

A photograph of a sailboat on a body of water during a sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm orange and yellow glow in the sky. The water is dark blue with ripples, and the sailboat's reflection is visible. The background shows a dark silhouette of a forest or hills.

DUSK to DAWN

Poetic voices on the current times
South Asia and Beyond

edited by
CHANDRA MOHAN
RITA MALHOTRA
ANAMIKA

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Seniors at Covid Time



Suddenly we are precious
 To be wrapped in protective gear
 Kept shut in a room
 Disallowed in drawing rooms
 And dining tables
 Kitchens and parks
 Because we are too precious
 To be 'exposed'.

My eyes pine for the open sky
 Arched over the park I visited every afternoon
 My weary limbs wish to feel
 The spring of the winding path under the Ashoka trees
 The fragrance of wild Champa
 I long for
 And the breeze brushing my
 Wispy grey hair
 But I'm precious and must stay home
 Wrapped like a gem in a velvet box

And I must quietly straighten my bed, plump my pillow
 Keep my cupboard clean
 Sweep my memories and muck
 Under the carpet
 Draw curtains to hide my shrivelled body
 'Eat healthy' and not dream of ice-cream, pakoras, phuchka
 At the corner street

How long this isolation
Within and without
How long is my wait for deliverance?
This careful wrap of safety
May well morph into a shroud
Or a body bag
Too contaminated to touch
I may then exit this
cocooned shelter where I am
Too precious to breathe
Too precious to live

Sita and the Pandemic



It's called "lockdown" now
I was confined in Ashoka Vatika
When Ravana's helpless anger raged against me
The world today is that Ashoka Vatika
The canopies of trees
A prison to men and women
Though home to birds that are free
Butterflies that roam
And bees that stack up their hives.

People rest under the sky,
Hemmed in by fear, anxiety
The enemy is invisible
Insidious, beyond any rules
I knew Trijita, my jailor who became a friend
Today's prison guards are faceless, nameless

Emanations of the prisoner's fears
Like me, the lonely people meet no one
Like me they build the strength of their soul
Like me they prepare to go if they must
With purity and dignity.

I kept hope in Godly powers
And the loyalty of sevaks,
Today who will rescue these people from their Vatika?
The wall girds the new world
And the enemy is within
Wearing a crown of invincibility
Mocking science, astrology, human knowledge.

But I trust Hanuman will again
Peer down from the Ashoka tree
With a message of hope
And bring the agnivaan to this new war of justice
I'm told it's called a "vaccine" in modern tongue.

