

छाया CHAYA



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शब्दों और छायाओं पर

एक अमरीकी दोस्त ने हमसे पूछा कि आपने पत्रिका का नाम *छाया* क्यों चुना? साये और भूत--बहुत नकारात्मक शीर्षक है, ना? यह अर्ध सत्य था। *छाया* का अर्थ साया, अँधेरा, धुँधलापन या कोई भूत-प्रेत हो सकता है, लेकिन उसका अर्थ शरण भी हो सकता है, शरण यानी वह छाँव जो कि तेज़ भारतीय धूप से बचाव के लिए एक स्वागतपूर्ण आश्रय है। इस पत्रिका का लक्ष्य है नयी हिन्दी और अंग्रेज़ी रचनाओं को एक शीतल, छायादार जगह देना। इस *छाया* में दो भाषाएँ, जो कभी-कभी एक दूसरे की प्रतिबिम्ब और छवि है, अंत में साथ-साथ चल सकती हैं।

आधुनिक शहरी भारत में हिन्दी और अंग्रेज़ी एक दूसरे के साये में रहकर एक दूसरे में समा जाती है और इस तरह जन्म लेती है 'खिचड़ी भाषा' जो आम तौर पर बोली जाती है और जो आज की सर्वप्रिय बॉलीवुड की हिन्दी फ़िल्मों में भी आम है। फिर भी इन दोनों भाषाओं के साहित्य विचित्र ढंग से अलग हैं। देश या विदेश में, जो लोग अरुंधती रॉय और रोहितन मिस्त्री के मुरीद हैं, वे लोग शायद अमृता प्रीतम या राजेन्द्र यादव के बारे में कुछ नहीं जानते हैं, और जो महादेवी वर्मा या अज्ञेय के प्रेमी हैं वे विक्रम सेठ या ए. के. रामानुजन को शायद न जानते हों। छाया का इरादा है कि इन पृष्ठों पर दोनों भाषाओं का प्रकाशन करके साहित्यिक बातचीत कर सकें।

क्या यह ज़्यादा अनुचित माँग है? क्या इतना ही काफी नहीं है कि हम अपने जीवन बहु-भाषीय लोगों के बीच व्यतीत करते हैं? क्या यह ज़रूरी है कि इस बोली के मिश्रण से हम पढ़ना और लिखना भी जटिल बना लें? हमारी कल्पना यह नहीं है कि यह पत्रिका हिन्दी और अंग्रेज़ी को बिल्कुल आदर्श रूप से जोड़े--फिर हम ऐसा करना भी नहीं चाहते। बल्कि हमारी आशा है कि इन भाषाओं को मिलाने से हमारा--और आपका--साहित्यिक अनुभव अधिक गहरा हो जाएगा। इसलिए हम *छाया* आपको समर्पित करते हैं--जो एक साहित्यिक छवि और विचारों का विनिमय है। आपसे मिल जायेंगे, इनशाल्लाह, वह आपसे ऐसे मिलेंगे जैसे कि पीपल की शीतल छाया एक धूलभरे राजस्थानी रास्ते पर यात्रियों का स्वागत करती है।

बहुत सारे व्यक्तियों के सहयोग के बिना, *छाया* अस्तित्व में नहीं आती। सर्वप्रथम हम धन्यवाद देना चाहते हैं अमेरिकन इन्स्टिट्यूट ऑफ़ इण्डियन स्टडीज़ को, खास तौर पर स्टाफ़ और छात्रों को जो यहाँ जयपुर में हैं--सिर्फ़ उनके हिन्दी पढ़ने के उत्साह और अमूल्य समय के योगदान से ही यह संभव हुआ कि छाया पत्रिका आज एक वास्तविकता है। हम अपने संपादकीय सलाहकार परिषद् के सदस्यों: डॉ सुदेश बत्रा, डॉ संजीव भानावत, डॉ गैब्रीएला इलिएवा, डॉ अच्युता नन्द सिंह, और श्री विधु शेखर को भी धन्यवाद देना चाहते हैं। इन शख्सों ने शुरुआत से ही हमें सहायता दी है, और अब तक जब कि अंतिम प्रूफ़्स प्रेस में जाने के लिए तैयार हैं इन लोगों द्वारा हमें सलाह दी जा रही है। इन लोगों के अलावा हम उन सभी लोगों को धान्यवाद देना चाहते हैं जिन्होंने पत्रिका के सृजन के हर चरण पर हमें सलाह दी। अंत में हम अपने लेखकों को धन्यवाद देना चाहते हैं, जिन्होंने हमें अपनी रचनाएँ सौंपी। हमें उम्मीद है कि छाया उनकी श्रेष्ठ कृतियों के लिए योग्य स्थान साबित होगी।

—क्लोई मार्टीनेज़ व सैमुएल थ्रोप, संपादक

on words and shadows

An American friend asked us, why are you calling the journal *Chaya*? Shadows and spectres—such a negative title, isn't it? He was half right. *Chaya* can mean shadow, darkness, obscurity, or a ghostly apparition. But it can also mean shelter, the shade that is such a welcome refuge from the hot Indian sun. Right now it is March in Jaipur and the windy winter months are making way for the sweltering summer, when any cool patch of shade will be a blessing. *Chaya* is a reflection too, an image or a rendering, both of texts and of the world itself. Shadows, reflections, ghosts and images—with all its varied definitions in mind, we have chosen this name, *Chaya*, for a literary journal whose aim is to offer a cool, shady place for new writing in Hindi and English. In this *chaya* two languages that are at times reflections and apparitions of one another can finally sit together.

In modern urban India, Hindi and English live in each other's shadows, intermingling to make the *kebichi* *bhasa* that is commonly spoken and dominates the widely popular Hindi films coming out of Bollywood today. Yet the literatures of both these languages remain strangely segregated. Both inside and outside of India, ardent readers of Arundhati Roy and Rohinton Mistry may not have heard of Amrita Pritam or Rajendra Yadav, and those who love Mahadevi Varma or Ajneya are often unfamiliar with Vikram Seth or A.K. Ramanujan. It is the intent of *Chaya* that on these pages contemporary writers in both languages can publish their work side by side, and enter into a bilingual literary conversation.

Is this too tall an order? Isn't it enough for us to live our daily lives in multiple tongues—must we also complicate the activities of reading and writing with this *boli ki misri*? We do not imagine that this journal will bring Hindi and English seamlessly together, nor would we wish to do so. Rather, our hope is that the juxtaposition and intermingling of these languages will enliven and deepen our—and your—literary experience, and the experience of using and appreciating language itself. Thus we offer you *Chaya*, an exchange of literary reflections and images. They will come upon you, *inshallah*, as the cool shadow of a pipal tree welcomes a traveller along a dusty Rajasthani road.

Chaya could not have come into existence without the support of numerous individuals, both in India and abroad. First and foremost, we would like to thank the American Institute of Indian Studies, especially the staff and students here in Jaipur; their enthusiasm for the study of Hindi and their willingness to donate their time and expertise have made this journal a reality. We would also like to thank the members of our advisory editorial board: Dr. Sudesh Batra, Dr. Sanjeev Bhanawat, Dr. Gabriela Ilieva, Vidhu Shekhar and Dr. A. N. Singh. These individuals have supported us since the beginning, and have continued to counsel us even as the final proofs of this first issue go to press. Many thanks as well to all those who have given us advice on the many elements of the magazine's creation. And, last but not least, we would like to thank our contributors for trusting us with their creations; we hope *Chaya* proves a worthy home for their excellent work.

—chloe martinez and samuel thrope, editors

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जंग

जंग लड़ने से पहले
लड़ना पड़ता है अपने आप से
अपने भीतर के डर से
चाहे वह जंग मोर्चे पर हो
या अपने आस-पास
अथवा ऑपरेशन टेबल पर
सहने पड़ते हैं ज़ख्म
त्वचा को भेदकर
रिसता है लहू
और लम्बे समय तक
बने रहते हैं उनके निशान
धीरज के लगते हैं टाँके
वक्त लगाता है मरहम
और दर्द बाँटती है चेतना
अपने भीतर से होती हुई
बहती है वेदना
पर जंग कोई आखिरी मुकाम नहीं
जिंदगी की
अनेक लड़ाइयों का
एक और पड़ाव होती है
क्योंकि जिंदगी जीने से पहले
जंग बाज़ होना ज़रूरी है।

—सुदेश बत्रा

on henry tanner's 'night'

Man and boy, the fishermen return
well after sundown—no fish—when they finally
bring their boat in for the day.

It's early winter, maybe, they huddle together
against the harbor, rolled up in raincoats,
going home through streets that are night-quiet—you can guess

it was the boy who kept them out so long
with so little, not wanting to see defeat settle
in his dad, while father knows the sea can chill

and his boy's feet are soaked in salt-water,
but wanting to please lets his son cast
once more before turning shoreward,

where on the land their figures merge with darkness
as they walk home without a catch—but you notice
the lantern: the light overwhelming the canvas,
held between a father and a son.

—philip ciampa

untitled

The sun is streaming in
through the window
making my cheeks
blush
the way
thoughts of you
once did.

—martha j. berry

भारत देश महान

शस्य श्यामला भारत भूमि तुझे नमन्
जगदुगुरु की हे जगदम्बा तुझे नमन्।

तेरे खेतों में हरियाली ऐसे होती,
पीत चुनरिया ओढ़ नवोढ़ा जैसे सोती।

गंगा कावेरी के जल में अमृत घुला हुआ,
एक बार जो पी ले तो फिर जीवन सफल हुआ।

भारत की पावन माटी तो सोना लगती
डाल-डाल हर पात में मणियाँ मिलती

तेरी केसर की क्यारी में तन-मन डोले,
कोयल मीठा बोल कान में मिश्री घोले।

हिन्दू-मुस्लिम-सिक्ख-ईसाई मिलकर रहते
सुख-दुःख जो आते हैं सब हिलमिल कर सहते।

साहस की दीवार थामकर हिमगिरि खड़ा हुआ,
झंझावातों को सहकर भी पथ में अड़ा हुआ।

गौरवशाली परंपरा के नूपुर बजते
संस्कारों के सुमन यहाँ, हर बगिया सजते।

तेरे घर में प्रीत, प्रेम का मेला सदा रहा,
सर्वे सन्तु सुखिनः का भी दरिया सदा बहा।

कोटि-कोटि कंटों से गाया जाता जिसका गान
निश्चय मानो मित्रों, मेरा भारत देश महान।

—महेश 'नवीन'

red line

this young man
was talking a mile a minute
and I could notice right away
that he wasn't talking to anyone
in particular
but loud so loudly he was talking
to just himself he went on and on
and it was really annoying
I have to tell you
I finally walked up to him
and asked him what his name was
and he told me
I forget now what it was
I used his name then and I said you
do you mind keeping quiet
so he said OK
and he was good for five minutes
he kept quiet
but he started right up again
so I walked over again
I said you and I used his real name
you was good for a while
try keeping quiet again
and sure enough he was good
for the rest of the trip
isn't that something though
I can't seem to recall his name now
and if I see him again
I'll have to start all over

—michael casey

हे ईश्वर, महेश्वर, परमेश्वर!

तुझपर आस्था, महास्था, परमास्था!

कैसे बँू निस्पृहा

तुम्हारी परिवेष्टित प्रकृति से

कैसे बँू विमुख

तुम्हारी विस्तीर्ण विस्तृति से

कैसे बँू वितृष्ण

तुम्हारी संपूर्ण सर्जिता सृष्टि से

कैसे बँू विरक्त

तुम्हारी उदात्त अमृता वृष्टि से

प्रज्वलित तुम्हारी दीप्ति सन्मुख

है असमर्थ मेरी दृष्टि

अघोष, अशब्द नाद है प्रस्तुत,

पर अवरुद्ध मेरी श्रुति

नहीं मुझमें क्षमता जानने की,

त्रिभुवन वैभव की अद्भूति

चिरस्थायी विश्वमंडल की प्रशस्ति

के लिए वाणी की नहीं विस्तृति

परन्तु.....

लघु जलबिंदु की करूँ कैसे अवगणना

जलसिंधु की अभिलाषा में

उर्वर बीजाणु की करूँ कैसे अवमानना

उत्तुंग अन्नभंडार की ईप्सा में

सुखकर सुधांशु की करूँ कैसे अवदर्शना

स्वर्णिम प्रभापुंज की इच्छा में

आत्मरत्न की नहीं होगी उत्प्रेक्षा मुझ से

पुनीत परमात्मा की प्रतीक्षा में

अंबार से विमुक्त, मुझे प्राप्त,

एक कण से है संतुष्टि

अनश्वर कोष से विघटित

अणु से है मुझे संतुष्टि

अति विशाल ब्रह्मांड प्रकाशपुंज निःसृत

आत्मरश्मि की मुझे विश्वस्ति

नियति प्रदत्त प्रारब्ध की

धन्याता से करूँ प्रशस्ति

आत्मा से नहीं विरक्ति

-निर्मला प्रधानानी

हे ईश्वर, महेश्वर, परमेश्वर!

तुझ पर आसक्ति, तुझसे है प्रीति

पर आत्मा से नहीं विरक्ति

untitled

At the terminal, she waited by the back door of the empty bus, hoping to squeeze through the door as the driver swung it open. As soon as he appeared, both hands working the remaining crumbs out of his mustache, the other passengers descended on the door like a wave, tossing Kate out of her strategic position. Reluctant, even then, to use her elbows to propel herself forward, she was sucked further and further back, and was the second to last passenger to board the bus. She edged her way into the relative safety of a group of women standing, shoulder to shoulder, in the aisle around a pole. The first jerking motion of the bus threw Kate against the woman next to her, shoving her hard against the pole. Silently cursing the limitations of her English, Kate touched the woman's shoulder and then touched her fingers to her lips by way of apology. The woman smiled vaguely, and wagged her head from side to side as she rearranged the folds of her sari. The bus began to shake as the driver accelerated along the straight stretch of highway. Tea houses plastered with the smiling faces of electoral candidates flew by. Strands of triangular flags strung over the road fluttered in the wake of the bus.

* * *

Some two and a half hours later, the bus entered the verdant forest that covered the hill, and the heat of the plain below dissipated. Kate's face tingled, the cool air evaporating the beads of sweat along her hairline and above her upper lip. The driver spun the steering wheel wildly in one direction, and then in the other, throwing his considerable weight into each hairpin turn. When he veered too far toward the side of the road foliage would scrape the side of the bus, slapping passengers through the empty window frames. Women seated near the windows covered their bare shoulders and arms with the loose end of their saris, while mothers covered their children, so as to lessen the sting of rubbery leaves against skin. Those standing in the aisle spread their feet wide and locked their knees against the constant back-and-forth of the bus.

The conductor picked his way slowly through the bus, collecting fares, making change, and distributing tickets with one hand while pressing the splayed fingers of the other against the roof of the bus to keep his balance. At the end of the bus, the conductor stood before Kate. He told her the price of the ticket, and then, because she obviously hadn't understood, took his hand down from the roof, raising three fingers on that hand, and all five on the other. Just then the bus stopped short, sending the conductor flying back into the same woman Kate had hit earlier. Less forgiving this time, the woman refused to acknowledge the conductor's apologies, muttering under her breath as she re-adjusted the polyester folds of her sari with more vigor than the chore required. Looping her arm around the pole to free up both hands, Kate gingerly fished eight rupees out of her change purse and paid the conductor, who then sulked off to the corner behind the back door.

At the next stop Kate stole into an empty seat next to a window. Looking out, she watched the driver and conductor smoke against the side of the bus, the conductor leaning over to carefully light the driver's beedie every time it went out. They threw the butts to the wet ground; the bus soon sputtered into motion again. A woman with two small boys and a baby sat down next to her, one boy

on each side. Kate tried to make room, and watched shyly as the woman arranged the loose end of her purple sari over her chest to make a sort of tent under which she fed the infant. A lump under the fabric, the baby emitted satisfied sucking noises as it nursed.

Staring out the window again, Kate watched as the green streamed by, recurring, unbroken. A few heavy drops of rain fell, bursting on the leaves and streaming down their waxy surfaces. More fell. Drops came through the empty window frames, leaving fat circles on her shirtsleeve. The driver stopped the bus, and he and the conductor moved down the aisle, untying knots that hung above the open frames. A sheath of white canvas hung down the length of both sides of the bus, between the passengers inside and the rain out. Softly luminous light filtered through the unbleached fabric.

The rain continued to fall as they drove on, soaking through the curtains. Pinkish stains stretched down the cotton sheath. The passengers sat silently, swaying in synchronicity with the movement of the bus. Lulled by the rocking motion, the little boy next to Kate fell asleep, his heavy head leaning on her shoulder. The boy's mother reached over as if to readjust the child's head and prop it against her own shoulder, but instead simply tucked a cloth between them to absorb a thread of drool that hung from his open mouth. Looking up, the mother's gaze caught Kate's, their eyes locking briefly, complicitously. Kate stared down at the boy, this small, soft being, watching his shoulders rise and fall. His breath was hot against her forearm, its heat swelling and receding over her skin. His blue-black hair shone purple in the glow of the soaked curtains. Kate sat very still.

* * *

The low rumble of the bus engine stopped, and the sudden silence disturbed the child's sleep, waking him. He looked up, expecting to see his mother, and saw instead a stranger with white skin and yellow hair. Kate tried to look friendly, but the child began to cry inconsolably and buried his head in his mother's lap. Around them, the passengers were lifting the curtains and peering out at a wide plaza. Rainwater stood on the ground, forming a lake that was several inches deep. Gathering luggage and bending to remove their chappals, they began to leave the bus. Kate too removed her sandals and went barefoot down the aisle toward the door.

In single file, the passengers traced the shortest path through the puddle to the higher, drier margin of the plaza. The woman and her children were the last to get off the bus because the sobbing boy refused to budge until finally the mother jerked him to his feet and dragged him down the aisle. Balancing one child on her hip and the baby against her shoulder, the woman waded to the edge of the plaza. The crying child followed at a distance, deliberately stomping his feet in the muddy water. The mother stripped leaves from the bushes growing on the higher ground to dry her own feet and those of the child. Putting her rubber sandals on, she led her children out of the plaza. Kate watched them till they disappeared from view, and then she too ripped a handful of leaves from a bush. She rubbed her feet with the waxy leaves till she became exasperated, and, tossing the leaves to the ground, put the sandals on her mud-streaked feet and headed alone into town.

—jenny barchfield

पाती

भारत से आई थी पहली जो पाती
तो पाती को पढ़कर बड़ी जोर रोई

पाती को पलटा पलटकर के देखा
किसकी थी पाती समझ में न आई
जिसने भी भेजी थी प्रेम की पाती
उसका कहीं कुछ पता ही नहीं था

बड़ी कोशिश की निरर्थक रही थी
यही देखकर मैं बड़ी जोर रोई

भाई ने भेजा कि बहनों ने भेजा
कि मेरे किसी हितैषी ने भेजा
इतना था मालूम कि जिसने था भेजा
उसने बहुत रो रो कर लिखा था

मिट गये थे अक्षर सभी आँसुओं से
यही देखकर मैं बिलख करके रोई

जो कुछ भी अक्षर बचे थे उस खत में
उन्हीं अक्षरों को जोड़ा मिलाया।
आधे अधूरे उन शब्दों में ढूँढ़ा
तो एक शब्द सम्पूर्ण माँ बचा था

माँ शब्द को फिर हृदय से लगाकर
बड़ी देर सिसकी बड़ी देर रोई

—बिन्देश्वरी अगर्वाल 'बिन्दू'

ONE

I play with words,
dart in and out
of true definitions,
keeping the syllables
balanced precariously
on the edge of ambiguity,
finding comfort
in their iridescent world,
which shines with a luminance rare
and swallows up my soul,
leaving me deliciously hollow.

two poems

TWO

Myriad thoughts
spin in and out of me,
leaving me
always bereft
and rather helpless...

as I am, here,
thinking of you,
and how you always haunt me

gossamer webs you weave
are always reaching out
to envelop me
in their silken grip -
soft yet tensile -
and I gasp,
struggle,
as you throw
not one glance
in my direction

your apathy hurts
as nothing else can

and yet,
at stray moments,
you venture
into this tangled creation
and touch me
in that one
glorious gap in time
we are compelled to hold on

perhaps we have
been living
this twisted game
for longer than we can now remember...
through ancient lives
that now are lost

-chinmayee manjunath

I got up this morning, when the sun burst forth and spread everywhere
And one bird had just begun to sing.
I said to the sun: will you give me a little warmth, on credit?
I said to the bird: will you loan me a bit of sweetness?
I asked a blade of grass: will you give me a sliver of greenery—
One thorny twig?
I asked the trumpet-flower: will you lend me some light—
A handful of brightness?
I appealed to the wind: a little open space— just one breath;
To the wave: one thrill of joy.
I requested of the sky
Boundlessness in the blink of an eye— on loan.

I asked them all for a loan, and all gave it.
Thus I lived and still live
Because these things are life itself—
Warmth, sweetness, greenery, radiance,
The sweet breezes of freedom, open space,
Suppleness, delight, the rippling current,
And magnificent consciousness
Of the infinite and the undivided:
All these things I got on credit.

In the lonely darkness of the night
I awoke from a dream, in which
A formless unknown cried out,
And asked me: “Why, sir,
Is this life of yours
So dappled with experiences?
How wealthy you are—
Will you give me a little love on loan?
I’ll pay it back a hundredfold—
And that amount too I will multiply a hundred times—
As soon as I return.”

I said: Love? Loan?
My voice faltered, because
Such dealings were beyond my experience.
The unseen formless one said: “Yes,
Because all these things are love itself—
This loneliness, this impatience,
This confusion, this agitation,
 anguish, inexperience,
This searching, this wondering, this helplessness,
 the agony of separation,
Waking in this darkness to realize suddenly that
Mine is the very thing that is beyond me.
You have all this,
So give me a little bit— a loan— this one time—
The thing that I need so desperately.”

He said this,
But alone in the darkness of the night,
I was terrified and remained silent; until now I am silent still:
I am afraid to give a loan
To that unseen stranger:
Who knows
Who he is, this beggar!

ajneya's
'udhar'

—translated by chloe martinez

कल्पना क्या है?

गाली सी लगती है।
कोई कल्पनापति बनना नहीं चाहता
करोड़पति ही बनना चाहता है।

क्या कल्पना उपयोगी है?
किसी कल्पना की परीक्षा नहीं होगी
गणित करने की, राजनीति की होगी।

क्या कल्पना इलाज है,
बचाव?
मैं ने सुना है कि कल्पना से बचाव में
बचाव है।

कल्पना आपके सरदर्द को
दूर नहीं कर सकती।
कोरा कागज़
कोरी कल्पना।

—मैथ्यू रीक

मर्यादा

क्या होती है मर्यादा?
सीमाओं का सम्मान?
आपसी समझौते
या जकड़न
घुटन
पीड़न-उत्पीड़न
अग्नि परीक्षा
स्त्री उत्पीड़न
सतीत्व, बलिदान!
क्या मर्यादा-पुरुष मात्र एक स्वप्न है
आदर्श है?
और मर्यादा नारी!
इतना आम अपेक्षित व्यवहार
कि शब्द की भी अपेक्षा नहीं!

—सुषम बेदी

छाया

lingua fracas

It never was my birthright. Neither was it my mother tongue. But fate would have it that I would be born in a former British colony, one that was in many ways colonised to the soul, and that my parents would be affluent enough to send me to an English-medium school.

Circumstance has made the English language inseparable from me. It has intimately bonded the two of us. But am I less of an Indian if I choose to pray in English and not Bengali—my mother tongue? Does it make me a foreigner that I penned my first love letter in English? And would I feel more at home in Pembrokeshire than in Jaipur, just because most of the books on my shelf are in English? I think not.

A language, like one's faith, must be a personal choice; like faith, it is unfortunately also a platform for prejudice. Nothing hurts me more than to see "privileged" English-speaking Indians denigrate vernacular languages.

Lately, many young Indians have begun looking at accented-English speakers as "cool", as the guys who are "in". This attitude is especially flawed and offensive since for most of these speakers the language remains largely a professional acquisition; although they speak the language, many of them have not even sampled the rich body of Indian writing in English.

English is shaped by its daily usage in the mushrooming nouveau-riche corporate offices of India's large cities, and is deemed only a passport to professional and financial stardom. English is treated impersonally and abused, learnt not for the love of the language but for the financial gain it entails. Worse, many of these English speakers are no longer comfortable reading and writing in their mother tongue, whatever that may be.

How many students actually "choose" to study English Literature at universities in India? Only a handful. And not only English—other language and literature courses as well are calling out for attention, with only uninterested and apathetic students on their rolls. On most students' lists of priorities, these courses appear far below other, more "career-oriented" subjects; in India, the Humanities have always been overshadowed by scientific and engineering programmes.

Few youngsters are in love with languages today. How many, for instance, would care to find out the various words from South Asian languages that have been officially included in the English language? And how many are interested in the etymology of any of the words that they use daily? For them language is still, unfortunately, only a survival kit.

As a journalist I use English as more than a mere instrument or simple medium of communication. All my ideas and expressions stem from this language. It has been my childhood friend and is now my life partner. Nothing gives me such a thrill as browsing through a list of unknown words, or delineating the nuances of a set of synonyms.

English words still hold a certain magic—one I have yet to fully discover—and they have made me the writer I am today. What I admire in English is the way it continues to grow on me. As much as I would now feel orphaned, unable to share anything in my heart without this language, my attachment to it can only grow stronger with the passage of time. English remains in my heart, embedded in myself, irreplaceable.

—debarshi dasgupta

figment of crushed spices

(on a mid-summer's day)

clothed in saffron silks, her bare feet tread
close to the riverbank
damp earth and grass muddy
the frayed edge of her sari

cinnamon goddess, one arm encircled with
emerald glass bangles, other graced
by a henna-painted tamarind vine

his lips whisper against her dusty wrist
tongue traces a vein into the crook of her elbow

she shivers
her skin glistening, glittering brown
wine dark with desire

he inhales her rose jasmine hair
smells leftover summer in her neck
long, languid and revealed

her wind-tangled hair, glossed copper by the sun
and he, with breath scented like cloves and ginger
kisses her and tastes water and earth

—monica shah

शब्दों की खिड़कियाँ

इन शब्दों की खिड़कियों के ज़रिए
पहुँचता है मुझ तक
सब कुछ।
सब कुछ जो तुम हो, तुम्हारा है
तुम्हारे भाव
अभाव
तुम्हारे गान
अगान।
तुम्हारी रचना
धर्म
राजनीति।
तुम्हारे रस, रंग
अर्थ-अनर्थ।
तुम क्या हो
ये शब्द ही बताते हैं मुझे
चुपके से मेरे कान में आकर फुसफुसा जाते हैं कथा तुम्हारी।

सुनो
शब्द न होते.
क्या “मैं” “तुम” होते?
क्या तुम मेरे होने से हो
या मैं मात्र तुम्हारे होने से हूँ
या कि दोनों एक दूसरे से स्वतंत्र अपने होने से हैं!
क्या होना अपने-आप में संपूर्ण है
संपूर्ण है तो शब्द क्यों!
पर क्या शब्द संपूर्णता दे सकते हैं
क्या शब्द संपूर्णता पा सकते हैं
पर शब्द के बिना मैं होती कैसे!
“तुम” शब्द न होता तो क्या तुम होते?
बताओ
तुम का होना तुम से है
या कि शब्द से?

क्या मेरी भावना,
मेरी संवेदना,
मेरे अहसास भी शब्दों पर आधृत हैं!
या कि स्वतंत्र, सबसे,
मुझसे भी स्वतंत्र!
क्या संवेदना न होती
अहसास न होते!
तो मैं होती? तुम होते?

मैं क्या हूँ
अहसास भावना संवेदना
या कि शब्दों का पुंज!
तुम क्या हो
तुम.....
क्या कि तुम शब्द?
कौन बतलायेगा
मूल हस्ती किसकी है?
तुम्हारी?
या तुम्हारी चेतना की
तुम्हारी पीड़ा की
पीड़ा के अहसास की
या अहसास के अहसास की!

कुछ मैं कौन कूदेगा?
सागर में कौन डूबेगा
क्या वह लौटकर बतलायेगा
कि तुम तुम से है
कि तुम का होना तुम से ही था
हो सकता था।
या
कि होना मात्र शब्द से ही था
कि होना मात्र होने से था
कि शब्द तो समर्पित है होने को
या कि होना
शब्द को?

कि घर है
तभी खिड़कियाँ हैं
कि खिड़कियाँ हैं
तभी रहती हूँ
इस घर में!

कि हवा सिर्फ खिड़कियों से प्रवेश करती है
कि हवा जीवन है
कि बंद घर मौत!
तो बताओ
कि हस्ती या होना—
घर है
या खिड़की
या हवा
या शब्द!
—सुषम बेदी

nirala's 'kukumutta' : selections

There was a Nawaab,
From Persia he'd requested a rose,
In a great orchard he had it planted,
There where native plants also grew...

* * *

When the season came, the Persian rose bloomed,
And spread its glory throughout the garden;
Just there in the dirt, by some deceit it grew.
From the hillock sprang its head, and wriggling, the mushroom said –
“Listen, you rose,
Don't forget, though you possess sweet fragrance and splendid color,
You sucked the blood of crude soil,
And you prance about on the branch like a *capitalist*!
How many have you made into slaves,
Made them your gardeners, caused them to endure cold and heat;
Those whose hands you touched
Ran away so fast their feet were on their heads,
The way men flee a battlefield in pursuit of women,
The way a horse bolts the stable having broken its tether;
Shahs, Rajas, the wealthy have always loved you,
Thus you've been distant from the people.
What else is this existence of yours, you depraved one,
You're filled with thorns, think of that;
The bud that now blooms
Having dried up, it is cut.
Every day you are watered,
You of bad family;
You always need such maintenance
That you show this fragrance,
Which flows on, ferrying people to where there is no embankment
Where there's no help;
Like twinkling stars lost in thought,
They may suffer pangs of hunger, yet each of your words is precious.¹
“Look at me, I grew,
I have climbed higher than one and a half hand-lengths,
And I've come up by myself,
Without a crumb of bird's feed;
My stalk is not planted,
My life awakens on its own.²
“You are the copy, I am the original,
You are the goat, I am well-born,
You are colored, I am pure,
I am the water, you the bubble
You spoiled the world,
I saved it from destruction;

Eunuch that you are, you snatched up the roti;
I made one and have given away three, do you hear?

* * *

But *benzoin*³ is made just like philosophy
Like the *navel* and Brahmagart,⁴
So the world is made of spheres and layers
Just like wrinkles on a sari,
Once they are cleaned and pressed.
Cosmopolitan and *metropolitan*,
Just like Freud and Lytton.
Fallacy and *philosophy*,
Like necessity and its removal.
The *fraud* in what's pleasing,
Like Leningrad among *capitals*.
As the enemy understands the truth
Like a fortunate fool among authors.

* * *

I am the *lyre*, the *lyric* is made of me,
Whether born of Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, Greek, Latin,
Mantras, ghazals, geet. Possessed by love of me,
They live, then die, then are born again.

* * *

All in the world snatched their *ras* from me
In *ras* I was steeped and from it emerged.
Valmiki and Vyasa plunged into just me,
Bhasa and Kalidas took their tomes out of me;
Standing on my bank they gazed intently,
Like the world-renowned poets Hafez and Ravindra.
Somewhere there's a stumbling block, somewhere there's a stone;
As T. S. Eliot pushed them away,⁵
The readers put their hands on their hearts
And said 'He wrote the entire world.'
Just as one stops the eyes, seeing too much,
In the evening he still sees a star;
Just as the progressive takes up the pen,
His anger and zeal not to be stopped;
All this happened from right here
The way mother told aunty."

—translated by scott schlossberg

¹ There may be a typographical error here. Accounting for the pattern of the previous lines, *zabaan* could also be read as *jabaan*

² The end-quote is missing in the original, but seems to belong either here or at the end of this verse.

³ Gum resin used especially in treating skin irritation, alternatively an ingredient in frankincense

⁴ Sacred land; actual region Northwest of Delhi

⁵ Alternatively, "As T.S. Eliot tossed out stones and pebbles"

गुरुत्वाकर्षण बल

शायद यही कारण है कि गुरुत्वाकर्षण बल को मानते हैं, मानो कि वह सत्य हो या तथ्य। सही बात है कि काफी सालों से हम सब नीचे की दिशा में चलते जा रहे हैं, हम बच्चे अपने परिवारों के पीछे, उस तरह जैसे एक बड़े जहाज़ के द्वारा सब छोटी छोटी नावें खींची जाती हैं। मेरी पूरी जिंदगी में, और मुझे लगता है कि पीढ़ियों से भी, लोग सोचते हैं कि हमें धरती का भारी केंद्र खींचता है। मेरे माँ-बाप इतना मानते थे कि मरने के बाद भी ज़मीन में दफना दिये गये। और शायद गुरुत्व के आधार पर हमारा अंदाज़ बन गया। खूबसूरत लड़की दुपट्टा क्यों पहनती है? क्योंकि उसको पता चलता है कि वसन्त के आते हुए समीर में वह उड़गा और अधोगामी बल पड़ने से सुंदर लगेगा। मैं मानता हूँ कि हमारे पैरों को नीचे से कोई बल नहीं खींचता है, बस बात यह है, कि हम दूसरी ओर जाना भूल गये हैं।

कल रात दीपक के घर में मैं आमंत्रित थी; कुछ पार्टी-वार्टी नहीं करती हूँ, लेकिन जाती हूँ जब मौका मिलता है। इस बार दीपक के घर में लगभग पचास लोग थे, इतने कि एक रात में सब से परिचय नहीं किया जा सकता। दीपक का तीसवाँ जन्म-दिन था, और उसके सब दोस्त वहाँ थे। अपने दफ्तर से बस मैं थी। मैं और दीपक *विश्व* पत्रिका के लिए काम करते हैं, मैं विज्ञापन में और वह, मुझसे दो मंज़िल नीचे संपादन करता है। रोज़ाना हम साथ साथ अपनी इमारत के छोटे-से भोजनालय में दिन का खाना खाते हुए अपनी मैगज़ीन की बुराई करते हैं-क्यों सब लेखकों को कॉलेज में वापस दाखिल होना चाहिए और प्रकाशकों को कोई बिज़नेस का शौक नहीं रहा। इन्हीं बातों पर हममें दोस्ती हुई थी, कि हम दोनों सब से नफरत करते हैं। उसने शायद सच में नफरत की। मुझे लगता है कि मैंने इतने वर्षों तक किसी से भी नफरत की तो अब रुकना मुश्किल है।

दीपक के सिवाय मैं पार्टी में सब के लिए अनजान थी। एक बातचीत से दूसरी तक फिसलती जा रही थी। तीन वकीलों से आनेवाले चुनाव के विषय में तब तक बात की जब तक वे मुझसे थक नहीं गयी और बाथरूम खोजने के बहाने एक मशहूर निदेशक की परिक्रमा करने लगी।

मेरी जिन्दगी ऐसी है, जैसी बचपन की एक याद। दूसरी लड़कियाँ मुझ पर हँसा करती थीं, तो मैं उन्हें कभी-कभी एक जवाब देती, कभी-कभी रोककर चुप रहती लेकिन कभी उन बदतमीज़ लड़कियों के परिवारों या उनकी त्वचा के रंग के बारे में पहले से ही गाली नहीं देती। अहसास नहीं था मुझे कि मैं ऐसा कर सकती थी। 'रंडी, तेरे कपड़े भद्दे हैं व तेरी माँ के खाने में बू है'; मेरी चौबीस साल की उम्र होने के बावजूद भी मैं उनको ऐसा कहना चाहती हूँ।

कमरे की दूरी से मैंने एक बुरी औरत की दिलचस्प और ओजस्वी आधुनिक कला की बातचीत सुनी किंतु उसके पास पहुँचने पर उसने मुझे अपने नातियों की तस्वीरें दिखाई तबतक दीपक अपने एक मित्र को मुझसे मिलवाने के लिए लाया।

‘तुम दोनों बात करो, मैं स्टीरिओ ठीक कर दूँ’ दीपक ने कहा। और सचमुच अच्छा था—मैंने अपनी बड़ी बहन की हँसनेलायक कहानियाँ बतायीं। उसने मुझे बताया क्यों सब लोग उसका नाम पृथ्वी होने के बावजूद कार्यस्थल में उसको ‘स्टीव’ कहते हैं। इस समय बहुत मज़ा आ रहा था, उसका हाथ मेरी पीठ पर दो-चार बार लग गया। मैं मुस्करा रही थी और मैंने महसूस किया कि मेरे पैर हलकें होते जा रहे हैं। जब मुझे लगा कि वह नहीं देख पा रहा था तो मैंने अपने घुटने के पीछे की त्वचा पर चिकोटी काटी; दर्द होने पर महसूस किया कि यह अनुभव असली था, कोई स्वप्न नहीं।

पृथ्वी शराब लाने के लिए गया; मैंने उसके पीछे कहा ‘जल्दी आओ साकीबाला!’ मैंने अपनी लहराती हुई काली ड्रेस को देखा।

वह दो गिलास लाल हाला लेकर वापस आया। मैंने शराब उससे लेने के बजाय अपना हाथ बढ़ाकर पृथ्वी की सफेद कमीज़ और क्रीम पतलून पर गिरा दी।

जिस त्वरण से हाला नीचे खिंच रही थी, उसी त्वरण से गालीलियो के दो पत्थर, एक बड़ा-सा व एक छोटा-सा, मीनार के ऊपर से गिर कर धरती तक पहुँच गये। सभी का त्वरण 9.2 मीटर/सैकंड^2 होता है: सिक्के, पानी, प्यार, हमारी बुरी सरकार। हाला भी पूरे संसार की तरह अधोगामी हुई। लेकिन मैंने अपने हाथ बढ़ाकर गिरती हुई हाला को उनमें रोका और कई क्षणों के दौरान हाला इस स्थिति में रुकी रही। एक एब्स्ट्रैक्ट मूर्ति जैसी थी, मेरे हाथों के कमज़ोर आधार पर जैसे, एक एक बूँद ने अपने को गिरने के पल में जमा लिया हो। ज़िराफ की लम्बी गरदन की तरह, थोड़ी-सी हिली अपनी लम्बाई के कारण। मैंने हाला के भार को महसूस किया, लेकिन यह गुरुत्व के विश्वास का भार था, जिससे मैं भी भरी हूँ। विपरीत दिशा में थोड़ा-सा बल लगाकर मैंने इस काल्पनिक खिंचाव को मार डाला।

मैंने रुकी हुई हाला गिलास में वापस फेंक दी। इतना असान था कि इस के बारे में कुछ कहनेलायक नहीं है। दरवाज़ा खोलने की तरह था। अगर पुराने खण्डहर मकान का दरवाज़ा कोई खोलता, तो हालांकि वह सालों से इस्तेमाल नहीं किया गया, फिर भी दरवाज़ा तो दरवाज़ा ही है और खुलने में कोई मुश्किल नहीं होती।

इस घटना को देखकर, पृथ्वी ने मुझे अपने पास खींचने के बजाय अपना हाथ बढ़ाते हुए कहा ‘तुम मेरे घर जाना चाहती हो?’ मैंने उसकी बांहों का खिंचाव देखा और फिर हाला को जो मैंने अपनी शक्ति से उसके गिलास में वापस लौटा दी थी। ‘नहीं,’ मैंने कहा, ‘मुझे इस की तुलना में अधिक पसंद था कि मैं अकेली कुछ देर बाहर घूमूँ। मैं दीपक के घर से चली गयी और चौड़े रास्ते पे सैर कर रही थी। सड़क की हर बत्ती व पेड़ मेरी ओर झुके हुए जैसे एक जोरदार, अदृश्य बल के द्वारा खींचे जा रहे थे।

—सैमुएल थ्रोप

माया की छाया

मानव-मस्तिष्क से परे है माया
अहसास भले ही हुआ हो
पर कभी नहीं समझ पाया
सुख-दुख, धन-दौलत, रिश्ते-नाते
कुछ खोया, कुछ पाया
कहते हैं यह है माया
पर, क्या यही है माया?
यह तो है सिर्फ *माया की छाया*
छाया जो हमेशा पीछा करती है
पर एक दिन
जमीन से उठकर, सामने आकर
हाथ पकड़कर कहती है
अब मैं आगे-आगे चलती हूँ
तू मेरे पीछे चल
देख होता है क्या
तू मुझसे क्यों डरती है मानव काया
होनी-अनहोनी
अर्थ-अनर्थ
सब है माया!

—अच्युता नन्द सिंह

three poems

1.

The smell of old flowers
In a warm room—
All I can think of are used arguments
Like sayings traced
In the dust on car windows.

2.

We walked on the pavement,
Talking of love,
And ahead of us on the street
A child turned cartwheels

3.

Going back in an auto,
My school uniform drenched,
Wet hair plastered to my face,
I run in to meet my mother.
She has dried me with a rough, large
towel,
And I go down for lunch
In my fresh, dry frock.

—meenakshi reddy madhavan

indian airlines flight 857

9:00 PM Arriving at the airport, I realize that I am an hour late. I am an idiot and cannot tell time by a 24-hour clock. However this makes no difference, as there seems to be no flight, nothing happening at all in fact. I check in and sit down in the waiting area. People wander around, looking unworried. I am patient. Certainly there will be a flight eventually.

11:00 PM An angry mob is gathering around the Indian Airlines officials. They are pushing and yelling, I am not sure about what. It does seem a bit late for a 10:30 flight. I get up and wander over to stand on the edge of the mob, trying to follow the tense conversations going on in Hindi. Finally I give up and ask the woman next to me, *ji, kya ho raha hai?* “I don’t know,” she says, “I think they’re putting us on an unheated bus to Delhi. They are trying to get a heated bus, at least.”

11:45 PM Bus is very cold. We are taken to a fancy hotel and have a lukewarm buffet in the coffee shop, though no one is hungry at this hour. When I go to use the bathroom, I return to find that the hotel staff has brought out a pile of blankets for the bus ride. They have brought about ten blankets for the fifty or so passengers. The blankets have already been snatched up by various fat middle-aged men. When I ask one man about the six blankets sitting next to him, he says, “*sab bacchon ke liye*”. As if they are really all for the four children on this flight. I burn with resentment for middle-aged men who have blankets.

1:00 AM I attempt to get another blanket out of the hotel employees by cajoling, begging, bribing and finally complaining. By the time I build up to an indignant tirade against Indian Airlines, the men in charge are doing their best bureaucrat routine—stare at the wall as if they are being harassed by some lunatic at a stoplight. Clearly, this is not their problem. I get on the bus.

1:30 AM Bus finally leaves.

2:45 AM I wake up on the bus, my body sore and frozen. We are inching along over what feels like huge potholes. Possibly there is a minefield on the way to Delhi. The road is unusually well lit. I writhe around. It is like trying to sleep on top of a camel. Fat men all snoring loudly under their warm blankets.

7:30 AM We arrive at the Delhi airport in a thick fog. The driver does not know where to take us. One of the passengers calls someone on his mobile and instructs the driver. No one is in charge.

8:30 AM I am trying to check in again. On either side of me a man tries to inch in front of me sideways and steal my place in line. When I point this out, everyone in the vicinity acts as if I am some high-strung American asshole, and laughingly tells me that we are all in this together. “You are next, of course, madam” says the fat man on my left, magnanimously. Nevertheless, when my turn comes both men try to shove their tickets into the Indian Airlines agent’s hand, as if by force of habit. When I start to make deranged growling noises they remember themselves again and say, “*bahn bahn*, yes, it is your turn now,” as if they had known that all along. Both continue to lean in front of me as much as they can while I talk to the ticket agent, who clearly hates me. In lieu of any

other compensation for the lack of an airplane, she hands me a boxed breakfast, including three kinds of fried something, sandwiches, and an artificial mango drink. My turn is over.

9:30 AM Nothing going on in the airport. All the waiting seats are taken, excepting a few which are held, theoretically for relatives, by fierce and unyielding elderly ladies. Huge crowding lines fill the security check area, but only one flight on the board flashes “boarding”. My flight is marked “delayed”. No departure time is proposed.

10:30 AM I give up walking in circles and go have coffee in the airport restaurant. I sit at the bar, as there are no empty tables. The man next to me orders an orange juice with a double shot of gin, and a mini-bottle of wine. I wish there was some kind of liquor in my coffee.

10:40 AM I emerge from the restaurant after ten minutes. My flight’s status has gone directly from “delayed” to “departing”. All the Thailand passengers are crowding the security check gates like panicky cattle. The semblance of a line disappears. No one knows anything. We look around anxiously.

11:00 AM At the far end of the crowd, an Indian man loses it and starts screaming hysterically. Everyone lets up their frantic pushing a bit to crane and stare in his direction. Just for fun, I attempt to read the *New Yorker*, stabbing people with my elbows whenever possible.

11:15 AM I inch through the security check doorway and am shuttled into the ladies’ line for the metal detector. The ladies are the most vicious pushers of all. There is only one security guard working this line, and she is in no hurry. We pile up and give each other dirty looks. When I request of one middle-aged, sari-clad lady that she not stand on top of me, she explains indignantly that she is all alone and sick and needs to sit down. I want to ask her, do I look like a chair? I tell her that I too am alone, and that I am in fact coming down with a cold myself due to being on a freezing bus all night. She says, “No, I think you have some three-four people with you, *na?*” I want to kick her. Instead I tell her again that I am, as far as I know, alone.

11:30 AM I arrive at my gate. A guard tells me to just wait, it’s not my flight yet. I frantically show my ticket to various men until one says, “oh yes, that’s the departing flight.” They let me through and I sprint to the shuttle bus. The shuttle bus sits there for forty minutes.

12:40 PM We have been sitting in the airplane for a half an hour. My mobile rings, and I answer it, hoping that it is my friend in Thailand, telling me that he can still meet me at the airport there. It is not my friend. A man asks me in Hindi if this is the office of the *Rajasthan Patrika*. I tell him that he has the wrong number, but he cannot hear me or does not believe me, so he grills me on my location and whether or not I am indeed the *Rajasthan Patrika*. I explain that I am not a newspaper office, nor am I speaking from Bundi. “Delhi?” he says, doubtfully. “*Habn jü, main Dilli mai hun...*” Yes, I tell him. I am in Delhi.

—olivia walden

जिंदगी क्या है बिना प्यार के

जिंदगी क्या है बिना प्यार के
प्यार है जिंदगी का हिस्सा
पर प्यार वो कैसा
जिसमें हो जिस्म का व्यापार
जिस्म तो दिखावा है
जिस्म तो क्षणभंगुर है।
प्यार अदृश्य है
प्यार संवेदना है,
प्यार पीड़ा है
इसका तो बस होता है अहसास
प्यार तो साया है
रहता है संग हमेशा
इक जन्म तो क्या
सात जन्म कट जाते हैं
सहारे प्यार के
प्यार तो है इक फूल
उस जीवनरूपी बगिया का
जो अपने चारों ओर सुगंध फैलाती है।
यही तो है सच्चा प्यार जो अजर है अमर है।

—हरीश खन्ना

ज्ञानः परिभाषा

(स.) नामः जानना
जिस में परिवर्तन हुआ है।
जानना क्रिया होती है
इसलिए उस का खुलासा
प्रक्रिया है, सक्रियता।
वह पकड़ा नहीं जा सकता।

ज्ञान जानने से बनता है।
वह नाम होता है
इसलिए जैसे भी वह दिखता है
वह अभी तक तयशुदा है।

ज्ञान लेना इतना मुश्किल
नहीं होता। बाज़ार जा के
वहाँ की पुस्तकों में
मिलता है। लेंगे?

आप के लेने से पहले
एक बात बाकी है.
जो आदमी मंच पर व्याख्यान देते हैं
वे सरस्वती के नाम पर
काली माँ को मानते हैं।

—मैथ्यू रीक

c o n t r i b u t o r s

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