

Dilip Mohapatra

CALLING

No one laments and sings a mirthless dirge
when the magnificence of the magnolia wilts
or the glow of the marigold
fades away
and lying in a heap in a corner
of the florist's shop
they wait to be stuck in bouquets
and strung into garlands
like the stiffs in a mortician's parlour waiting to be embalmed.

In their death they decorate the coffins and the palls
their lifeless smiles stay frozen on the wreaths
and on the garlands that adorn the gold framed photos
of the dear departed
passively partaking
the aroma of the joss sticks
and basking in the reflected glory
of the candles that burn so very benevolently.

Like the mendicants scoop
holy water from the holy river Ganga and offer the same back to her
they perhaps live their lives only to die one day
and make an offering of their very own deaths to the dead
and add colour to many other dark and colourless deaths.

PHASED OUT

I distinctly remember
when in class seven
the water colour that I made
for a children's art competition
and which had won the third prize.
The highlights were the dark fringes
of the coconut frond
that slightly encroached into a
luminous full moon hanging
on a somnolent grey sky
undeterred by a thin film of
clouds floating over
the silhouette of a range of hills
while its reflection shimmered
over a flowing stream
interrupted by a black blotch
of a coracle paddled by
a lone traveller.

Now I open my window
to be faced by another window
and I crane my neck to
get a glimpse of the magnificent crescent
but a disc TV antenna stares back at me.
Not to be deterred I venture out
to the open through the phalanx of
tall buildings till I reach
the bridge on the local river
that is almost dry and that waits
for the monsoon rains in the
catchment area to fill her up occasionally.
And here also I have no joy
but to be satisfied with
a diffused translucent patch
behind the thick curtain of smog.

With romanticism sacrificed
on the altar of knowledge
the magical mystery
has melted and sublimated
over time and with it gone
the celebrations of fertility
the baying of the wolves and
lunacy has become just an
etymological legacy
and one doesn't get
moonstruck any more with love
that has devolved to an
arrangement and perhaps more
of a transaction.

The 'Eids' come and go and so do
the 'Karva Chauths' but meanwhile
the time has lost its rhythm and rhyme
and the moon reduced to
just a vestigial habit.

THE ONSLAUGHT

The glyphs from the graves
have raised their heads
and have come alive
like zombies and how
have they invaded
the inner recesses of our hearts
to depict our tears
our pains and agonies
our happiness and glee
our stoic silence
and our rolling on the floor
with laughter.

The colon followed by a hyphen
ending with one of the open
parentheses make us smile
and the other instead
shows our frown
while a zipper across the lips
makes us speechless
and the stuck out tongue
with a wink makes us smirk.
All our emotions
are encapsulated in
those mini faces
called emojis that abound
in all our net chats and responses
with the occasional
thumbs ups and downs
claps and clasped palms in prayers.

The differences amongst
The Egyptians
The Mayans
The Aztecs
get dissolved
for the distances are dead
while boundaries
have become permeably
amorphous
with the new age metaphors
lavishly spiced up with xoxo's
for hugs and kisses
tempered with the universal lol's
rotflmao's and their ilk.