



Raw Whispers

Edition 6, 18.02.2021.



give bread to a stray dog.

-Rinchen Angmo.

A Semblance of Peace

What is that whistle I hear?
Is that a train engine sounding in Nizamuddin?
There are other noises I hear
Like: a mongrel barking, men bantering,
Four wheelers honking, and static from machines.
Strange how these noises amplify
The sensation of silence.
It is the distance which amplifies this silence.
The train whistles in Nizamuddin,
The mongrels are barking in another galli,
The men banter outside of the colony, some in rooftops;
I live in Sunlight Colony.
It is peaceable
Because my house is silent,
So long as there is quiet in my vicinity
The noise outside only adds to my peace.
“If there is peace in your heart,
Then the busiest road will be peaceful”
Nonsense.
The road is silent as long as no one notices me.
If I am perturbed, the silence is broken.
On the other hand,
If there is silence in my vicinity,
Even if there is trouble brewing in my heart
The reverberating sound of silence
Will hush the disquiet cisterns within.



Check your surroundings.
Do you live in a noisy house?
Is your locality brimming with black noise?
If so then listen,
Follow the trail of silence.
Listen hard and walk toward that source of silence.
Every once in a while, visit that place,
Surround yourself with the tranquil waters of that spring
Every once in a while.
Thus, nourish sanity and the sage within your heart.

Life in this noisy world is harsh, brash,
Urgent, hurried,
Cold and rational, obsessively productive,
Dilemmatic, subjective,
Pretensive, aggressive,
Passionate, articulate,
Seldom quiet.
Peace.
Peace ho.
What? There is no peace in this world?
Shall we wait for the Resurrection to live in peace?
Hearken!
Let us then at least, have
A semblance of peace.
If, not yet in paradise,
Let us live for now in an imitation of one.
So long as an inspired product
Can help us prepare for the real thing,
Let us pretend!
Why wait for an ebullient stairway
If a makeshift ladder suffices?

-Samson S Haokip



Pandemic snippets

The days of the pandemic, when the numbers were soaring high, proved to be difficult to hold still. The world outside and the universe inside our minds were crumbling. It felt as if the negative fortune about our world did not just refer to the external world but also the world inside of us. Perhaps that's why even the most comfortable individual with a luxurious lifestyle felt something missing if not right. For us, the high numbers and the anxiety of falling ill kept us away from the general crowd, especially my mother and I, for almost a year and even now. For me, the pink wallpaper in my room had metamorphosed into something atrophic, almost pathetic to look at. The only window inside my room had a view of the silent outskirts of the otherwise bustling Ahmedabad city. The flat, which I had no complaints about in the beginning, had begun to be disliked by all of us, somehow. Perhaps by looking at the same objects and subjects everyday and everytime at the same designated hours made us feel same, same like dejected.

It felt like everyday was a struggle to live in reality. In order to do so, it felt correct to take some time off social media. But after doing so, a social cord of knowing the happenings of the world, of friends around me had been snapped.



What else was I to do, without transforming myself into a socialite person, to decrease this increasing sense of loneliness? Social media, on one hand, had grown into a world-informant and on the other hand, became a deterrent on my path of seeking real time closure. But even seeking real time closure is difficult during these pandemic times, especially when you have a hesitant nature to talk/speak about emotions and folly. Rather than real people, I think, I had begun talking to myself about myself and not often than not my past. But why would I start talking only about the past? The past seemed to be important to my older self but not so much to this self. After reading an essay on the use and abuse of history, I realized how much I needed to grow still, how much time I had wasted by thinking about the past. Even at the age of 20, I needed to remind myself that dwelling upon the 'I' has reached sufficient levels of analysis. But you know, a lot of times, especially when I suffer from lack of attention for a brief period of time, I realize that all that we often do is think about the past, not often the happy memories but the terrible headaches. And during such melancholic days, we forget to remind ourselves that amidst these big despairs, there were rays of hope and forgotten happiness.

We act maturely in front of others, especially siblings, when it comes to solving problems and their hidden anxieties. 'You shouldn't have done this', with onanopoteic expressions. Externally, I display a strong character, completely aware of such disasters. In other words, I act like an adult who has seen half of the world in front of my sister. To some extent, my snippets about abstract ideas of life, and sorrow are able to console her. And I often rejoice at this fact of conclusion, but internally, almost instantly, I become aware of how much I needed someone to tell me about such snippets, such advices. And funnily, these advices would come from my own word of mouth. Instead of waiting for someone else/alike, I subconsciously gave advices to so many of my cousins, to my own unsatisfied self. Inwardly, I would become thankful to my sister for sharing her part of story which she could easily perform in front of others. At that stage, I would be reminded of the phrase that had a deep impression on my mind, we live our own lives through others' words and memories, and others' lives and memories, because they are indispensable to our negotiation with the world outside and the universe inside of us.

-Sonam Chhomo



A Child's Tryst with Solitude

Mommy, don't take me away
My friends give me company
I share my toys with them.
Don't take me home
Please, I love my friends.
Mommy? Can you hear me?
I said—mommy—?

Sit down there, sweetie
You play with your stuff
It's getting dark out there
Your friends have to go back home.
Honey—listen. Don't cry darling.
I love you baby, mommy loves you lots.
Mommy, I want to play with my friends
Why won't you let me?
We can play under the light
I promise you I won't get lost
I'll return home before it's too late
I promise you mommy, I promise.
Sweetheart, there is a time and a place to play,
Now's the time to stay home
And be satisfied with your toys.
Your friends can't stay with you the whole day,
They can't accompany you every day,
But that's alright. I'm here aren't I?
Mom? Can you tell me where Roger went?
I haven't seen him since Tuesday
I wanted to show him my new car.
He too wanted to see it. I swear!
Can we go visit Roger?
Please mommy please.

Well, Roger went to a place far, far away.
We can't visit him. It's too far away.

But that's alright, I'm sure Roger will appreciate
You wanting to show him your new toy.
It's time for your bath honey.
Put your clothes in the basket!



Mommy, what are those black things?
Is that dirt?
Yes sweetie, that's the dirt you brought home
From playing in the park remember?
Honey, go sit at the table
We're going to have dinner.
Tell daddy to come too.
And arrange the table, will you?
I have prepared your favourite,
Sticky rice pudding!
What's the matter son, you feeling alright?
Your food is going cold,
Why the long face?
Mom said that I can't play with my friends every day
And I get dirty when I play in the park.
Did you know Roger went far, far away?
I wanted to show him my new car!
He wanted to see it too.
And now I can't show him it.
I can't see him ever again.
That's alright son, you show your car to your other friends.
I'm sure Roger is happy in his new home,
He wouldn't like to see you sad, would he?
As for the dirt, hmm...
Oh! Why don't you play hard and get dirty?
And wash up afterwards! Ha-ha, you'll be clean again!
Do you know, my dad told me to play hard and get dirty,
Then take a bath and I'll be clean again,
Oh, silly daddy, he doesn't know that I'll get dirty again.
Is Roger happy? But he has no friends in his new place.

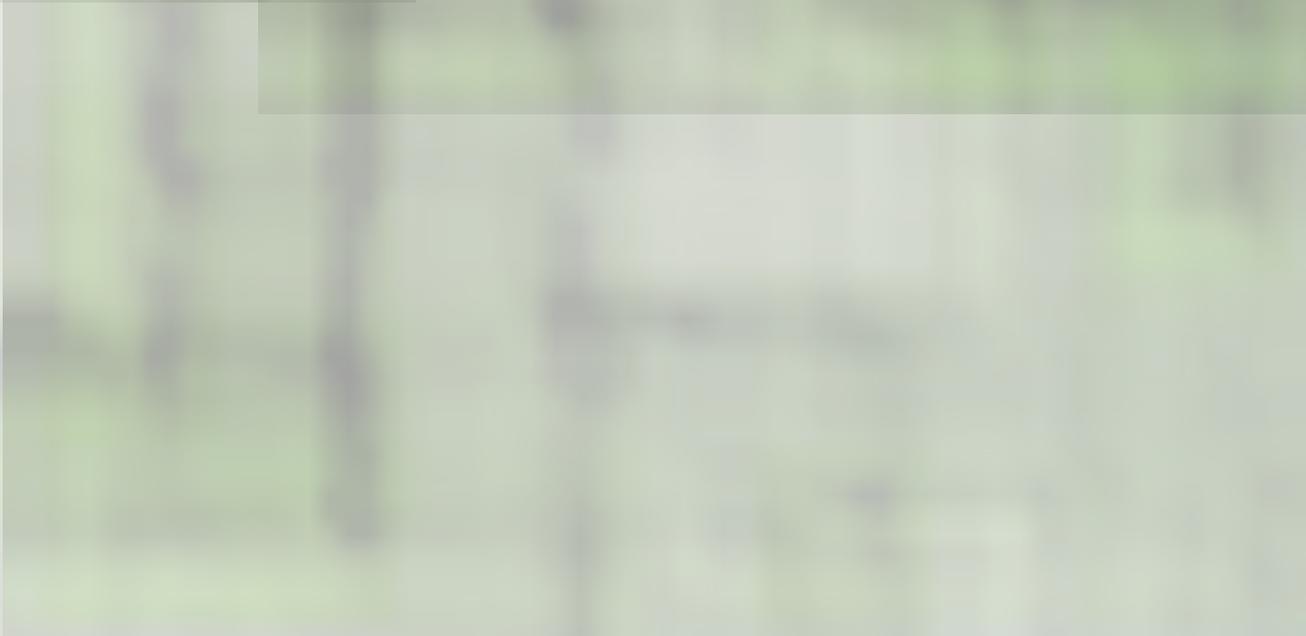
I hope he can meet good friends to play with.
It's a bit cold tonight.

-Samson S Haokip



*Mari-gold and silver webs,
Whorls with white rust,
Vibrant and delicate stems,
Flowers turn to dust.*

-Aastha Sarraf





That moment

That moment

That moment when I stopped looking back
cause there was nothing left to see,
I looked up at the sky and saw what I'd missed;
when my head had been too heavy to lift,
heart too broken to bother.

I became a diamond, a rare one
with a dash of blood red; unwavering
despite past adversities
that have made me fiercely ablaze
yet ice cold to the touch of warmth.

That moment when my eyes had been too sore
from constantly staring at pitch darkness,
and my throat too arid to even utter
a cry for h... ; I'd been
a mere measure away from lifelessness.

I forgot that an ethereal idyll
could exist at any instant,
that would let me rest
in a still ground; peace all around
and no resistance to fade it out.

That moment when I was pushed
onto a rough path, limbs full
of cuts and bruises from running, hunting
for solitude in an endless forest;
I was unable to find a way out.

I searched for rays of sunshine
amidst the dense fog,
frantic for a sip of water
that could quench my thirst
from decades of agony.

That moment when my mind felt
stuck in an artificial realm
and my breath pacing softly,
It dawned on me and I was
enveloped in fluorescence.

I realised I was the pond of serenity;
breezy, crystal clear and
the void in my guts was filled
with contentment. At last
I came to be.

-Aastha Sarraf



Tales From A Coffee Table Book

It's been two years, six months and twelve days since I arrived here,

Wrapped in a brown sheet and tied with a string,

Smelling of the damp air that you would often find,

In a poorly lit warehouse.

As I sat on a freshly cleaned glass table,

I saw hundreds of people pass by on the adjoining footpath.

Some lean and starved, some with about six Louis Vuitton shopping bags dangling from their arms.

And as the days passed, I became friends with some of the regulars here,

At the friendly neighbourhood coffee shop called Coffee House.

Thus, I've decided to tell you a bit about the people I've met ever since.

So let's begin with my owner, Lily.

She doesn't talk much, but she works really hard to pay her bills.

These bad guys often come by to threaten her, telling her they'll close down the shop.

That's when she sits on the chair next to me and cries her heart out.

She also has a little daughter, who loves spilling leftover coffee on me when she cleans the table in the evening.

Then there's Walter, who has his phone permanently attached to his ears.

He once forgot to place his order, and instead shouted at Lily for taking too long to make a 'simple' cup of cappuccino.

His hands are always sweaty, and he always creases my corners,

As he tries to read me to distract himself from the commotion in his life.

Then there's Florence, whose daily order is a monologue worthy of an Oscar

And every time someone hears it for the first time, they find it a tad bit pretentious.



But I guess I'm the only one who manages to catch a peek at her checking the number of calories in her order,

And scouring the internet for effective weight loss tips.

And last, but not the least, there's Andrea.

She's my favourite, because she's always smiling.

Even when she got fired from her job on the phone last Tuesday,

She smiled at herself and wiped off the trickling tear down her cheek.

"Life goes on, doesn't it? With or without you."

Wondering why I'm telling you all this?

Because it is finally time for me to bid farewell to Lily and all the other people.

She'll get another replacement for me soon,

The table doesn't look nice when it's empty.

And till then, I guess I'll just watch the bustle on the streets.

Before I land up at another 'environment-friendly' landfill.

-Anushka Saha



Soothing Desertion

Do you remember, Romeo?

*How it used to feel as if the
world revolved around her,
How the sun seemed dim
to the twinkle in her eyes,
How her smile was the thing
that made you open your eyes each morning.*

Remember, Romeo?

*How much it hurt
when she walked out,
Her parting words like shattering glass,
Marking cuts upon your heart.*

Remember, Romeo?

*How different it is to forget that one last kiss,
How stupid it is to miss the feel of her hands upon yours,
How pathetic every breath feels without her?*

*And you wish, you wish
Until you bleed.*

But do you remember, Romeo?

*There are millions of Juliet's out there,
There are others who can show you,
That tomorrow's promises
remain to be more beautiful than yesterday's shadows.*

Remember, please, Romeo.

I could be a Juliet too.

-Bidisha Dam





What If?

As we ring in another year of unknown adventures,

It makes me wonder, would things be any different,

If I could go back in time, and do it all over again,

Would it change the path that lies ahead?

Or will my past self smile back,

And embrace my present and future,

In a way I could never do.

Every day was a new challenge,

And at the end of it all,

I emerged as a warrior,

Stronger than I could possibly imagine

Wounded and scarred,

But with lessons for a lifetime.

So no matter what the next year throws at me,

I know I'll make it to the end.

And what if things get even worse?

Well, the prettiest rainbows always appear

After the darkest storms.

-Anushka Saha



Ice cold.
Ice skate.
Ice.
Ice does not hate.

The words do not flow as naturally.
Is this what you call a wind of change?
But isn't that supposed to be the opposite of negative.
Why then does one feel weary.
Why then are fears increasing.
Why then.
Why then.
The questions never stop,,
but the words.
they stop.
the words stop.

yet clearly they aren't.
is there then a difference between present and present continuous?
Ofcourse there is, but there isn't is there.
but there is, there is.

now the mind looks for a state of still.. still what?
still I don't know.
then who does.
Who ever knew that?.

Snow is here.
Snow is here.

-Rinchen Angmo



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