

Indian Literature

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The Last Will

This is our last wish, the last command.
It includes decisions on all our possessions,
the output of our entire life.

Whether we maintained the paraphernalia
that we received at birth or multiplied it manifold,
it is all trash and needs to be left behind.

It's only use is in the recycling.
Like a ragman's inventory,
everything is to be now categorised
into useless, pointless and meaningless.
The categories by names of useful,
helpful or meaningful, just do not exist.

And all of you, who leave with no possessions,
and with no requirement to write a will,
wondering if your life has been worthwhile,
remember that you have been saved
this thankless exercise.
Regardless of what others leave in their will,
when you depart from here,
you will be on par with everyone else.



The Happiest Country

I wonder what happens differently in Norway.

Do the husband and wife not bicker there?
Do their marriages last longer?
Do their women have the same freedom as their men?
Do their families bond stronger than ours?

No?

Maybe the sun shines brighter there.
Maybe their politicians are more honest.
Maybe they are all vegetarians.
Maybe it is all about prosperity.

No? Then?

Men must be more faithful.
Women must be more chaste.
Everyone must be a virgin until marriage.
Old parents must be living happily with their kids.

No? No to all of them? Then?

Their civilisation must be more ancient than ours.
More gods must be living in that country.
They must be having more saints and monks to guide them.
They must be doing yoga and meditation every morning.

No? Still no?

Then what is it that makes them happier than us,
particularly when we are convinced
that we are the most spiritual of all beings?
Or, being spiritual and being happy,
Are two distinct, non-overlapping things?

My Visitors

Some come like the moon—
with a prayer in their heart.
They quietly watch from a distance,
send me their best wishes
and withdraw without a fuss,
leaving with me a part of their silence.

Some come like a bumble bee—
singing loudly and cheerfully.
They break into a dance
and pull me heart and soul
into their celebrations.
They part the same way,
singing and dancing,
leaving with me a part of their festivities.

But many come like a salesman—
ready to shove their agenda down my throat.
They neither ask anything nor listen.
They only want to know
whether I have heard them or not.
If I have heard them,
whether I have understood or not.
If I have understood them,
whether I will do as they say or not.
And when they leave, they leave
with me a part of their restlessness.

Blessings

Some blessings had fallen on
the roadside, en route their destination.

They were waving and jumping
over each other to draw
the attention of the passersby,
hoping to latch on to a troubled soul
and come to some fruition.

Many noticed them,
waved back at them,
even stopped to feel their benediction,
but no one picked them.

Who needs blessings these days?
People have too much
confidence in their own abilities.

Dodging the erratic, passing traffic
and evading the feral kittens,
the blessings got smeared with dust.
Their skin shrivelled, and
they lost their colour.
They turned into curses
and started growling.

Whoever saw them after that,
passed them from a distance,
frowning at them with disgust.
People do not have even that much
confidence in their own abilities.

Sonless, Daughterless

All chunks of Mother Earth—
fertile or wild,
snowcapped or arid,
covered by air or by water,
one's own or snatched from others,
have become people's
motherland or fatherland.

People guard these chunks by
giving their lives and taking other's
as respectable people do
while defending their honour.

For this,
they are suitably rewarded
in their afterlife with benefits
that can only be imagined.

But Mother Earth herself
seems to have become
a lonely widow in her prime—
with no protector, son or daughter
to look after her.

And men,
having secured their afterlife,
play with her, as they do
with any beautiful and delicate
un-protected widow.

Muscles and Breasts

It was their peak time, their spring.
They had just arrived of their own volition—
his strong muscles and her firm breasts.
They attracted each other like the
mountains attract the climbers.

But following the new trend
he went his way and she went on hers,
to take care of urgent things first—
complete the education,
find a job,
secure the future.

Now that they finally unite,
both of them,
well-educated with high paying jobs,
are at the threshold of a great career.

As they get ready to embrace and squeeze
each other to make up for the lost time,
they pull in their abdominal bulges
and his muscles—stiff and flabby,
finally meet her breasts—soft and sagging.

In Ladakh

This land up far north in the Himalayas,
has always been cold and barren.
Few people have lived here from the beginning.

Thus, a favourite haunt for those who meditate
and home to numerous monasteries.

Not much has changed here in centuries.
The weather has remained the same—cold.
The air has remained the same—thin.
The vegetation has remained the same—sparse.
The peaks have remained the same—intractable.

Although more visitors come now in summers,
the number of people living here has remained the same.
The number of sheep and yaks has remained the same.
The number of those who meditate has remained the same.
The number of monasteries has remained the same.

What has increased, is the army.
Their cavalcades in green, far outnumber
the walking lamas clad in red.
The marching sound of the soldiers' boots
effortlessly strangulates the hum of the ancient chants.
The war cry of the army drills
routinely crushes the mantra '*Om Mani Padme Hum*'.
And the national flag sits atop the sacred peaks
and flaunts its muscles, looking down
at the peace spreading prayer flags.

