold, rocks, iron
And what not.

The almost pure air freshly breathes
For not being choked, to an extent
With toxins, smoky fuels, cement dust
And what not.

The clouds pour itself out in joy
For not being, over laced with
Vaporous acids, dirt, smog
And what not.

The trees waltz with breeze
For not being ruthlessly cut
For highways, railways, subways
And what not.

The birds fly with abandon
For not being hit in the skies
By drones, planes, fighter jets
And what not.

The animals hop and leap
For not being poached in their abodes
By royal tastes, smugglers, hunters
And what not.

The seas surf and lave the shores
For not being harassed by visitors
Trashing plastics, liquor cans, rituals
And what not.

Yet, mirages are never permanent
As water bodies still moan
Being used as dumping spaces
For sewage, nuclear wastes, carcass
And what not.
Non-humans aren't aware, that
Histories of pandemics never made
Humans, to pay heed for its age old deeds
So, what can a few days of lockdown teach?

Hence dear earth, air, sky, clouds
Dear birds, animals, water bodies
And what not
Enjoy your time as long as you can
Coz, your relief is not for ever and ever.

It Hurts

It hurts,
Though years later, to know
Of being born unwanted to loved ones
And the impossibility of being an effigy.

It hurts,
When you are growing, to know
Your world will always be quarantined
And all aspirations to be curtailed.

It hurts,
When people expect you, to know
You are supposed to be a chameleon
And must every step adapt, flit, crawl, change.

It hurts,
When life leads you, to know
You do not belong to permanence
And as a fly, can be chucked out anytime.

It hurts,
When friends teach you, to know
You always are second to ones with status
And kinship or feelings must be pliable.

It hurts,
When partners hope you, to know
That your self-dignity is expendable
And you must mirror their illusions.

It hurts,
When you learn gradually, to know
Dreams and desires end up in despair
And being charming masking pain is an art.

It hurts,
When you sum up, to know
So many may claim to empathise
And yet their eyes reflect, only envy.

It hurts,
When you accept, to know
Your wishes and needs cannot be priority
And everything else always come first.

It hurts,
When you end up, to know
You spent life, catering to worthless ones
And yet you are accused of ruining theirs.

It hurts,
When you concede, to know
The dejection of love and care you gave
And the empty words received in turn.

It hurts,
When you glean, to know
Your pain is the cause of someone's smile
And only you can stop hurting yourself.

It hurts,
When you seek, to know then
The nuances of rejecting hurt
And inflicting yourself with its repair.

Young India

Today young India says something to old India
(A poem by Diya Mirza translated from Hindi to English by Soulfulheart)

Today young India says something to old India
He says-

His constitution does not flow in speeches
It flows in his pulsing veins.
Ambedkar, Gandhi are not adorned in monuments
But rather in his active thoughts.
He may stay in metros and towns
Yet he creates Apps for remote villagers.
He may speak different new languages
Yet can glean their kindred passions.
His roots of natural humanity
Go deeper than we ever can hope.
Listen! Today young India says something to old India
He says-
Even though you see him, chill with Netflix
Yet, if needed he can holler out-
' My country will never be destroyed!'
If he goes to a crowd for favourite's rock concert
Then for nation he also becomes the patron crowd
And stays jammed across the roads.
He is the 70% creator of India's destiny
Let him flow, as till now has been trying to flow.
Listen! Today young India says something to old India
He says-
That he perceives every religion in one shade;
He is the solution of the Constitution;
Breaking away shackles of caste and creed
He has to soar high to new horizons
He says-
Come, let's fight back and save
What can be saved of land, forest, water;
Why poison our consciousness
When rather air has to be saved from poison?
Come, let's save, what's left of this world;
Come let's use filters only on Insta, not on our minds;
One nation we are, citizens of one earth,
As, every face mirrors a similar kinship.
Listen! Today young India says something to old India
He asks old India-
Weren't faces with pangs of hunger not enough
That you have quarantined even smiles with selfish rumours?
He demands old India-
Why have you gone so helplessly mute?
Why are you suffering these silent schisms?
Listen! Today young India says something to old India.

I the Worker

Translated poem 'Kaam Karne Waala' from Urdu to English of Dr. Sunil Pawar
(translator Soulfulheart)

One that burns in your kilns, I am that human
One that is picked from trash, I am that human
One that life in hands goes into mines or sewers, I am that human.
Jostled by miles I am the one to toil on rickshaw
Every paper bearing news, I am the one to bring.

Somedays with vegetable cart, or with umbrellas at signals
Or from footpaths nearby, you often hear me call.

Leaving my world of dreams behind, I arrived
Abandoning a doll in some garden, I arrived
My eyes may seem silent as mute stones
Like the little box of kohl that left behind, I arrived
The cart of dreams left far behind, I arrived.

I get papers for my ration, only through a bribe
I get a loan if I need, only through a bribe
If I lose myself somewhere being hit on a road,
Even my corpse I get, only through a bribe.

I know I embody a picture of only utter loss
Or am the topic of some fallacious discourse
You noose me to the gallows of poverty, and
Accuse I am the shackle that truss your nation.

Its me whom you hire to build your minarets
Its me that you call to repair your pulpits
But when mosques or temples are martyrd
Its my house that you come first, to burn.

Every body here is adorned with my toil
Yet, the talent weaving cotton, has to yearn for few threads
Often I feel its the debt of my hands
That the dirt of my attire laughs at its sewn patches.

I will swallow my requiem, I will swallow my feelings
And one day my plight will even swallow my dreams.
People cut down roads, vehicles fill the roads
And one day my share of footpath will also be swallowed.

I don't stop to brood what has been lost
As I know, its useless to curse my fate.
Its so easy to cry, and there's a lot to lament
But, the fuel of my grief I know, will not ignite my stove.

I am not ignorant, of the intentions of rulers
As I am not something, to be sealed in ancient chests.
Rest assured I am not going to open my mouth
Lest I become your bane, as I am not so easy to rest

Ever thought, what'll happen -
If ever I decide to snatch the rewards of my labour?
And if ever on your palace I write to reveal your name
For stffling my screams, for trampling my grief?
What'll happen
If I too decide to show your impending aftermath?
Yet, one day among my selves someone will wake up
And a banner will flash across the clouds as a glinting foil.
Chronicles prove, every change has been through me
So as always, the wheels of time again, will be turned by me.