

CREATOR

By Mona Dash

Your first born
was grotesque
Arms spanning the world
crushing it with iron strength.
Your second born
was fierce
exploding fire from his mouth
burning souls in a day.

The ones who came after
and after
raged for days
destroying the fabric of the skies,
the foundations of forests
ripping the sturdy mountains
until the streams dripped blood.

Still you didn't stop.

You carried on
producing offspring
one after the other
advancing across geographies
changing histories
living unimagined futures.

Till one day, they swallowed the sun

whole, shredded the earth
and washed away the paintings
of your image
Till they brought apocalypse
in the middle of the Yuga.

THE GOD OF HAPPINESS

Wars rage in countries, battlefields grow
People mourn wounds
of the destroyed and the destroyers
Wars rage in human hearts
Killings happen whether in words, deeds
or bodies

Despair sets in, like age
Healthy bodies deteriorate
As people in frenzy
clamour for possessions

The Earth dances its own tandava

And all along, hidden in the skies
sits the God of Happiness
Blue bodied, golden robed
He dazzles in rainbows
He giggles in super moons
He is resplendent in the sun's ray.
He bestows benedictions,
laughing, indiscriminately
into our outstretched palms

Some receiving moments
Some receiving lifetimes of blessings
Some bewildered by his gaze
know they must give in
and nurse despair as if happiness.

DURGA

It was only an instant
When she forgot to breathe
And that moment
The seas sucked through and dried
leaving craters of drought
Hearts collapsed, exploded
Pralaya in our lives
Perversions took human form
as men demon like
gouged and penetrated
Women ruptured into
mangled and grieving parts
stones, blades, rusty hammers
lodged in fragile bodies

Durga!
Mother!
Singhabahini!

She forgot to see
Her eyes shut for a moment
And in that instant

The world was sucked into
the writhing abdomen of the
asuras.

(Written for the rapes happening in India on an almost daily basis)

A FAIR EXCHANGE

Your fingers stroke my hair
your smile is not brutal
As your lips bite into my neck
sharp and clean
drawing blood, vampire like.

I know it must be done.

Love is in the caves
lost, lonely.
To find it and make it whole
to clothe and wash it
to adopt it –
It's not for everyone.

Only the brave receive manna
only the ones who walk through fire
are redeemed.

Puny thoughts, shallow desires

What can that bestow?

A slow drawing of blood, of more
is not that bad.

In return,
There is a mansion, soft pile rugs on marble floors
fox and rabbit fur, nestling on my neck
glorious jewels shining, hiding the sharp bite.

And I know when night comes
I will be back
in bed, with those fangs
telling myself, thinking this is it,
this is love.

BELONGING

Corporate men in pinstripe suits
Sitting around the table in deep discussions
In accents of lilting French, baritone German, twang American
Among them an Indian, worse a woman, Indian.
When I speak in tone, walk with the step
Eyebrows raise, they lean forward to hear better
Talk louder when addressing me, as if I were deaf
Telling me silently
'You shouldn't be here.'

A crowded English pub, people
standing in spaces too small for them
Leaving my group I go to order the drinks

The bartender stares and doesn't get it when I say
'A Bacardi breezer and three pints of lager'
Looking confused, leaning forward closer,
Telling me silently
'You shouldn't be here.'

Welcoming smiles, women in sarees
Sitting in front of a TV, talking about the day
Grinding masalas, rolling chapattis, content
in the four walls, within the set boundaries.
My hometown, my roots, so far from my branches
Ill at ease I sit
listening to my own voice
telling me silently, loudly
'You shouldn't be here.'

[Published in Nov. issue of Kavya Bharati 2005]

ATONEMENT

Do I have to beg
rebirth
To become whole again?
Atone with a thousand dips
in those Holy rivers
mounts of purity
names familiar in books
or on the lips of
Pilgrims, fanatic in belief
I had always mocked

Take back all that I ever chastised
or made mockery of
Goddesses in bright yellow sarees
dark faces smeared with red hot vermilion
golden flowers adorning the notch in the tree
mini temples dotting roadsides to protect
the millions in the country
Those wayside shrines
I had never bowed to

Should I retrace my steps?
This time with burning incense
and coconuts bursting with juice
when cracked open, white on a stone.
Go over the fragments of my past
Where can I find my forgiveness?

If sorrow is the natural result of past sins
for sins I do not remember having committed
How do I atone
in this inevitable path to death
carrying a body which was given to me
incomplete, defective?

Will atonement bring completeness?

Bio:

Born and brought up in the coastal state of Odisha in East India, Mona Dash comes from a family of artistically inclined professionals and academics. Mona has been living in London since 2001.

By education she is an engineer and MBA and with that comes the price of working as a sales manager in an international Telecoms company. By choice she is a writer and with that comes the freedom and happiness of writing poetry, stories and fiction.

She has recently gained a Masters in Creative Writing, with distinction, from the London Metropolitan University.

Most of her work explores themes of love, displacement and belonging. Mona is inspired by different cultures and having travelled extensively as part of her work, likes to observe and write about how a place can significantly influence human nature and behaviour. Relationships, subsequent betrayal, and a quest for something fulfilling also emerge as strong themes in her work. Her characters are caught in between the west and east, tradition and modernity, the routine and something beyond the ordinary.

Her short stories and poetry has been published in various anthologies and magazines in the UK and India such as KavyaBharati, Muse India, The Lake, Poetry 24, 3 Elements. Her work has also been anthologised in Suvarnarekha , Dance of the Peacock, Foreign Flavours, Foreign Encounters and other recent anthologies. She has recently gained a Master's in Creative Writing at the London Metropolitan University.

Dawn-drops is her first collection of poetry published by Writer's Workshop, India. Her first book of fiction is represented by Redink Literary agency.

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