

Poem
The Sepoy of Silpukhuri

Pranab Roy¹

What is this dread
when I do not know your name
yet ease into your enormous eyes –

What bridges are these,
broken beyond repair,
dusty old tool
amid tiresome trees
restless by the roads.

Whimpering across,
amid screeching honks of outdated vessels,
the widow steers
toward a cubicle –
Screams suffixed into smiles,
Agony condensed into appearance –
only her thoughts reveal her reality.

And a man with a moustache
sulks inside his sere shop,
and a driver dreamy by the day,
is ditched drunk by the drying dusk.
These are fissures on half-baked mires
in the banks of riveting rivers.
The ghats have flooded.
The drains have unclogged.

Dusks draw the dread,
Nights draw the nostalgia
while dreams die;
and tremors all around the tirades
of the errant eyes
of these men of letters –
with “philosophies” so pointless,
with “truths” so unnecessary.

Night stretches on.
Molds of men muzzled
in morbid monasticism
like frogs groaning after a parched evening,
like fireflies searing in city lights.

There hangs an abstract art
screaming and yearning on a wall.

There is a shrivelling tree-tub
stranded in a foliage
of shrunk saplings,
and lifeless leaves –
that molds into a face
like a moon meddling into a noiseless night,
and it stares with its eyebrows raised,
questioning you,
weeping within you.

¹ **Pranab Kumar Roy** completed his Master’s degree in English Literature from The English and Foreign Languages University, Regional Campus, Shillong and his Bachelor’s degree from Delhi University. His academic interests span phenomenology, modernism, and both Eastern and Western philosophical traditions, particularly Buddhist thought and Levinasian ethics. His Master’s dissertation offered a Levinasian reading of *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoevsky. He is currently engaged in independent doctoral research and preparation. His creative and critical work explores the socio-cultural landscapes of individual consciousnesses in contemporary India. ✉ pranabray052@gmail.com.