

India: A Poetry Collection

“Sewing Machine”

This is a growing place
Fringes of fabric lay thick
Squirreling and squirming out the edges
Of their repressive tupperware
Toes frantic as they avoid the silver glinted needles
Carelessly dropped by the rolling
Chair next to the new furniture
I can only think of my mother's
Fresh knit smile when crisp hands and practices
Eyes bent over the sewing machine

This is not a sepia world of
Dull eyes and black braids bouncing
Against her back as she bicycles to school
Color is found in the expansive trees lush
Cornucopias of green against the fading
Sky the color has bled the deed is done
We are in America now

Old sewing machines lay forgotten underneath
Dusty memories in stifling heat and choking
Nostalgia surrounded by cacophony of
Children with loud smiles and burned feet
Embroidered handkerchiefs stuffed into school bags
Now we are in a white tiled world

This is a resting place
At night I turn the light off
The sewing machine
My mother left it on with the silver needles
The last scrap of fabric lying skew across the table

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“Holy Water”

Once I was handed a silver jar
Silky smooth leaves of green laden
On a petite platter there was water
Murky distant sweet water
I was told this was the water of God
I must not let his holy plate touch
Banal wood of mortal table

Perhaps it was the wet saliva dripping
From tongue as God spoke hallowed hollowed word
Or urine expelled with Satanic thought
Or the blood of God
Still and simple in his veins calm
With omniscient security

Behind closed eyes I drank holy water
Foreign liquids wishing wasting burning dreaming
Within my simple throat I erupted
I grew and expanded and burst for I could not hold
God's consuming power within these very veins

For in India it is not one God but many
Infinite forms of colors and shapes
Arms and legs and heads and toes all battling
And striving to rejoin once more
I could feel that struggle within me tugging on the wires
And strings and stories that so carefully wound me together
I could feel my veins and tendons and ligaments
Stretching ready to snap
I could feel all of the gods merging and diverging
Holy water held these things

Holy water has spawned angels in me
I feel wing beats with heartbeats
Trembling fingers and ancient chants
Sanskrit hymns and the rhythms of the tabla
Sneaking aside from wide eyed relatives I walked over
To the mango juice table and washed
Holy water down down down
To cleanse myself of that glimpse of beyond

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“Bliss”

Bare feet pound against sweltering pavement top
Cacophonies of chatter, languages of origins unknown
Blend and collide with that call of the fruit seller
A squeak to the wheels of the cart as they
Groan and grumble down the alleyway

Found between saccharine suns in the sweet box
Bliss lurks aside motorcycles smelling of spices and gas
On soft singing and the clasp of hands
I find it under banana leaves and taste it in milk
Swaddled in a thick curd coat
Cool metal cup pressed against
My tongue pressed to the roof of my mouth as
I try to speak words of airplanes and curry plates

Creased brown hands worn and withered
Thick black thumbs and thin nails
Plucking the strings of the veene
Bliss sings through the throaty murmur
Of music which I do not know

And Bliss makes pictures, sculptures of memory
Chin lifted eyes brightened smile forming
A laugh has escaped my mouth in this foreign instant
I find Bliss tucked behind the withering green heart
Hung lovingly on the wall

I find Bliss in shared puns over birthday cake
Mischievous eyes and slight nods and The Insistence
That you must have another cup of mango juice
Tall ketchup bottles above the Krishna idol and
Chipped paint swastika adorned with floral wreath
The sign T.R. Sastry hung on the rusting metal gale