

No one is listening

A selection of new poetry from Sri Lanka



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This e-volume of new poetry from Sri Lanka was curated by Dr. Vivimarie Vanderpoorten Medawattegedera, Senior Lecturer, Department of Language Studies, Open University of Sri Lanka, from a selection of approximately 100 submissions forwarded to the British Council.

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Image on cover by Stephen Champion – 'Bathing in the early morning, near Kirigollewa'

Contents

Dr. Vivimarie Vanderpoorten	Foreword	iv
Medawattegedera		
Chalani Ranwala	1983	1
Poornima Perera	A beggar	2
Chamith Akalanka	A Good rule of the thumb	3
Kavya Weerasuriya	ALONE	4
Arshaq Shafraz	Bird songs, silence and violence?	5
Megan Dhakshini	By Now	6
Priyangwada Perera	Cinderella Dreams	7
Priyangwada Perera	Clan continues	8
Zion Anisius	Coffee Stains	9
Malik Sheriffdeen	Crimson Lake	10
Ruthryi Kulasekaran	Dreamscape	11
Erandathi Damunupola	Experience Paradise	12
Wazna Hafi	Fallen From Grace	13
Sumithreyi Sivapalan	Feeble She Stands	14
Nethun Weerasuriya	FIRE	15
Ruwan Laknath Jayakody	Ground Zero	16
Malithi Alahapperuma	Hymns for the hybrid	17
Ranmini Gunawardena	Jasmine Buds	18
Sachielle Abeynayake	Jungle Sounds	19
Mayondi Manjula Samaraweera	Long Tense Wait	20
Zion Anisius	Lost Words	21
Arshaq Shafraz	Moon walker	22
Chalani Ranwala	My favourite thing to hate	23
Hansi Millawithana	My Teacher	24
Kavya Weerasuriya	NIGHT	25
Hamad Anver	Other Worlds	26
Sajida N Marikar Hazim	Perfect?	27
Indumini Ranasinghe	Rituals	28

Contents contd

Sachielle Abeynayake	Save the World	29
George Cooke	The Coin	30
Manaal Mubarak	The island with Clear Waters	31
Aamina Muhsin	The Poets	32
Aamina Muhsin	Things that Matter	33
Anusha Nilmini Perera	To My Son	34
Dilantha Gunawardena	Under a Mulberry Leaf	35
Malik Sheriffdeen	Untitled	36
Manaal Mubarak	Untitled	37
Shaaziya Fayas aka Umayaraa	Untitled	38
Poornima Perera	Waiting	39
Ranoukh Wijesinha	When No One Is Listening	40

Foreword

Dr. Vivimarie Vanderpoorten Medawattegedera, Senior Lecturer, Department of Language Studies, Open University of Sri Lanka

In Books III and X of the *Republic* Plato says "Poetry, including the narratives of others' lives, appeals to the emotions; it "feeds and waters the passions instead of drying them up; she lets them rule, although they ought to be controlled, if mankind are ever to increase in happiness and virtue." In Book X, Plato concludes that poetry must be banished from the hypothetical, ideal society; however, if poetry makes "a defense for herself in lyrical or some other meter," she may be allowed to return from exile. He stated that poetry could return if there is a "use in poetry as well as a delight?"

The role of the poet has been often questioned... what role she should fulfill, or whether it is a must that a poetry has uses. The debate continues, is it just for pleasure, or delight, as Plato said, or is it to change the world. Is it merely to share your ideas, or is it to tell the world, "this is how I feel about this and that, what do you think?" For me a good poem has always been something that gives me an epiphany, however small, an ability to see the world differently even in some very minute way.

We need poetry to utter the necessary and the casual. Poetry need not be only about love and death and war, though it can be about those ideas as well. While history books record the main narratives of our world, the perspectives of the elite, poetry can be the voice of those ignored by history, the man and woman in the street, those with no say in the way history books are written. Poetry can tell the story of a country or a nation or a people that is a different story, an alternative narrative of society.

For me, poetry is a way of living in the world - it is a way to come to peace with the world. You come to poetry not out of what you know, but of what you wonder. Lucille Clifton once said in an interview. I would like to add that you come to poetry also out of what you think people should hear. Out of things left unsaid, out of things that make you uncomfortable.

As a teacher I have often fallen into the trap of approaching poetry to find answers. But as a poet I know that it is about asking questions. Poetry needs to ask uncomfortable questions, of others and ourselves.

Foreword contd

And then of course there is the question of the craft of poetry. While there is no satisfactory definition which frames how poetry should be written, we may imagine that poetry is when language dances. Anne Carson in an interview put it this way: If prose is a house, poetry is a man on fire running quite fast through it. The fire she speaks of is that spark in poetry, the fresh metaphor, the shock of a new image, the unexpected words. This is perhaps the most challenging part of writing poetry. For poetry seems like an easy form of creative writing, especially in its free-verse avatar. Its simplicity is deceptive, and even though you may make use of simple language to write a poem, the idea needs to be well thought out and complex. Poetry is compressed, and therefore every work must have a need to be unpacked.

As the curator of this collection I was delighted by the passion and the insights offered by the poems, and moved by the range of concerns and sensitivity to social issues and the nuances of relationships. So, there was use as well as delight, and Plato, am sure, would be satisfied. In my selection I focused on what the writers wondered, what they wanted to say, how they allowed their hearts, minds and souls wander, and what they wanted to be silent about. I let myself be enchanted by questions asked, and answers offered. Since it was a blind review, after the selection was made and finalized, I discovered that I had selected poetry written by poets I had read or listened to before. This was indeed a pleasant surprise. I am grateful to the British Council, and particularly to Mrinali for granting me the honour of this task. I enjoyed it greatly. Anthologies such as this, and initiatives to encourage the writing of poetry should be especially appreciated in a context where publishers frequently say "poetry doesn't sell" I hope that each one of you featured in this anthology will continue to write and grow and develop as poets, ever sensitive to the world around you and to who you can become. Remember always, to release the poetry in you and let it wander in the world, because it may seem like no one is listening, but trust me, out there, someone is.

Vivimarie VanderPoorten.

July 2020

1983

Chalani Ranwala

Why didn't you tell me about
Black July?
The blood, the fire and the gut-wrenching cries
Did you think I'd be safe in your lies?

Well, miss, imagine my surprise
as I turned the pages of
my story book to see the words
"die Tamil dogs"
and for the first time,
I was forced to imagine.

Just imagine.

The first impression I have
of that defining day –
from a story
about love and loss.
Some of it made up, some all too real –
And then imagine me asking
"Thaththi, did this really happen?"

Why didn't you tell me about Black July?
I had the right to know.

Those kings who built things,
very important things,
whose names you said I should know -
I don't remember them now.
But the names of those who screamed as
their bodies burned and their walls shattered -
weren't they also lives that mattered?

You selected my history, carefully carving the path
that I stepped on.
And the stories that were erased?
Left to the artists and writers who could not
stay silent.
The power of their voices guiding me to
fill in the gaps created by
your silence.

A beggar

Poornima Perera

Brown dirty clothes unkempt loose hair

Crooked black teeth flaky skin

He limps onto the bus

“Oh! please help me, dear kind lady,

give me a rupee my dear sir,

help this poor man to have some supper!”

He limps in pain

A coin or two drops into his hand

Getting down from the bus — a miracle!

He runs across the road and

Disappears inside another bus

A Good rule of the thumb

Chamith Akalanka

Never ever drink wine for health
Or for Christ
Never listen to violin concertos for development
Or swim to lose weight
Or menial work to build muscles

Don't squeeze out the juiciness of life;
Don't go around trying to find optimal outcomes
And don't be in bed pondering whether port or wine is better for
the body
Or tea or coffee has the lesser chance of insomnia
Or how much calories pancakes butter and maple syrup has
Or did you sleep eight whole hours straight as a kite
Or whether the kid's crayon drawings are appropriate or not
Don't
Please don't

To find life sizzling out of the woodwork
You must be lazy
Be overweight
Drop a muscle or two (hell no one's gonna care)
And drink and drink wine all day along
(also don't forget to ride without a helmet on; don't be so shy)

ALONE

Kavya Weerasuriya

The summer breeze blows briskly
Across my winter-frosted skin
As I stare across the deserted land
Full of memories and thoughts within

Your warm hand is now beyond my reach
No longer there to grasp
As I watch a single leaf descend
To the ground from a sturdy branch

The smile that nearly stopped my heart
Now haunts me to this day
Like the strange shadows beside the lake
Dancing mysteriously, then moving away

The desolate land was full of life
The tree was overgrown with leaves
The shadows were the bright rays of the sun
Oh, why, Oh why, did you leave?

I needed someone, someone like you
To give me life, love and a home
I believed in you, saw hope in the dark
But you left me, left me....

Alone

Bird songs, silence or violence?

Arshaq Shafraz

I have wished a bird would fly away,
And not sing by my house all day;

The sun so high up in the sky,
Please oh bird, don't let my day go by.

And of course there must be something wrong
In wanting to silence any song.

Have clapped my hands at him from the door
When it seemed as if my ears could take no more.

By Now

Megan Dhakshini

By now, this alter to you
should have collapsed
into itself, burning out
the stench of damp skin
and pretense.

By now, this marred tongue
should have no memory
of how to sing your praises
or lick your wounds
the way it needs to.

By now, this mass
of blood and bone
should have ripped away
from the grasp of your fantasy
and distant gaze.

By now, these eyes
should have stopped sieving
through the crowds
for your face and your musk
and the drone of your voice.

By now, the nighttime pillows
and thighs and cheeks and fingers
should be bone dry.

But not yet.

The air is still wet
with you.

Cinderella Dreams

Priyangwada Perera

I am standing at the edge-
Is it a jump?
Or is it a fall?
Heart says I'll spread wings,
Brain says dreams are false.
I sense the awakened Pisces soul;
Dressed Cinderella, after the ball.
Back of the mind, it takes a toll
Sink and broom-a wakeup call!
Scared to dream!
Scared to dare!
A fairy-god-father is all that's there
With Super-Glue to fix, my broken stairs.
Pumpkin carriage,
Talking mice:
A magic wand
Wagging thrice.
The lost shoe, just fitting nice,
She dreams correcting paper-piles.

Clan continues

Priyangwada Perera

Helen what fault had you in thee?
Of your kind-the ultimate fall!
Queen, princess, slave-recall,
A pretty face never went free.

An innocent face-framed for beauty,
Taking the blame of each tragedy,
If a God's daughter was shamed like thee,
We're a mere Achini or a Somawathie.

Your face that launched a thousand ship
Your grace, on a thousand shoulders-a chip,
A bait in a battle of divine wit,
Clueless but cursed for every bit.

Not then-Greece, but here even now,
Once deemed 'ugly', no love, no fun.
But being 'women' is our prestigious pun,
Doomed we are-each 'n every one.

Coffee stains

Zion Anisius

“I am a traveler, but no,
I am not the traveler who is lost in the sea or
the traveler who is trying to climb the highest mountain.
I am a traveler within my thoughts, around the smiles and
Into the words I dive.
I adore the sun that is captured in photographs and
the moon that is captured in ink.
And maybe that's the reason why every time I sit by the window
with my cup of coffee, the sky looks breathtakingly artistic”

Crimson Lake

Malik Sherifdeen

I followed the trail of fallen roses
Upward from a crimson lake
As it led me through a forest of thorns
To the petals that were drenched in rain

Elegant brushed ivory
How they shone as she spoke
And her blue butterfly eyelids
How they danced in the smoke

But the wells were dry and the walls were cracked
Still, the fountain forever remains
So I took her hand and guided her back
To her home by the crimson lake

Dreamscape

Ruthryi Kulasekaran

In my dreams
You smile at me
I can almost feel you
The warmth of a setting sun
The vivid hues
Ripped from memories so far
Before the realization
That you are no more.

Is it your soul
That bumps in my bed
And wakes me with fright
Of a forgotten monster
In a horror movie I didn't watch
Or is it the cat? Or the dog?
Trying to keep me company
In these desolate nights

Waking moments
Eyelids half open searching
For something in the unknown
Void gaping with stark reality
And the grief seeps into my dream
Colouring it unhappy
Yet you are there
Smiling at me benevolently

Experience Paradise

Erandathie Damunupola

Sun goes down slowly
The wind kept blowing
Salty and damp
Waves come and go
Her toes remain dry, untouched

Phone in hand she walks... looks,
Smiles, clicks...Turns, clicks,
Looks, clicks...Poise! Click!
Tints of purple-rose for the backdrop
A flawless image from paradise

The golden sun went down unnoticed
Warmth of sun and sand not felt
The gusty wind was just too much!
But she made sure the foam
Didn't touch her embroidered hem

Light fading... no more clicking
Must post them quick...another update...
Added to her story with a finger tip's touch
I spent for a trip...to a paradise isle
Tropical Bliss!

Share

Fallen From Grace

Wazna Hafi

“Breakaway, run, don’t look back,”
Scream all the cells in her brain,
“Leave, escape, scurry along
Before it’s too late....”

“NO!!! please, stay, hang in there,
Tarry for a while, please give it another try...”
Pleads her heart full of pain....

“Why, you are such a fool,
The last thing you want to do is listen
To that beating piece of flesh!”
Snickers her brain.

She drowns the sensible sounds of her brain,
She blocks out all the common sense it makes,
She chains it, shackles it and locks it away,
Till the voice of reason fades, fades away.

The heart wins again!

The last time I saw her,
She was lying on the cold, frosted floor,
Bruised, hurt, damaged,
Nowhere to go, no one to run to.
Her bleeding, wounded heart in her palms,
Mind, body and soul a mighty wreckage.

And from far, far away,
The tiny voice of reason said,
“I told you sweetheart,
DO NOT DIG YOUR OWN GRAVE!”

Feeble she stands

Sumithreyi Sivapalan

It's raining
Yet
Feeble
She stands.
No umbrella
Only a torn bag
And some sugar
Wrapped in newspaper
Clutched tightly in hand.

She stares through the haze
At a wall, reading a story there
That others cannot see.

The rain-soaked paper slips
And the sugar is washed away.
But none will wash away her sorrow.

FIRE

Nethun Weerasuriya

That fire burnt as bright as bright
Throughout the day, and through the night
If raged and pounced like a feral cat
It lay on, and destroyed the mat

If thrashed it's arms and burnt the walls
And chilled the bones with it's calls
The crackling, roaring sound as soot
Rained from chimneys and covered the foot

The vermillion flames danced higher, higher
As deer and beasts were lost to the fire
That heartless beast that fiend from hell
Had burnt our house and killed as well

Ground Zero

Ruwan Laknath Jayakody

The man

Ground zero

This room
Its curtains like matted hair
Of the Mayans in their Nagasaki despair
Gutted of its colour
Why is it there

This room
Its lights like snuffed fog
Of the catheters in their hollow urethra
Stutters of its valour
Why is it there

In this room
The rat eyes, delight
In the blade's slimy glare
Smudged with the pittance of light
Outside, the sunken veiled sunset of mourning
Why is it there

Our demise

Ground zero

The woman

Hymns for the hybrid

Malithi Alahapperuma

“Mama, why is it bad to cook one cupful of rice?”

“Because it signifies death. A cupful of rice is only cooked at funerals.”

“But I’ve never even seen anyone serve rice at funerals.”

No, not here, my daughter,
Not in this wheat mine.
But we did serve rice at funerals,
back in Paradise Island.

It’s funny how I willingly speak of
disease and death,
Just to be able to talk of home.

Back then, disease was taboo.
Our mothers “shushed” us when we spoke of death.
I thought their myths were silly. I
’ve told it to them myself.

But now the notorious daughter
refuses to cook one cupful of rice,
refuses to eat fried food outside, and
refuses to shower on Tuesdays,
without even knowing the reason why.

I don’t want to know the reason why.

Following the myths of homeland,
knowing the science behind them,
would make me a rational.

I don’t want to be a rational.

I crave to be the blind follower.

Each time I add a cupful of rice to the pot,
only to quickly follow by another fistful,
The fragrance of the jasmine rice
suddenly becomes that of my mother.

I yearn to lie down on the floor
and allow the sweet fragrance of the rice (or my mother, I no longer know which)
to suffocate me.

Jasmine Buds

Ranmini Gunawardena

The Jasmin buds bloom,
She picks the scented flowers gently -
Pure fragrance permeates the air,
She knows it won't be long.

Treading softly on the soft sand,
She offers the flowers reverently,
'My life too would end,
Like the withering flowers,' she muses...
The peaceful Buddha is serene;
She feels His compassion, metta and karuna,,,
She understands.

Death lurks in the dark, menacing...
Outside the temple...
The sun sets.

The insidious cancer has overpowered her;
A withering flower herself...
She stumbles outside the temple gate,
The clay lamps she lit flicker and die,
The fragrant joss sticks turn into ash.
As she drops down, her last wisp escapes,
And mingles with the fading fragrance,
Of the once pearl, white Jasmine buds.

* metta and karuna – loving kindness towards all beings

Jungle sounds

Sachielle Abeynayaka

Birds call forlornly
Grass shivers and shakes
The mountain says:
“Shhh! The river sleeps!”

Birds fly to their nest
Grass rustles in the breeze
The mountain says:
“Shhh! The river stirs!”

Birds begin their morning songs
Grass bathes in the dew
The river wakes and begins to flow.

Long Tense Wait

Mayondi Manjula Samaraweera

Azure skies being streaked with red
Just as the cheeks are with tears shed
Eye muscles about to go into spasm
Yet the long wait, I am not ready to abandon.

Yesterday was of no different hue
He arrived with no heed to the times due.
Without a word took dinner and slept.
I sobbed throughout the vigil kept.

His phone is there, I dare not touch,
What startle might spring in front
Too much time spent on it
Could it mean the worst I dread?

Never should I show that I do care
I have others with life to share.
Need to put on make up to rub tell-tales.
But hardly any strength to go my way.

There he comes with the falling dusk
Darkness now reflecting on me,
I lie on the bed turned other side
Never mind his look of weary.

Why does he fumble in his pocket?
Takes out a crushed piece of wedding cake
O! Dear, he had told me so
Today was his peon's wedding date.

Lost words

Zion Anisius

“There’s a melody I wrote for you that I can’t sing to you,
so maybe grab the flowers I’ve kept by the piano and
Listen to the tape that I’ve left”

Moon walker

Arshaq Shafraz

I have always wondered about a moon walker.

Is he a genius is he a fool or is he a senseless moon talker?

What does he eat and what does he drink,

What does he do while he is lonely on the moon's brink?

He has the superpower to fly and glide,

But he isn't able to skid or slide.

His life is so short it might end so soon,

And when it does, in his hands would be written, "I am a fool".

My favourite thing to hate

Chalani Ranwala

I cannot look away,
the colours, so bright,
pull me closer and closer
as I dive in
deeper and deeper
into its embrace.

“The lives of others”;
opium for the new generation -
the sea of nameless faces
that come together
to stare at
nothing.

I cannot look away,
its emptiness feels
so good, so rich,
a burdening intoxication
that leaves my thumbs stiff and
my eyes sore.

A bittersweet addiction to
this artificial seduction
gets you hard
and numb.

I cannot look away.
it's so smooth like
night and day,
its colours, bright, and
words, silent, are, by far,
my favourite thing to hate.

My Teacher

Hansi Pubudinie Millawithana

My teacher is a	dear
Like an adorable fuzzy	bear
Her voice is sweet you can	hear
In your very small	ear

You don't have to	fear
If she comes	near
Because she's sweet and	dear
From the beginning of the	year

She advises us through the	year
Not to shout because everyone will	hear
So we won't do bad and	fear
Now we are good from year to	year

She likes to	wear
The most beautiful things in the	year
Then you want to go	near
And she's still kind and	dear

At the end of the	year
She's still kind and	dear
And I can still	hear
Her sweet voice in my	ear

NIGHT

Kavya Weerasuriya

Hark, Look, Night comes
Quietly, Stealthily, Cunningly
She creeps across the land
Stirring bats, owls and evil
Whatever close at hand

Is engulfed in her velvet cloak
Of menacing darkness
Beware Night, for she casts a spell
That calms the mind of consciousness
And awakes the mind of wildest dreams

Beware her, for she stirs up thoughts
That were never meant to be thought of, so
Beware and bow down to
Her majesty
The Glorious Queen of Sleep

Other Worlds

Hamad Hassan Anver

Other worlds are full of surprises,
I wish I wish I could visit another world,
where birds talk as they walk and choco-lakes shimmer in the sun
as it rises,
as the future goes, we will find another world and discover
adventures over there,

where will the other world be,
will it be easy or hard to find it
will we even walk, will we even talk
will it even be dark or sunny

I wish a world, I can eat anything
chips and nuggets and still be healthy,
I wish no poor and all have something,
to be happy, content, rich and wealthy

Perfect?

Sajida N Marikar Hazim

You find the rose too red,
And you say the sky is not the right shade of blue.
You claim the sea is too wet
Nothing ever seems perfect for you.
You say that honey is just too sweet
And that the fragrant of musk is unbecoming.
The prospect of a beautiful clear starry sky, your mind never
meets,
Your view of the world to me is puzzling.

When will you accept the world the way it is?
It is not perfect but it is beautiful in its own way.
The silver lining is what you miss.
Dwell on that instead.
The world will look a brighter place
Along with the people it holds.

Rituals

Indumini Ranasinghe

The sentient being in us
metamorphosed into cadavers,
with stitched back
left-side cuts and broken skulls-
all hollow husks.

Mummified,
wrapped in dry linen strips,
enslaved to *plummet* rings,
inhaling rotting fumes,
so cold as silent regrets formed in *vaults*.
Journeying the underworld at sunrise,
scavenging salacious pursuits,
after Osiris' demise.
T'is a sarcophagus,
our *dwelling* in disguise.

Save the World

Sachielle Abeynayaka

No birds sang
No deer called
No kids played
No animals roamed

The bird's throats were full of ash
The deer were hunted in a flash
The kids wouldn't play in dirty air
The animals had no lair

Do you want a world like this?
In which plants and trees were a distant wish?
Where most wildlife became a tasty dish
Do you want a world like this?

A land with smoke for air?
This is what could happen if you don't care
I said it once, I said it twice, I'll say it once again
Do you really want a world like this?

The Coin

George Cooke

An out-stretched hand, seeking,
Hoping a coin would fall.
Anticipation building, eagerness
Renewed, despite the hostility,
Condemnation, even doubt.

Genuine, many a soul,
Entrenched in a cavity of despair,
Struggling to extricate, oneself
And one's brood, away
From an alley, from want.

Unwanted, unloved, thrown away.
Cast out of lives, once nurtured,
Cared, loved, fought for,
To thrive, survive
On an unknown compassion.

Acceptance of fate, the cycle
Turns. Fatalistic in nature,
Surrendering, no other knowing.
The hour is late, the night
Grows darker, too late to struggle.

Deceit, the goal, aim of a few
Convinced of the venture, gaining;
Supporting idol minds, warped
Conniving. The sincere one, judged,
Convicted, in the same light.

A meager existence, yet unsure,
A light obscure, blighted by plight.
Directionless, aimlessly passing.
The world is mean, hateful, sore.
Release out of sight, thought.

Sentenced. An everlasting storm,
Never passing, no respite.
Escape forgotten. Escape?
Never thought, or considered.
Eternal the strife, lasting the hurt.

Watching passers, elegantly clad
Rejoicing, munching, they go by,
Neither a word, or to converse
Expected. Only that lonely hand
Waiting, for that single, tarnished
coin.

The Island with Clear Waters

Manaal Mubarak

When I was four,
I always thought that my happy place,
Would be right here, on earth,
Where I belong.

When I was seven, something felt strange.
I saw a cloud of black smoke.
I jumped and tried to chase it away,
But no. there it stayed.

When I was nine, I never felt like flying.
I heard the sound of a cough,
For the first time.
Too many worries, too many fears.

I wanted to escape reality,
And go live on an island,
With sand so soft, that it would go between my toes.
With water crystal clear, and rays of warm sunshine.

When I was ten,
With all the things thrown at me,
My brains was going haywire,
“Wear a mask”, they said.
“Cover your nose, don’t breathe in the smoke.”

When I was twelve, I started to want,
To always go inside, my imaginary shell.
I could never see, through the dark smoke.
And didn’t know what was to come.

The once white and soft sand, is now dirty,
Never to be seen white and soft again.
The water is now black,
The blue completely out of sight.

Now all I do is hope and pray,
That maybe, someday,
I can still be able to, live on that island,
With sand so soft, that it went between my toes,
And water crystal clear.

The Poets

Aamina Muhsin

If you asked me,
what the best lovers
have in common,
I would, without
pausing to ponder, say –

The best lovers are those
who are painlessly protective
and publicly private and have
an inbuilt penchant for perfection.
They are those, who are purely peaceful
and properly problematic - 'a peculiar pair,'
you'd say, for just one person.

They come with pretty pasts
pilfered by pathetic plights,
so the pricey price to pay,
they presume, is pain.
But still, they can purposefully
be prouder than pious peacocks, so
you might wanna try, and apologize again.

So ask me once more,
what the best lovers have in common,
and I promise to make it short this time
by telling you who, they are, instead -
I'll tell you, without pausing
to ponder, but maybe, I'll pause for effect,
I'll tell you, my personal proposition,
is that they, are the poets.

Things that Matter

Aamina Muhsin

It matters not very much
how well you spin your words;
do you know what it is like, to be eloquent
in living? To be deluged with joy, and sodden
in misery, and to falter not in giving
both kinds of soaked-throughs
equal attention?

You see,
it matters not very much
how well-versed you seem,
are you aware though, that fluency
and literacy in love, have nothing
to do with each other?

It matters not very much
how much you make in money.
Have you known what it is like
to be rich in anger? To have
the presence of mind in a seething minute
to do what's wise and kind?

And can I trust, that you will do that
always, later?

You see,
it matters not very much
if you can roll in dough and be free of pride,
but can you make a fool of yourself, for love's sake,
and lose,
and never look back in regret?

Can you love yourself, enough
to love another, in-depth?

Can you laugh at yourself,
when you are down in the dumps of an abyss
that snatched the joy from your life?

Can you rest in peace,
while you are living?

Can you notice the trees,
while they are still here?

These are the things that matter.

To my Son

Anusha Nilmini Perera

Do not think twice
to draw a smile
on a sorrowful face...

Do not think twice
to sketch a hope
a shadow ray of hope
on a weeping heart...

Do not think twice
to hold tightly
a cold hand
with care and affection....

Do not think twice
to sprinkle softly
to the hopeless
a bit of hope to live...

Under a Mulberry Leaf

Dilantha Gunawardana

So tender, so homely,
And so captivating in how she
Will hang colorful lanterns
On the underside of a leaf and flare
A fire from inside, to blaze
Open the stubborn walls
And make an opening for a fragile
Form of kaleidoscopic beauty
To leave its hermitage,
To commence a pilgrimage,
To far-away places, floral shrines.
Nature's truest flower-child, Who will rest for a while,
And carry the cargo of pollen from
A beautiful angiosperm,
To a delicate open stigma for
A breathtaking beginning,
Of how celibate nature,
Consummates.

Untitled

Malik Sherifdeen

On Monday she brought me a Daffodil,
Synonymous with Spring
On Tuesday, a bright gold Marigold,
And the darkness it brings
Wednesday came Camellia,
With a white one at that
A Rose she brought me, pulled out of her hat
But I wanted an Orchid,
One she did not possess
And on Thursday, in my garden
Among the sunflowers, they wept

Untitled

Manaal Mubarak

A sparrow flies over,
And sits on top
Of an old telephone wire,
In front of the empty
And lonely house.

It looks cold and is wet,
But nevertheless it
Shakes off all the water,
And flies away noiselessly.

The grey-eyed girl
Sits alone staring and watching,
In front of the empty
And lonely house.

She wishes she could,
Shake off her worries,
As painlessly, as the sparrow
Just shook off the water.

Untitled

umayaraa by Shaziya Fayas

Write a poem they said
Choose whatever fancy thread
No topic or prompt
Choices galore to chomp

What will you write about?
What will you highlight?
Will it be current affairs?
Or natural disasters that confound?

The fires in the East,
The hurricanes in the West
The Glaciers that melt – turn the cameras to the North
Here in the South – we hear of tremors while asleep
I don't know where to turn
From where'd come the next bleep

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle they say –
Contamination at bay is now a no-say
For I hear of viruses that require quarantine
Fires that simply cannot be contained.
Lava flows and ash clouds
It's all in the news.
Since these don't suffice
We have humans who rampage, terrorize and traumatize.
And oh the children of morrow!
I cannot help but sympathize.

There is much to write
Should I wish to transcribe
For the news I hear
Makes me weep and tear.

The world we have one
We best keep in mind
There's no second one
And simply no rewind!

Waiting

Poornima Perera

Hot morning

Outside my window a fight

Argument chitter chatter

loud squeaks nonstop debate

Parrots, mynahs, sparrows, squirrels

Listening silently hiding

in the shadows of a mango tree

A white cat

When No One Is Listening

Ranoukh Wijesinha

Late on in moonlit nights
When the stars shine bright
And streets are enlightened by weakened lights
Instead of the crowded streets of harsh daylight

The morning that shrieked of the hard working crowds
Is now drowned out by silence
At this time there seems no one around
And so no hatred nor violence

You feel the trees, they're listening
Even the stars that are glistening
Silence is the only presence you can hear
For peace, at this time, seeks vengeance from fear

But the feel of your heartbeat still echoes
It echoes through the trees and clear meadows
These are the feelings that I keep expressing
When no one at all is listening



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