

LITERATURE | INTERVIEW



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**PANACHEE**

Guest of the Month

**DR. ANUKRATI SHRIVASTAVA**

HOMOEOPATHY  
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COUNSELLING  
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# Preface

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*"Panache" is not just a name. It is a basic value of our "Aadhya Publishing House" as we believe talent should never die. Rather it should always stand out like the feathered plume on a helmet to attract the world and that is what Panache means. We, as the Publisher, believe in encouraging new talent in the field of literature. We want each and every poet to get the opportunity to express themselves and get the proper acknowledge that they deserve. They should be known by the world for their views and we hope very soon we shall be able to achieve this.*

*Panache is a monthly international magazine in the English Language, that is released on digital platforms for literature lovers.*

*However, our work does not end here. I, Akanksha Shrivastava, Publisher and Chief Editor of Aadhya Publishing house, am trying to put a smile on the faces of poor children by providing them with food on behalf of our publishing house. By taking this small initiative, it is our wish to fulfill this basic need of food so that we help the children to survive in a better way.*



# **AADHYA PUBLISHING HOUSE**

**PRESENTS**

## **PANACHE** International Magazine

*July 2024*

**Publisher &  
Chief Editor**

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**Panache** is a monthly magazine which is published by **AADHYA PUBLISHING HOUSE**. In this magazine we encourage new poets and writers by publishing their writings. Every month we offer a competition in which poets and writers can take part by registering themselves. The registered participants send their writings along with their name , photograph and phone number. The magazine will be launched on our facebook page on 1st day of every month. After the launch of magazine every registered writer will get the pdf of the magazine. Out of all the registered participants we ask every writer for their top 5 choices. And then we promote our writers on our social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, Twitter . This “**Panache**” will definitely be the attraction of literature and also the rise of every poet...



**Akanksha Shrivastava**  
**Publisher & Chief Editor**

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# PANACHE

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**EDITORIAL :**

**A JOURNEY OF HEALING AND HOPE**

As the Chief Editor and Publisher of Aadhya Publishing House, I am deeply moved by the inspiring journey of Dr. Anukrati Shrivastava. Her story is a testament to the power of resilience, compassion, and the relentless pursuit of one's dreams. From her early aspirations of becoming a doctor to her profound commitment to homeopathy and mental health, Dr. Shrivastava's path is both unique and enlightening.

Dr. Shrivastava's dedication to serving others was ignited by a personal experience—her grandmother's illness. Witnessing her grandmother's suffering, she vowed to make a difference in the world of medicine. This vow led her to homeopathy, a field she passionately chose for its gentle yet effective approach to healing. Her belief in the non-harmful and side-effect-free nature of homeopathy underscores her commitment to patient care and well-being.

The influence of Dr. Shrivastava's grandmother is a powerful reminder of how personal experiences and family bonds can shape our professional journeys. Her grandmother's words, encouraging her to become a doctor and serve people, have clearly left an indelible mark on her heart and career.

In addition to her medical expertise, Dr. Shrivastava's interest in psychology highlights the importance of mental health. Her own struggles during pregnancy opened her eyes to the stigma surrounding mental illness. She has since become an advocate for mental wellness, emphasizing that mental health is as critical as physical health. Her message is clear: mental illness is not a phase but a disease that requires acknowledgment and treatment.

Dr. Shrivastava's holistic approach, combining homeopathy with psychological counseling, provides a unique and individualized treatment for her patients. She believes that understanding the root cause of psychological disorders is crucial for effective healing, and homeopathy offers a safe solution without the burden of side effects.

Her message to society is both urgent and compassionate: take care of your mental health and never be ashamed to seek help. She particularly emphasizes the importance of mental wellness during pregnancy, a period often fraught with emotional challenges.

Dr. Anukrati Shrivastava's journey is a beacon of hope for many. Her dedication to healing, her innovative approach to medicine, and her unwavering support for mental health serve as an inspiration to us all. At Aadhya Publishing House, we are honored to share her story and contribute to the conversation on holistic health and well-being.

Warm regards,



A circular stamp from Aadhya Publishing House, dated 2022, is placed over the signature.

**Akanksha Shrivastava**  
**Chief Editor and Publisher,**  
**Aadhya Publishing House**

## **EMBRACING HOLISTIC HEALTH WITH DR. ANUKRATI SHRIVASTAVA**

### **1. When and where did your career start?**

While growing up, I always had a thought to serve people, I always believed my purpose of existence is treating ill. So when my grandmother fell ill and was bedridden, I saw her suffering and tossing in pain, that made my dream of becoming doctor well fortified.

### **2. Why did you choose homoeopathy as a profession?**

Since childhood, I have seen conventional treatment in my home, though I believe that is a life saving service, but the withdrawal and side effects are horrendous, I always wanted to treat patients, which is non-harmful and has no side-effects. After doing a lot of research, I found that homeopathy is one.

### **3. Who's your inspiration ?**

To be very true, my inspiration to become a doctor has always been my maternal grandmother. She was the driving force for me to choose this as a profession. I remember while spending my childhood with her, she would say I want you to become a doctor and serve people.

## **EMBRACING HOLISTIC HEALTH WITH DR. ANUKRATI SHRIVASTAVA**

### **4. How does homeopathy works?**

Homeopathy is a system of alternative medicine based on the principle of “like cures like” (similia similibus curentur), which means that a substance that causes symptoms in a healthy person can be used in small amounts to treat similar symptoms in a sick person. Homoeopathy is not ready made its tailor made.

### **5. Why did you choose psychology as your subject?**

During my pregnancy, I faced a lot of ups and downs in my mental health, and I realised that mental illness is still a taboo. People are ashamed to talk about their mental health and a common reference to all sort of mental illness is labelled as madness. So that’s when I realise that I need to educate people about mental wellness and mental illness.

### **6. Whats the significance of mental health/wellness**

Good mental health is fundamental to overall well-being and affects every aspect of an individual’s life. It enables people to cope with the stresses of life, work productively, build and maintain healthy relationships, and enjoy life. Promoting and maintaining good mental health is essential for personal fulfillment and societal progress.

**EMBRACING HOLISTIC HEALTH WITH  
DR. ANUKRATI SHRIVASTAVA****7. How homoeopathy is useful in psychology cases?**

Like not every lock has the same key, not every psychological disorder has the same reason of illness..homoeopathy works on individuality. So when we take a case history of a person we try to unfold many layers and go to the root cause which is creating any psychological disorder in a patient. That's when we decide medicine and prescribe homoeopathy is the safest form to treat any psychological disorder without withdrawal or side-effect.

**8. What message do you want to give to society about mental health?**

Always take care of your mental health, Never be ashamed. Especially woman during pregnancy.

Mental illness is as normal as anybody have diabetes or cholesterol, And like I always say mental illness is not a phase that shall pass.It's a disease. It needs to be acknowledge and rectified.

All the best !!

***Dr Anukrati Shrivastava  
Homoeopathy physician,  
Counselling psychologist,  
International Certified Life  
and Mental Wellness Coach.  
CCH (united states)***

***Location-Texas (USA)***



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**Note :- We always demand the original write-ups from our writers. If any article, short story or poem is found to be a copy of any other article, short story or poem respectively, then the writer would only be responsible for it.**

## 1. People



**Ms. Aditi kumar**  
**Student**

People say friends heal you,  
But they broke me.

People say the right person always stays,  
But the best one also left.

People say loneliness kills a person,  
But I find peace there.

People say the present is beautiful,  
But I'm still stuck in the past.

People say love makes you feel special,  
But it made me feel worthless.

People say money can't buy you happiness,  
But it can buy a person.

People say you always need someone to talk to when feeling low,  
But for me, that someone is no one.

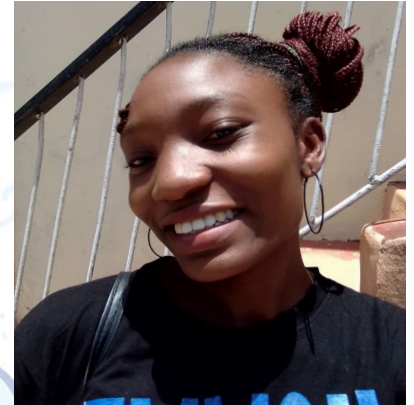
People say beauty lies within,  
But they judge me because of my looks.

People say a smile makes a person beautiful,  
But they forced me to stop.

## 2. Intoxicated Love

Love is like alcohol:  
You become intoxicated  
When you consume a large quantity of it,  
And you become blindfolded  
To the faults of the one you adore,  
Who strips you of your dignity  
And steals your happiness.  
Every day of your life seems like hell,  
But intoxication won't open your eyes  
Or ears to advice that could help you flee  
And become free again  
From the bondage of love's intoxication.

Crying, yelling, and sorrow are the outcomes  
Of your drunkenness.  
The only remedy is sipping love  
From a small cup, little by little,  
So you can gain clear sight  
And avoid long-term regrets.



**Ms. Akindipe  
Oluwafunmilola  
Student  
Ibafo  
Nigeria**

### 3. Me and my father

Without the father,  
The world is dark.  
The world is discouraged.  
Without him,  
How am I encouraged?

Without him, how do I learn?  
Without him, do I gain nothing?  
Without him, how do I fly?  
Without him, I always cry?

Without the father,  
The world means nothing to me.  
Father is everything to me.  
Without the father,  
My world is sad,  
No happiness and no gladness.

In conclusion,  
I say that I can't explain  
The "Bond of Love"  
Between me and my father.  
In this love, there is no place for sadness,  
Everything is happy,  
And all happiness is gathered.



**Mr. Anmol  
Shrivastava  
Student  
Vaishali  
Bihar**

#### 4. DEMO-CRAZY DAY

Replica of the juries has caused injury to the future  
July!

Ohh! Nigeria!  
Death keeps knocking at the doors of the youths!

Serving bullets as food,  
Blood as drink,  
Devouring human flesh like banquet meat!

Why fight over a piece of land?  
Biafra fighting for a referendum,  
Nigeria fighting for restructuring,  
Bringing us into the confused country called the United African Republic  
(UAR).

Indeed, things have fallen apart, as Chinua Achebe said, where the center can  
no longer hold!

Demo Crazy, why did you ban Twitter?  
When I was about to can it like canned food!

Demo Crazy, how did you enter Aso Rock and steal items in the name of  
robbery?

Demo Crazy,  
Please answer this question!  
What has kept our Post Mail Box (PMB) from addressing us these days of flaw?

For we've been sitting at home and listening to unknown gunmen!



**Mr. Chinwendu  
Chinonyerem  
Emmanuel  
Aba  
Nigeria**

## 5. Maharshi Valmiki And His Ramayan



**Dr. Chitranjan  
Dayal Singh  
Kaushal**

**Director of Sanskrit  
cell, Haryana  
Sahitya Evam  
Sanskriti Akademi,  
Panchkula  
Haryana**

Maharshi Valmiki has been the first great poet of Sanskrit literature and is famous as Adi Kavi. He took birth in Treta Yuga and wrote Adi Kavya Ramayan. Every Hindu feels inspired by the teachings of the Ramayan. Valmiki samaj worships him with full enthusiasm and devotion. Maharshi Valmiki is the Ishta of Valmiki samaj. The fascinating world of Indian mythology starts from time immemorial i.e. Vedic period.

Maharshi Valmiki visited all over Bharat and preached Vedic philosophy. At that time Lord Ram appeared on this land and performed his role to establish Dharma. Maharshi Valmiki wrote this historical fact in a poetical manner and depicted the story of Ramayan in detail.

Maharshi Valmiki was a great sage who lived during the time of Lord Rama. He was the author of the epic Ramayan, which tells the story of Lord Rama and his journey to rescue his wife Sita from the demon king Ravana.

Valmiki had a unique life journey, starting as a thief and eventually becoming a sage after receiving enlightenment from Narad Muni.

Ulataa naam japat jag jaaanaa,  
Valmiki bhaye brahma samaanaa.

He spent most of his life in different ashramas, where he meditated and wrote the Ramayan. Valmiki ashrama is situated at Chitrakut, district Banda in Uttar Pradesh.

Bhagwan Valmiki Tirath Asthan is temple panorama complex and an important historical monument of Valmiki located at Bhagwan Valmiki Tirath Road of Amritsar. It was here that Sita came after Rama deserted her and Maharshi Valmiki gave her shelter and protection. The place got more religious and historical significance as it was here that Sita gave birth to twins "Luv and Kush" the great sons of Lord Rama.

Valmiki Ashram is a Hindu Balmiki temple situated in Chitwan district of Nepal, inside Chitwan National Park. It is close to the Triveni Dham where Tamasa, Sona and Sapta Gandaki rivers meet. Deities worshipped here include Rama, Sita, and Valmiki. The festival of Rama Navami is also celebrated here.

Ramayan is full of stories that teach us valuable lessons. For example, it teaches us about the importance of dharma, or righteousness, and how it can guide us through difficult times. It also teaches us about the power of love and devotion, as seen in Lord Rama's unwavering love for Sita.

There are seven kandas in the historical epic Ramayan composed by Maharshi Valmiki.

First up is Bal Kand, which tells the story of Lord Rama's birth and childhood. Then there's Ayodhya Kand, which details his marriage to Sita and his exile in the forest in Aranya Kand.

Kishkindha Kand follows Lord Rama's journey to Kishkindha where he meets Hanuman and forms an alliance with him. Sunder Kand tells the story of Hanuman's journey to Lanka to rescue Sita.

In Lanka Kand, Lord Rama and his army fight against Ravana to rescue Sita. Finally, Utter Kand tells the story of Lord Rama's return to Ayodhya and his coronation as king.

Each kanda has its own unique story and message, but together they form the epic tale of Ramayan and Ram Rajya. It teaches us about the importance of dharma, love, and sacrifice.

Lord Rama's reign in Ram Rajya is a time of peace and prosperity for all. It serves as a reminder that when we follow the path of righteousness, we can create a happy and just society.

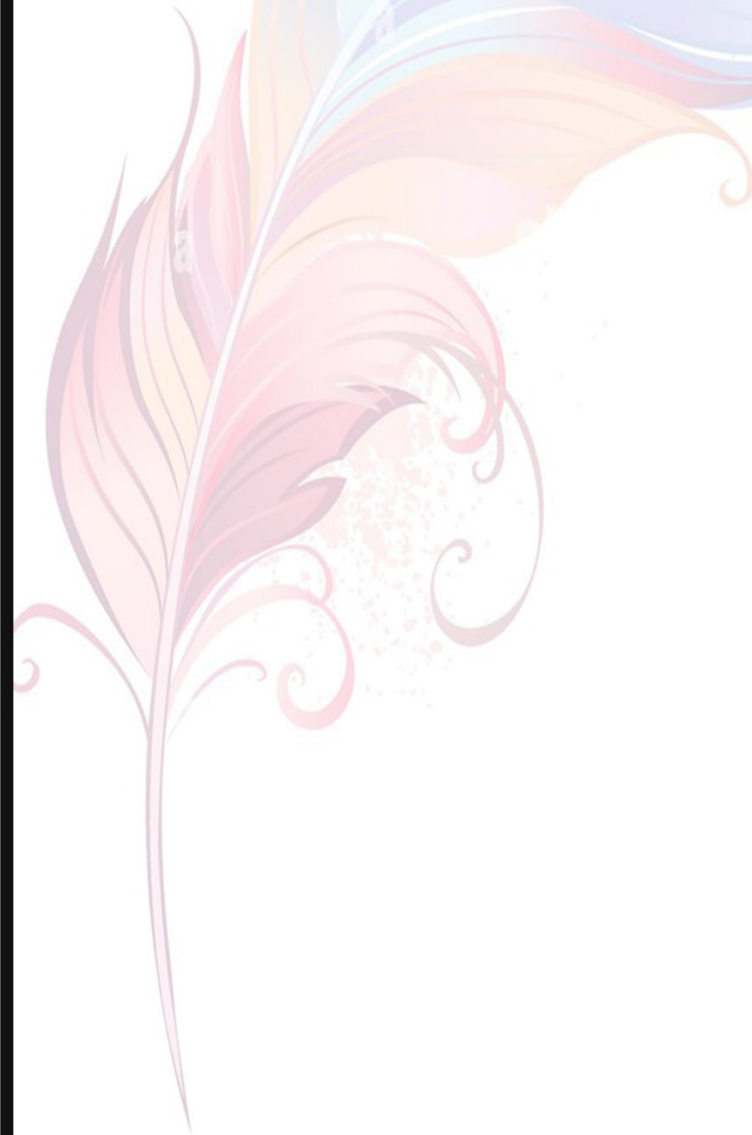
The Ramayan has many messages that are still relevant today. It teaches us about the importance of treating others with respect and kindness, regardless of their social status or background. It also teaches us about the power of forgiveness

and how it can help us heal and move forward.

Maharshi Valmiki's contribution to Indian literature is immeasurable. His Ramayan is not just a story but a cultural phenomenon that has shaped Indian society for centuries. It has inspired countless artists, writers, and thinkers throughout the world.

To conclude, Maharshi Valmiki and his Ramayan are an integral part of Indian mythology. They teach us valuable lessons about life, love, and spirituality. We should all strive to learn from their teachings and apply them in our daily lives.

**By Chitranjan Dayal Singh Kaushal**



## 6. A Gleam of Zeal



**Ms. Donika Sharma**  
**HR**  
**Noida**

Deskbound on the corner of the opening, looking towards the blue sky with many hopes, longing for this cosmos to bring fulfillment for a lifetime. Without caring about the consequences of not following its own rules, raindrops continue their rapid descent. Even as the wind plays with the intertwined branches of the trees, she sits there without any effort, nursing the wounds of her broken heart. Her senses await the moment she can capture until her last breath, feeling it in every moment of life. This isn't just a moment when love is achieved; it's a profound experience that transcends understanding and resonates deeply. The rain dances joyously, as if these are its final droplets on this beautiful earth, eagerly anticipating the woman who waits for the precious moments of her life. The earth itself encourages the raindrops, allowing them to reach the cherished one without hindrance, standing by her till her last moments.

Oh, what a surprise! The woman stands and hurries to the entrance to find a man holding a bunch of yellow roses, gazing at his beautiful lady in her wet white saree. He takes a step forward, embracing her with deep emotions and feelings. Witnessing this, the rain joins in the celebration with the beautiful earth once more.

## 7. Love Is a Wild Adventure



**Ms. Esha Fatima**  
**(MindScribe)**  
**Student, Writer**  
**Sargodha**  
**Pakistan**

Love Is A Wild Adventure, And Ours Began When We Found Each Other. It Was As If Fate Had Intervened, Guiding Us Towards Each Other Despite The Obstacles In Our Path.

The Interaction Between Us Was Sparse At First, Just Distant Contacts With Occasional Laughter And Banter. Yet, Slowly But Surely, He Began To Weave His Way Into My World, Making Me Smile And Laugh With His Playful Demeanor. Our Conversations Grew Longer And More Frequent, Stretching Late Into The Night As We Shared Our Thoughts, Dreams, and Fears.

At Times, His Words Hinted At Deeper Feelings, But I Brushed Them Off, Hesitant To Acknowledge The Growing Connection Between Us. Yet, Deep Down, His Words Lingered In My Mind, Stirring Up Emotions I Couldn't Ignore.

Then, Like A Sudden Gust Of Wind, Everything Changed. We Found Ourselves Drawn To Each Other. When My Partner Poured Out His Heart To Me, It Was Like The World Stopped. His Love Was So Pure, And I Couldn't Help But Feel The Same Way.

We Became Each Other's Safe Haven, Finding Peace And Joy In Our Togetherness. Our Love Grew Stronger With Each Passing Day. Our Bond Blossomed Into Something Beautiful, A Testament To The Power Of Connection And Love, Proving That When Two Hearts Beat As One, Nothing Can Stand In Their Way.

Together, We Faced Our Fears And Uncertainties, Sharing Our Hopes And Dreams For The Future Knowing That As Long As We Had Each Other , We Could Conquer Anything.

But It Wasn't All Sunshine And Rainbows. The Geographical Distance Between Us Served As A Reminder Of The Hurdles We Had To Overcome. And The Thought Of Introducing Him To My Family? That Felt Like Climbing A Mountain.

Now, As We Stand On The Brink Of The Unknown, We Face The Future With Unwavering Confidence. For Our Love Knows No Bounds, And Together, We're Unstoppable, And Are ready To Conquer Whatever Challenges Lie Ahead.

But it didn't end there.....

**By Esha Fatima**

## 8. Impossible

Nothing is impossible in the world.  
Possibility paves the way to success.

Pessimism and frustration are close friends.  
Optimism and hope are bosom friends.

Don't concede to inevitable odds.  
Don't capitulate to the scary dots.

Life is never a bed of roses.  
Be ready to bear the dual faces.

Don't take anything for granted.  
Don't leave anything unwanted.

Try to give the maximum in every effort.  
You are bound to see the spring in the desert.



**Mr. Girish Chandra  
Upadhyay**  
**Legal profession**  
**(Advocate High  
Court)**  
**Prayag Raj**  
**Uttar Pradesh**

## 9. SHE



**Ms. Gowri  
Ramachandran  
Retd Educator,  
Author  
Chennai**

She sat there, hunched,  
Lost in a distant world.  
Her eyes gazing far away.  
The many wrinkles on her face  
Spoke of the many sorrows witnessed.  
Her crippled hands, all knotted,  
Told a story of toil.

Her ears had deafened  
To the cacophony around her.  
What did she dream of?  
A life she would never attain?  
Of hopes and aspirations, perhaps?  
A happy world, long lost?  
A lifetime spent in toil?

Did I just see her eyes moisten?  
Did her lips gently quiver?  
Those eyelids, an attempt to blink?  
Nay! Oblivious to the world around,  
She sat hunched by the street corner,  
Ruminating over a life gone by,  
Or one she would never attain.

## 10. White Rose

Sitting near the window, gazing outside, a broken, sad girl looked as if she was going through severe mental stress. She was physically present but mentally absent.

Suddenly, she heard the voice of a little girl with her father, holding a fresh rose in her hand. The girl had the most beautiful smile on her shining face. She caught Mina's attention. Mina could not help but continuously look towards her, even as she crossed the road.

"Flowers.... Red roses..."

With both hands around her head, repeating these words, she screamed loudly and fell on her bed.

Not everyone has a good past; for some people, it becomes a lifetime regret. So it was with Mina.

"Oh, come on, beauty! Believe me, I will never let you fall," Vim said to convince her.

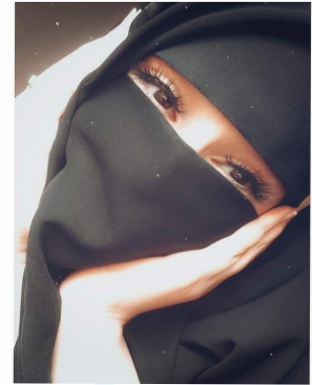
"No, you don't know. Clara, tell him how much I am afraid of this ride," she excused.

"It's true, Vim. Mina can't do it."

"Try it once, please," he requested.

Mina could not resist anymore.

"Thank you, Vim. You helped me face my fear. I... I don't have words to explain it. I really enjoyed the roller coaster ride."



**Ms. Humaira  
Noreen  
Writer  
Sargodha  
Pakistan**

“You are not only beautiful but a brave girl too. You just need to believe in yourself,” he said, looking into her eyes.

Mina felt overwhelmed by his words. She unintentionally became attracted to him whenever they met afterward, as Vim was Clara’s friend. Vim continued admiring her, even for her little things. When this appreciation turned into feelings, they both didn’t realize it.

Finally, one day on Mina’s birthday, Vim confessed his love for her. On that day, she felt like the world’s luckiest girl as she had been desperately waiting for this declaration from Vim.

Time passed, and they continued getting to know each other. Vim used to surprise her with red roses as she was fond of their fragrance. She had overcome many of her fears in Vim’s company. But who knows what twisted fate has in store for us?

“As far as I can guess, I think Vim is going to propose to you that very day,” Clara said carelessly, eating a packet of chips. Upon hearing this, Mina blushed with shyness.

“Let’s see what happens,” she said with a smile on her face.

“It’s obvious when he has arranged a special party for you...”

“If it happens... what else can I wish for?” She could not hide her heart’s throbbing.

The party was to be celebrated at a friend’s farmhouse. All friends were invited. Mina and Clara reached there together.

“Mina, you have to wait outside as Vim has a special surprise for you.”

This added more sparkle to her face. Everyone went inside except Mina. She sat on a bench, preparing herself for the surprise. Almost half an hour passed, but

no one came to get her.

“I need to wait here,” she comforted herself.

After fifteen more minutes, she decided to go inside. As she stepped onto the doorstep, she didn't see any decorations. When they noticed her presence, they first stopped talking, then suddenly everyone started laughing loudly at her. She became confused by the situation. No one was ready to tell her anything.

“What's all this, guys? Is this some prank?” she asked with mild anger.

Vim and Clara pointed at each other to tell the truth, but the others were stopping them to irritate her a bit more. Mina was about to burst into tears when she noticed Vim and Clara sitting together and a bouquet of fresh red roses in Clara's hand. Clara smiled mysteriously at her.

Someone took pity and revealed the truth.

“It was all a trap, girl. We all challenged Vim to win your heart as you seemed a timid girl who didn't trust anyone in matters of love. You once shared this with Clara. Now Vim has won. So, it's all over.”

Loud laughter echoed around. Mina turned pale and was about to faint.

“One more thing to tell you, the ‘Rose girl’ (everyone laughed again with sneering remarks), Vim and Clara are actually in love with each other..”

Mina could hardly stand as if the whole sky had fallen on her head. She wanted to cry, but her tears were stuck in her throat. Controlling her shivering body, she fell to the floor.

Time is destined to pass, so it passed. Since then, Mina has been traumatized by roses.

After years, she opened her diary and read a line written by her:

“Love should be colorless. Flowers should be colorless.”

**By Humaira Noreen**



## 11. RED

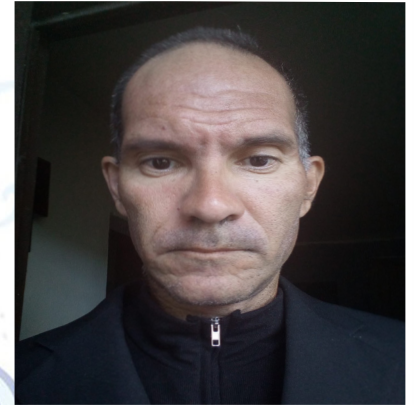


**Dr. Jailaxmi R  
Vinayak**  
**Poet, writer singer**  
**Bhopal**  
**Madhya Pradesh**

What catches one's eye?  
It is always red. Yes,  
Red in the beginning,  
Red in the end,  
Let's make red your friend.  
Red is the brightest,  
Dazzling one,  
Outsmarting the rest  
With its vibrancy,  
It has a charm of its own.  
It is the center of attraction for all eyes,  
Catches attention in no time.  
Red is the queen of spring,  
Red upholstery is one's dream.  
Bathed in red, the room glows.  
Painted in red, the nails show.  
Brush me not on the wrong side,  
Red is dangerous but adorns a bride.  
Not alien to red as our blood is red.  
Though it suppresses anger,  
It displays glamour.  
We once saw a lady in flamboyant red,  
Garish and extravagantly bright.  
When she entered,  
Donning it in style,  
Heads turned,  
Eyes gazed,  
Some stared, some scoffed,  
Some were jealous,  
Seeing her in all red.  
She was the cynosure of all eyes,  
Hot, arrogant, and wild.

She swirled in her red skirt,  
Took a caper and turned,  
The yellow,  
Blue, and greens,  
All paling into dust.

## 12. Executioner of the Planet



**Dr. Jose Luis Lopez**  
**Puerto Rico**

Do we all live in the same place?  
Do we have nature and gardens?  
Do we have mountains and waterfalls?  
Questions, and more questions.  
Why no response?  
Undoubtedly, we are not exhibiting rational behavior  
towards the planet.

Reading about air pollution in some countries, citizens infected with worms, monkeys dying from heatstroke due to habitat destruction, unresolved genocides due to politics and religious beliefs, irrational segregation of people everywhere—what can one possibly comprehend? We're failing to take corrective actions to ensure safety anywhere.

From time to time, decades and centuries, everyone acts against the world and humanity. Unfortunately, no one seems interested in adopting a positive attitude to reverse the negative societal impact; it's always the opposite. Every year confirms that we are not taking the necessary steps to end the chaos we have created.

The conclusion is clear: we are becoming the executioners of the planet. There are inexcusable excuses, unjustified attitudes, nothing assertive enough to close the case forever, unless they choose to expose their destructive manifestations to the world because they are not satisfied. This is our disgraceful reality worldwide.

### 13. A MESSAGE TO THE MAIN MAN- MODI



**Mr. Kailash Rana**  
**Ph. D scholar**  
**Hazaribagh**  
**Jharkhand**

O! Heart of hearts,  
There was a tug of war,  
As you have played  
Your innings as your best part.

O! Heart of hearts,  
Many of us know your art,  
As you keep your mind  
Even at the sound of the harp.

O! Heart of hearts,  
You are really so smart,  
As you follow your best chart,  
Yes, your courage is your cart.

O! Heart of hearts,  
Don't lose your path,  
As some lied and went apart,  
But in fact, you are a sweetheart.

O! Heart of hearts,  
For many poor and kind hearts,  
Whom you made a good part,  
Are always behind your art.

O! Heart of hearts,  
We are lucky to have a height,  
You shall carry us to that, we know,  
O! Heart of hearts, O! Heart of hearts.

## 14. BIBLICAL TRUTH...

If it is a lie,  
Let any man or all kill me.  
Earth knows bountiful Gods,  
'That save, kill, and destroy.'

A lady in white asked me,  
"Who can see what I see?"

"Furious winds in the garden of God;  
Roasting and toasting a kind of God...  
In dishes of mind manipulation."

I responded with an articulation  
That made the earth panic.

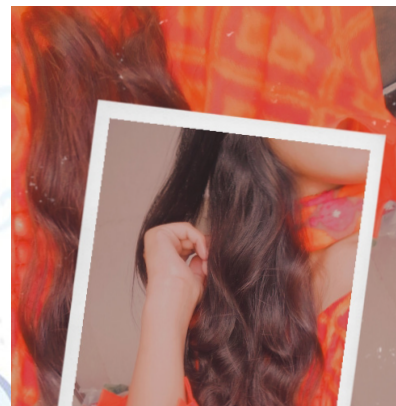
"Clear view I see,  
Falling men, dying kids, angry ladies, and all.  
The truth you've spoken, Holy Spirit.  
I see what you see."

God is one, ONE,  
Indeed ONE...



**Mr. Leonten Tendai  
Chakombera  
Author, boiler  
Maker , Artisan,  
Auto-Mechanic,  
Evangelist  
Mutoko  
Zimbabwe**

## 15. Chaos in silence



**Ms. Mahnoor  
Mukhtar  
Teacher/writer  
Sargodha  
Pakistan**

How does it look when a sea has turmoil inside but appears calm outside? A peaceful lake with strong currents beneath, a volcano with a calm exterior but intense activity within? A peaceful face concealing an intense storm behind? Do you ever think about what it looks like, how it feels, when you have a catastrophe inside but must face the world as if nothing is wrong?

Emma, the middle child among her five siblings, is struggling with internal and external complexities. It's always difficult to deal with your heart and surroundings when you have upheaval and turmoil beneath the surface but appear quiet and calm. She was standing in front of the mirror, meditating and staring at herself, wondering, "What if I had a simple life? What if I could tell people exactly how I feel? How terrifying are unspoken thoughts? How do I kill these demons of desire, who have grown legs now and follow me as I move forward?"

She was amazed while staring at her deep eyes that had now turned narrow. "What was I, and what has time made me?" There's a lot of difference between the person you are and the person you were. She was an epitome of innocence, simplicity, and quietness. Away from illusions and delusions, she believed in herself rather than in anyone else. She was the best among the brilliant because she never surrendered. Suddenly, she met with an accident arranged by fate and lost her perfection and brilliance. She is not what she used to be. Fate destroyed her every dream and every wish, whether about career or love.

It is a common perception that if you wish for something from the core of your heart, everything in the universe begins to move in your favor to grant your wish. But in Emma's case, it was just an illusion, a wrong idea. If she wished for a flower during spring, every bud and flower would begin to pale like autumn leaves. Everything began to move against her longings.

Once she fell for a guy who was nothing more than an illusion. His words began to wrap around her like a warm blanket. One who never believed in love now began to feel him in her soul. Her idea of love was different from others. She never met this guy whom she began to love from the core of her heart. She knew very well her unrequited love would never be reciprocated. But she still loved to listen to him, hear his problems, tensions, and heartaches, and console him. While handling and healing his wounds, she hurt her own hands. He was far away not only by distance but also by heart. To her, distance wasn't a problem. The problem was humans who don't know how to love without seeing, touching, or listening. Love is felt with the heart, not the body. But who would understand the quietness and turmoil she was going through? She would never dare to say or write about it. According to her, she wasn't pretty or perfect enough to deserve a man like him. She always thought about others before herself. It hurts, really hurts, but who cares about her unspoken feelings, her hidden pain, and the love her heart holds for so long without letting anyone know?

Whenever she thinks about her silent love, she just sighs and wonders:

What if every word had a sound?

If every emotion had a language?

If every dream had a reality?

If every delusion had a face?

What if the heart had no hurt?

What if we could tell people how precious they are? How much they mean to us?

There is chaos in her heart, soul, and crumbling thoughts, a storm of unsaid words that she is afraid will blow away her life, happiness, and peace. It hurts when you love someone unconditionally, care for him, are concerned about him, and his smiles make you smile, but his tears break your heart into pieces. But when it comes to you, he doesn't care about your silence, your pain, or even your existence. Sometimes she just wonders how it feels to be someone's loved one. How monumental a moment, how terrifying a thought it would be when someone could listen to your silence, see the pain in your eyes, and hear the longing in your words.

It's Emma, her unsaid love, unspoken thoughts, unheard story, and untold side against her love and the world. She keeps on living while having chaos in her

head and peace in her eyes. One day she will die holding his love in her heart. She asks for nothing, complains about nothing to her creator for what He has not given her, for creating her imperfect, but still, she has a prayer in her heart: "Oh Allah, I don't beg for him in this world, because I know I'm not suitable for him. But I ask You to make me a Hoor of Jannah in the end (as a reward for my patience and quietness) so I could be deserving enough to have him for good.

**By Mahnoor Mukhtar**



## 16. Coup d'ethought

When happiness declines, reunion;  
the shadow of the past follows my brain.  
Memories crawl out of my eyes and  
roll down my cheek.  
Coup d'ethought!  
Words parade at the  
festive of chaos in the brainland.

I just need  
the latest version of my brain  
when memories overstay their welcome.  
It has made me lose my train of thought.



**Mr. Major Sir  
Adesoga Jubril  
Asiwaju  
Educator and  
Prolific Writer  
Ogun  
Nigeria**

## 17. The Weather



**Ms. Meenakshi  
Sharma 'Manushri'  
Ghaziabad  
Uttar Pradesh**

You are a wonder  
That changes every day,  
Sometimes brings us thunder,  
Sometimes makes us play.

You are a marvel  
That paints the sky with hues,  
Sometimes shows us marvels,  
Sometimes gives us clues.

You are a mystery  
That shapes the world we know,  
Sometimes writes the history,  
Sometimes helps us grow.

## 18. The Desert Snow



**Mr. Nhamo  
Muchagumisa  
Teacher  
Mutare  
Zimbabwe**

Majanisa had not given up on Carolina. He wanted her back in his arms, despite the feigned rape shout that had never beguiled him. He had immediately taken the rape story with the intention of cutting down the audacious garden boy cum gateman for polluting his conjugal rights.

Carolina never allowed the thought of returning to Majanisa to sweeten the experiences of a woman whose fall from grace was the deepest a pessimist heart could perceive, especially as newspapers had narrated the story of her infidelity with malice and gusto. Her withdrawal of the charges against Gwiri created a cheap woman out of her, a woman who would pledge her nudity for pleasure and then create a rape story to repair her image, without pausing to consider the deeper end of the aftermath.

Immediately after filing rape charges against Samson Gwiri, Carolina and Majanisa had agreed to send Muna, their four year old daughter to Carolina's elder sister. Her mother had been "too traumatised" to perform her motherly duties as would be expected of her. After breaking up with Majanisa, Carolina was now staying with her sister in the same city, but she was quick to realise that a nameless worm had infected their bond. The warmth Susanna used to radiate had suffered the baptism of desert snow.

Carolina always reminded herself, "Which sister would enjoy the presence of a sibling whose marriage had died as a result of infidelity, especially when the sister giving refuge had her husband under the same roof?"

Returning to Majanisa would not even pass for a last resort. He would tighten the security around her to erase any possibility of a repeat of her previous act. She was certain that her estranged husband would never believe that the first time was the only time, and that the likelihood of a second time was almost zero.

Even the down and out find places they can fill very effectively, so with the increase in the incidence of Covid-19 cases, Carolina got a job at the district hospital, accommodation provided.

Visits by Majanisa to her hospital residence were a major disturbance, but her eyes remained focused on the future. Holding on to the ghosts of the past had only ephemeral rewards.

On one of Majanisa's visits, the estranged couple sat on plastic chairs at the back of the house, savouring the emptiness that spread before their eyes like aquatic creatures that had been ejected from the marine world.

"There is no point in reviving our relationship because you will never trust me again," Carolina said.

"You only need to begin to see value in the revival of the bond, and self restraint won't be a moral difficulty," Majanisa said.

"You seem to read through my mind. Self restraint will definitely be a difficulty," Carolina argued.

"No, please no Sweetheart," Majanisa begged.

"Yes, we may move in with each other again, but I can't promise that I will not do it again," said Carolina, "So, what am I saying? A reunion is impossible."

Majanisa had left Carolina with tearful eyes, careful enough to wipe the water from his face in order to see the road clearly when he started the engine of his car.

Carolina wanted to move on yes, but she owed Samson Gwiri an apology. She "knew" that he hated her as babies feared nightmares, but she still had to say the sorry word to him. It might not carry with it the desired healing effect, but at least saying it would relieve her of a load no one had ever trained her to bear.

After a few exchanges of lifeless messages on WhatsApp, Mrs Majanisa and Gwiri agreed to meet at Mrs. Majanisa's hospital residence. She took him into the house and let her tears flow with her words as she asked for forgiveness. He simply said, "We had both been careless on that occasion, so it can't be entirely your fault," he said.

"But what pains me is that I am the one who made the first move, yet you are the one who ended up being locked up," Carolina sobbed.

"Today I will make the first move, and then surrender myself to the police," Gwiri said rising from the sofa on which he had been sitting to approach her.

Carolina stood up and fell into his embrace before leading him into the bedroom.

\*\*\*

As Carolina led Gwiri out of the house, she said, "We are done with what we started on the day we thought it was safe for both of us. Now go your way and never look back."

"I'm not sure yet, if I will not ask for it again. Yet everything depends on you saying yes," Gwiri said, walking towards the gate.

Back in her bedroom, Carolina locked herself up, crawled into bed and wrapped herself up. She wept like she had never wept before. An experience that would have given her comfort had not been any consolation to her, not even in the slightest sense of the word. Yes, she had to let him go, for she might give him the most devoted love, but behind the beauty would be the ugliest ghost with only one word on his lips, "Selfish". Yes it was indeed selfishness that had made her shout the "rape" word. She had seduced him to soothe her own soul, just to be intimate with someone who was not her abuser, but she had turned out to be his abuser.

Carolina wept until there was no tear left in her skull. A splitting pain tortured her brain matter, nerve fibres and blood vessels, a sign of stress and severe dehydration.

She finally fell into a dreamless sleep and woke up at midnight, but when she regained her wakefulness, the freshness of what she had done with Gwiri still lingered in her mind. She would never shake the burden of the memory of him from her shoulders and remain herself. He would be a separate part of her like one story written back to back on the same sheet of paper, but was it going to be the same with him?

\*\*\*

Gwiri and Carolina finally agreed to go their separate ways. Carolina began to accommodate men who showed interest in her, and there was a certain junior doctor, whose fingers were long enough to touch the spot Majanisa had never touched, yet not long enough to reach the most sensitive spot, where Gwiri's finger prints remained as fresh as a footmark on the moon.

A compromise is only a compromise when it is made, but when it becomes your reality it ceases to be a compromise. After work, following a busy schedule in which Carolina and the doctor had been partnered, the Doctor and Carolina had a moment to share in the deserted corridor, leading to the lab entrance.

"I'm still waiting for your positive response, Sweetheart," the doctor said.

"Before you hear it, you must know my story first," Carolina said, allowing her smile to retreat back into her thoughtful head.

"Let me hear it," the doctor said, staring the lab scientist in the eyes.

Carolina told the doctor about her failed marriage, omitting to mention her husband's name, mentioned her first amoral act with Gwiri, the court case, then omitted her second amoral act with Gwiri. "You see doctor, in my case, moving on would be a matter of a shift in physical location, but not emotional wellbeing."

"That was you in the past, not today," the doctor said, contrasting the beauty that sat next to him with the mischief that she had been involved in.

"If you really want me, meet me at the foot of Mt. Jungwa when we are both free this Saturday, by the huge granite rock that faces the main road out of the city," Carolina said and they started their walk towards the exit gate.

\*\*\*

Carolina arrived at the rendezvous very early in the morning. She had not eaten anything. All that mattered was the meeting. The day matured into mid morning, reached noon and began its decline. Doctor Tunga did not arrive. She sat on the ground, stood up and walked around the rock a countless times. No message from him hit her inbox, and when she tried his number, it was not reachable. Why should she be so desperate? Why not leave the place and go home, then return to work and treat Doctor Tunga as just a favourite workmate?

Sunset caught up with her and she sat down and began to pray. This was going to be her last day alive. She would not leave that place. She was going to die waiting for the man who would never come.

But at eight pm, she heard the gentle tread of a person walking towards her. Her face remained buried between her raised knees. Then she felt a tap on her shoulder, but did not raise her face.

"Carolina," the person said gently.

"Doctor Tunga," Carolina answered, rising to her feet.

There was no point asking why he had delayed. Doctor Tunga had come to meet her after all, but then the Doctor spoke.

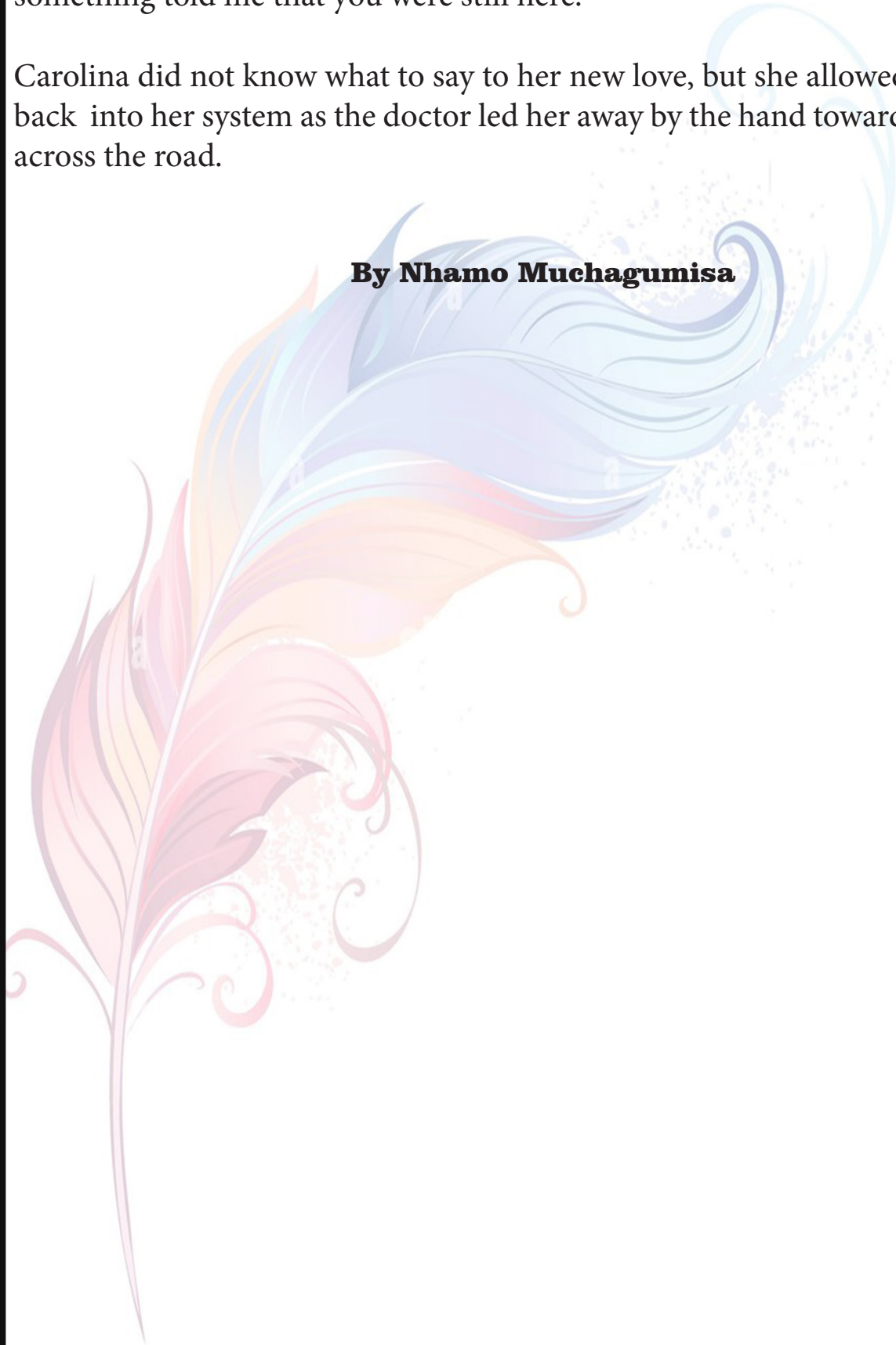
"I received a call from the General Hospital where a team of six doctors was needed to save the life of a Mr. Truman Majanisa, who had been severely assaulted by ten men who accused him of being in a relationship with their woman," Dr. Tunga said.

Carolina froze from toe to temple, but she managed to say something, "Were you successful?"

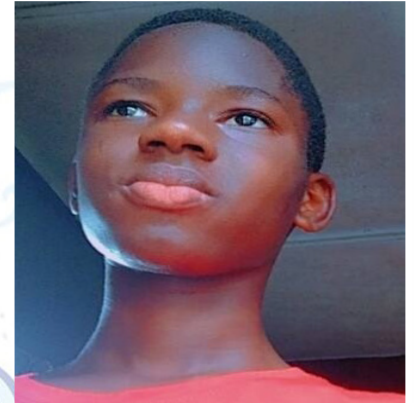
"We lost the battle, but I remembered that I had an appointment to fulfill, and something told me that you were still here."

Carolina did not know what to say to her new love, but she allowed life to crawl back into her system as the doctor led her away by the hand towards his car, just across the road.

**By Nhamo Muchagumisa**



## 19. I ONCE HAD A DREAM



**Nwafor Amarachi  
Grace  
Lagos  
Nigeria**

My thoughts wandered in the dream world,  
Crossing many bridges only to land in a local arena.  
I decided to take a stroll around the vicinity.

My eyes saw the disadvantages of my country,  
My eyes saw the deserted souls  
Who lie on the ground of dirty thoughts.

My eyes saw how life is outside wealth,  
My heart cried in misery,  
My legs trembled down to my knees.

I wanted to fight the impostor  
On the seat of power  
Who has turned my fatherland into a den of thieves.

Ahhhhhhhhhhh,  
My soul is restless,  
My spirit is moved by pity.

My tongue has been tied down,  
My mouth has been rendered speechless.  
When will partiality end?

## 20. I tender an apology

My love, I tender an apology  
If love at first sight lacks conscience.  
Forgive me for the day  
My eyes crossed with yours  
On that summer day I saw you.  
You looked like a cool breeze.  
You stopped me from feeling thirsty.  
Kindly teach my heart to love you more.  
Kindly teach me how to feel your warmth.



**Mr. Oladipupo  
Olayemi  
Anuoluwapo  
Lagos  
Nigeria**

## 21. In Her Admiration

If I had permission, I would allow the Hoorain-E-Jannat  
to comb your hair every morning in Jannah.  
The beautiful hair you have,  
whenever you wake up with untied hair and half-opened eyes,  
make me a witness to this moment.  
I would allow them to bathe you in rare water to keep  
your beauty forever and keep you young.  
If I had permission to take my Hoor in Jannah,  
then I would take you in his Jannah as my reward.  
Oh, my love, if you ever come into my life as my life partner,  
then you will be the only reason for my Jannah, to enter its gate.  
I might be crossing the limit of words in your admiration,  
but you are a creation of that God who made the Hoorain of Jannah  
for us in the next life after leaving this world temporarily.  
And I would allow them to make you my bride with the most beautiful dress  
they would have for the women of Jannah,  
so that I could tell them that I found my woman in your world,  
Oh Lord, and the beauty of Jannah I have taken with me.  
Please allow me to marry her again, with your permission,  
to make her my life partner in the next life you gave me now.  
Oh, my love, in the beautiful paradise of the Lord,  
the heavenly would be amazed by the beauty of your eyes, your lips,  
and all of your existence.  
Your brightness of eyes alone would light up paradise, brighter than any star.  
I would allow them to make flower crowns for you from the rarest flowers,  
and each one more fragrant than the last, I promise.  
Oh, you girl who lives in my mind, every time I look at you,  
I would be reminded of the Creator's amazing work.  
Your eyes are as calming as Jannah's rivers, your smile as warm as its eternal  
sun.  
Your touch is soothing, a promise of the peace that paradise brings.



**Mr. Own Abbas**  
**Writer**  
**Lahore**  
**Pakistan**

And I surrender myself in front of you, oh, you Zameen Zaadi:  
your beauty is even more breathtaking than the dreams of paradise.  
You are like a masterpiece created by the Divine,  
admired even by the heavenly beings.  
Being with you feels like being in heaven on earth,  
and with you, I want to find eternal happiness.

**By Own Abbas**



## 22. Inner Light



**Ms. Pareeshy**  
**Writer**  
**Pakistan**

The most difficult battle in the world is to fight against oneself (psyche).

Have you ever thought that two lovers might be separated, yet they will always be alone? He kept fighting with himself (psyche) and never thought of making another companion...

Have you ever seen that old lady who secretly opens a box full of clay in her old room, takes out a picture, stares at it for hours, then sheds tears and puts it back in the box?

Have you ever heard of a boy who used to pass by a prostitute's house every day and still walk away quietly?

Is it easy to fight the battle with oneself?

A person loves someone but marries someone else, and then develops Alzheimer's disease in old age, just keeps on calling her name.

Because the memory of the heart is more powerful than the memory of the mind.

Two people who have been hiking in the mountains every day climb a snow-covered peak and express their love to each other by shouting that nothing can separate them except death. Then one day, one of them is separated from the other by that merciless mountain. But still, that lonely person keeps coming to the mountains with different flowers every day to feel these sounds. Because he has to remember his promises. If he wants to listen to himself, he can also bring a companion there with him, but...

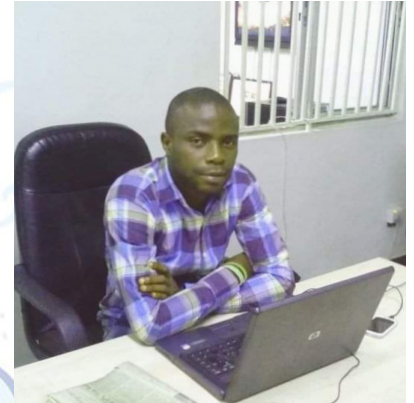
A persecuted person of the world knows how to do every bad thing, but still, he earns honorably and lawfully and is happy in his small house. He speaks two words of love to his wife every day and goes to earn a living. Do you think he

earns money by doing wrong things for his wife? Instead of speaking the two words of love to her, he can bring her a beautiful necklace, he can bring her the food she likes, but no... He will never want to earn forbidden earnings.

This is the battle with oneself. And the battle with oneself always comes between evil and good. Now it depends on you which side you choose. He who has killed his soul (psyche) has kept his loyalty. And the one who could not do it will always be unaware of killing the self...

**By Pareeshy**

## 23. My Son



**Mr. Phillips Tayo  
Damilola  
Writer/Content  
Enthusiast  
Lagos  
Nigeria**

My Son,  
Come Closer nay,  
Cling nearer at myself,  
Of thyself trigger being,  
Like how the river intercourse,  
Its banks overflowing,  
Thus, you sit on the warmth seat,  
To hearken the home truths.

See life blossom,  
My Son...its sod,  
Isnt evergreen latches,  
Nay why Ye...my son,  
Reins as the sunshine,  
Of my aging manhood,

Young man,  
I grow as a child,  
Steep on the wack peels,  
That crusted painful youthfulness,  
Of life...living ...lushness,  
Even born angelic...aghaast,  
Lies ahead of yours of mine.

My Son,  
Follow the way nought,  
Of the men strait wittiness,  
For lies ahead a termite nest,  
Rather, Talk a walk of light,  
That beams hindsight,  
Of each of your right instinct,  
Like a insight reverend mind,

Of the biblical prophets,  
Who wait unto ages,  
To berth the Messiah birth.

My Son...My Sun!  
Wild artillery widens,  
When beards blooms,  
To see wired mermaids,  
Of the feminine fatale,  
Such your mother born,  
Such set your egos burning,  
When you drunk...sips a pint,  
Not to loose your guard of gourd,  
Of wisdom not to snooze weed  
That set rage ragging hot,  
Like a unburdened Prince,  
Among the shameful lost  
Dimming therein sunlight,

Life is a sport, son  
For awhile, football  
Encircles around into goals,  
11 vs 11...one game at a time,  
Yet...a discern of how times flies,  
If 90mins ending...Son,  
Ye entrusted with mindful decades,  
Make Hay whether sun bright,  
May Haste whether sun black,  
For living akin Basketball,  
Whose score is basket point,  
Written out with ball pen tips.

Son of my youth sunlamps,  
I call thee...tonight,  
Knowing tomorrow Isnt a trite chapter,

Nay today's action Isnt a flip over bottle,  
Hold tack the maniac slug,  
Of every loose act,  
Of inordinate action,  
Such that cast hell fire into prayers,  
Make men tremble behold trumpet's call,  
Take joys when Gladys nods head,  
Of the goods of your handwork,  
Make Atleast one delirium,  
Of a sane kin like our messiah,  
Who died for the world wherein,  
To stay Alive Not Aliens.

**By Phillips Tayo Damilola**

## 24. ASHES OF VALENTINE (ASH WEDNES- DAY)



**Mr. Ralph Lungu**  
**Writer**  
**Yola**  
**Nigeria**

Love calls you on a flower Wednesday.  
God calls you to deep reflection.  
The shadows know no sand,  
But ashes remind us of where we came from.  
We return to Him who calls us sons.  
In meditation, we keep the flowers away,  
Journeying 40 days with Him to be saved.

Holy palms burnt, blessed, and placed as a sign,  
A reminder to run and seek His time.  
A solid love found from no other,  
Abstaining from watering the dead flowers,  
Racing to the spring of His blood,  
Warmer and cleaner for a long-lost soul,  
Sweet to the awesomeness of His presence.

Abstain! While the arms are open,  
And the left arm is blind to the right arm,  
40 days with He who holds you in His arm.  
We are His flowers of love that renew.  
His blood a holy sign of love,  
Ashes of Wednesday,  
A sign of dust, and one day we become the dust.

No one holds a flower and a cross for victory.  
The burden of the cross is a sign of victory.  
Ashes are washed by His blood,  
His resurrection a joy that fills the deep soul.  
His journey of 40 days is a triumphant stage  
Where death will lose its powers.

## 25. Spare the rod and spoil the child!

Once upon a time, there was a young but wealthy couple named Mr. and Mrs. Duncan. They loved each other dearly but were unable to conceive a child. After six years of marriage with no sign of pregnancy, they consulted many doctors, pastors, and clerics, all of whom said there was nothing medically wrong and advised them to wait for God's timing.

Mrs. Juliet Duncan, feeling the pressure from her husband's family who taunted her with names like witch and demon, began to feel desperate. She cried day and night, but her husband, Mr. Julian Duncan, always comforted her, telling her not to worry about having a child.

A year later, she became pregnant and gave birth to a baby boy named Iretimi, which means "my expectation." They both adored him and showered him with love and affection as their first and only child. They gave him everything he needed, often before he even asked for it.

One day, Iretimi came home with a pencil he found on the floor. When his father asked where he got it, he scolded him for taking things that didn't belong to him. However, Mrs. Duncan rebuked her husband for being too harsh on their son. This caused a rift between the couple, something that had never happened before. From then on, Iretimi continued to bring home things he found without his mother questioning him. This behavior continued into his secondary school years.

As time passed, Iretimi joined a group of boys known as the "big boys gang," who engaged in activities like sneaking out of school, doing drugs, and being involved with different girls.

A few days later, the school principal called Mrs. Duncan to report that her son was engaging in immoral behavior. She refused to believe it and almost



**Ms. Robert  
Christianah  
Student  
Ikeja  
Nigeria**

took legal action against the school. She transferred Iretimi to another school without informing her husband, claiming the environment was not conducive for learning and that their son was being treated unfairly.

Iretimi eventually sat for his final exams but was caught cheating. He was immediately expelled from the school. Months later, the consequences of his drug use began to show, and he was diagnosed with kidney failure. Despite his parents' wealth, his condition was too advanced for treatment.

Years later, Mr. Duncan, unable to bear the pain of losing his son due to his wife's negligence, filed for divorce.

In the following years, the consequences of her actions began to weigh heavily on Mrs. Duncan. She cried uncontrollably, feeling as though the ground should swallow her up.

Since then, she vowed to herself, "I will never spare the rod and spoil the child."

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**By Robert Christianah**

## 26. Standing up for Something

If you have failed in your struggles,  
Try to stand up for something.  
Even if you fail to stand for nothing,  
Life is like a rough surface of the road.  
If you fall for anything, you fail to stand for nothing.  
If virtues may fall you down,  
Stand up for something.  
You can do what others only think.  
Your destiny cradles your success  
If you stand up for something.  
If you stand up for something.



**Mr. Saleem Raza  
Jakhar (Amar  
Shaw)  
Teacher, Writer  
Khairpur Sindh  
Pakistan**

## 27. Understand

There is no love by heart in this soil,  
And non-loyalty this world does spoil.  
Hearts have been wounded from idlers above,  
What is left but hypocrisy, you couldn't shove.

Chastity is lost in the manners of men,  
No humanity in reality or in dreams does remain.  
All are in drunkenness and in delirium lost,  
No desire comes for the bliss utmost.

All aspirations are for fame and survival means,  
Not a drop of kindness remains in between.  
Troubles and diseases hit us from all sides,  
By want of money, we do abide.

Our pride and hearts were broken in a foreign land,  
Patriotism is but honor; this we do understand.

Translation: Santos Kumar Pokharel.



**Mr. Solikhov  
Ibodullo  
(pseudonym  
Ibodullohi Soleh)  
Poet, translator  
Barcelona**

## 28. I HAD TO BLOCK YOUR NUMBER

(A LETTER TO MY EX)

I had to block your number because the urge to text you wouldn't go away. But if you ask me how I feel about you, I would lie. We were never serious anyway.

While reading old text messages, while contemplating what went wrong, I had to block your number because I liked you all along.

I had kind of a rude awakening about it, learned that I'm not very good at letting go.

I had to block your number, but your favorite birthday cake I still know.

I almost learned how to make it, considered how your family could have it too. I researched dietary restrictions, even though about me they probably never knew.

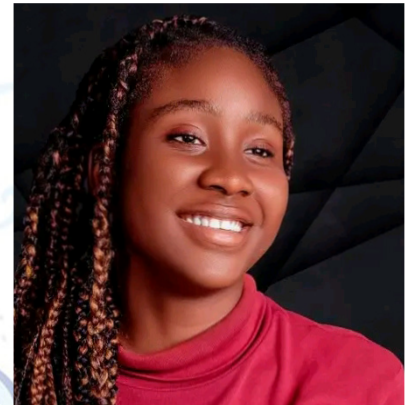
I must have expressed them at some point, these emotions that you would find cute. But if I was a car ride, a karaoke, you always had your radio on mute.

So I believed love had a ceiling. Can't give it away too fast, at least that's how I was feeling.

But then at the back of the stage, somewhere behind the curtain, I wished I could go back in time to prevent you from hurting.

To be there in the worst moments, to prevent the downward spiral. It's no surprise, really, that even the thought of you went viral.

Because to know you is to remember you.



**Ms. Tanishang  
Balami  
Writer  
Jimeta  
Nigeria**

Trust me, the opposite I've tried.

I told people how great you are, I really should have lied.

Because now it's all different, or just a spark that burned out. Now you're just something I and my therapist talk about.

I've always been so afraid of speaking, but about you, I easily vocalize. Only the prettiest words I could say, and all they had.

Your crooked smile, they all had. Your pretty voice.

I immortalize your energy because you became my first choice.

Now I'm sitting on a sidewalk, contemplating a call to make.

I'll throw my heart in a cell that nobody can ever steal.

Until the cell has your number and the phone returns to my hand.

I had to block your number because my heart, your absence, it still doesn't understand.

**By Tanishang Balami**

## 29. Happiness



**Mr. Tha Ono**  
**Teacher**  
**Gasparillo**  
**Trinidad & Tobago**

Life's labyrinth, I wandered astray,  
In shadows lost as my dreams fade away.  
Searching, looking for solace in the depths of  
midnight,  
Wanting peace of mind, yearning for a beacon, a  
glimmer of guiding light.

Through trials and tribulations, I journeyed on,  
Through the darkness, feet bare, I trod until the break  
of dawn.  
I lost myself in life's endless fray,  
Soon I found strength to pave my way.

Friends departed, their echoes a distant sound,  
I whispered to myself, "Happiness will abound."  
I failed to see, it was within me all along,  
I'm on my own, always have been,  
A hidden treasure, a forgotten song.

Life became a reality, a modern fairytale, the key soon discovered,  
Unlocking the joy that was waiting for me.  
Lost but found, in a dance so divine,  
Happiness intertwined in every step, every line.

I'll embrace the unknown with courage and might,  
Even in the midst of chaos, I found my light.  
Through the trials and tears, a victory I decree,  
Happiness resides within, setting myself free.

In the silence of solitude, I found my voice,  
Amidst the chaos, I made my choice.  
To let go of the past, to shed the chains,  
Embrace the beauty that forever remains.

I wandered through valleys, climbed life's mountains high,  
Lost in the moment beneath the Caribbean sky.  
Each step I took became a leap of faith,  
Jump then fall, into life's joys and misery,  
Guided by the whispers of newfound grace.

Friends may come and friends may go,  
Seeds of joy within me will always grow.  
I believed happiness came from external shores,  
Yet it blossomed within me, an endless source.

Life's knitted path, soon I found my thread,  
Weaving a tale of triumph, where fear soon fled.  
Lost in the maze, yet a glorious exit found in the end,  
Happiness so timeless, my soul on the mend.

Dear reader, allow the winds of change to blow me away,  
I've learned that happiness is here to stay.  
In the depths of our being, a treasure untold,  
Write your story, how you find your peace and gold.

**By Tha Ono**

### 30. An Unexpected Connection



**Mrs. Usha Krishnan**  
**Life Coach,**  
**Educationist & NLP**  
**Coach**  
**New Delhi**

Was it the blissful look,  
Or the first sign of appreciation given silently,  
That sparked a silent conversation between us that evening?

You were sitting blissfully there on the sidewalk,  
While the street was merging into its rush hour chaos.  
You seemed calm and composed, even as  
The whole street absorbed the impatience  
Of honking cars and the tip-tap of busy pedestrians.

Was it that moment of serenity amidst the chaos,  
When you transferred a tiny joy to me with your  
Appreciative gesture about my ethnic outfit the next evening?  
Did you earn a space in my heart reserved for  
Kind-hearted individuals when you passed  
A silent query on my well-being the evening after that?

Was it here, in this city with its blend of Tamil-Franco lifestyles,  
Where I have come temporarily as a migratory bird,  
That I found an acquaintance to exchange fresh smiles on my evening walks?  
Have I felt that there originates an oasis of friendliness that  
Dispels the usual sense of strangeness we often feel as tourists?

Was it your loving smile while enjoying  
The coziness of your tiny wooden stool,  
That made me feel at home during my evening walks?  
The wicker baskets you kept with you resembled coracles,  
And the strings of fresh jasmine flowers in them  
Exuded an alluring fragrance all around.

You looked beautiful with your salt-and-pepper hair,  
In the crimson red and bright yellow checkered saree you wore.  
Your hair was in a neat bun, adorned with fresh jasmine flowers,

And your forehead shone with a perfectly drawn big red vermilion circle.  
Your tiny diamond nose pin flashed brightly with every turn of your head.  
You were enjoying your evening tea and  
The freshly baked cookies that evening,  
When I approached you to buy a string of jasmine flowers.

Was it so that I could feel the same warmth of motherly love  
When you adorned my hair with the jasmine flowers  
And gave me a warm smile?  
Could it be the reason for the reluctance I felt , to bid farewell  
To this beautiful city of serene beaches and rich heritage,  
At the confluence of Tamil-Franco culture?

Didn't I feel that our silent conversations have created  
An unexpected connection between us?

**By Usha Krishnan**

## 31. Daddy's Little Girl



**Ms. Vaishnavi  
Shrivastava  
Student  
Vaishali  
Bihar**

As I look back to see,  
I remember times spent on your knee.  
When it came to my biggest fears,  
You came along to wipe away my tears.

But as years started rushing by,  
I'll have to say with a sigh,  
You needed me just as bad,  
And those times were so sad.

But now we're a family once more,  
And I know there's so much in store.  
You always seem to know when I need a smile,  
Especially when you haven't seen one in a while.

We seem to always be on the same page,  
Even though there's a big difference in age.  
We know how to make each other laugh,  
And it makes time fly past.

Daddy, that's why I'm so thankful for you,  
I would never ask for anyone new.  
I love you so much!  
Because you help me with all my problems and such.

I know you wish you could give me the world,  
But I'm proud enough with my title,  
"Daddy's Little Girl."

## 32. The wedding monster

The memory of this incident still lives rent-free in my brain and plays back like a show reel at times when I encounter a déjà vu situation, thus inducing laughter and teaching me valuable lessons for life. It happened when I was eight years old. My maternal grandfather, whom I call Dadda, and I attended a distant relative's wedding, which, thankfully, was near our home.

Like every Hindu Brahmin wedding, everyone was dressed appropriately for the occasion, and as my Dadda was a highly respected member of the bridal party, we were given special treatment. Our traditional cream and gold combination was different from others, as most people wore bright colors with gold and were decked out in gold ornaments as expected. Dadda always says that we should attend and watch all the rituals as well as pray for the couple's successful married life. If older, then we should bless them when we hand over the gift. We don't eat at weddings as we are used to different kinds of food preparations that we have at home. Hence, it gave us a lot more time to observe the behavior of various people who graced the occasion.

While most of the crowd was busy munching and gulping the delicacies as the rituals were going on at the other end, I noticed that the groom's mother had a huge and colorful jute bag. When I questioned Dadda about it, he said it was to collect the envelopes with money in them, which were given as gifts to the couple by the guests. After the rituals were over, the bride, who looked beautiful in her red and gold saree, and the groom, who carried his beige and golden dhoti-kurta outfit quite well, moved towards the reception area, where the guests could meet them and congratulate them, not to mention shower them with gifts.

A small stage with two huge and two medium-sized chairs was built for them to receive the guests. The groom's mother sat next to him, and the bride's sister gave her company. The couple looked divine as they posed right in the center for an extremely enthusiastic photographer. We stood in a queue that led to the



**Ms. Vizzmaya Jalal**  
**Student**  
**Mumbai**

stage.

I found it rather funny that the groom's mother kept opening each envelope to check the amount of money in it and then noted it down along with the name of the guest in a notebook. Dadda looked a little shocked, as this is usually done after the wedding.

Suddenly, a family of fifteen people landed on the stage to meet the couple. They seemed to be poor, as that is what their clothes and looks indicated. The bride's mother-in-law seemed unhappy with their arrival and quickly checked their envelope to find only one hundred and one rupees in it. She got up from her seat, stopped the photographer from taking a picture, and asked them if they had any shame or not. Those guests, the couple, and the bride's family were entwined in threads of shock, and so were we as spectators. The short and fat lady started shouting at them while they were in tears. The groom and his father tried to handle the situation but all in vain. The decibels were touching the sky, and pearls started dropping from the bride's eyes. That is when the bride's father stepped onto the stage, apologized to the guests painted in insults, and told his daughter's mother-in-law, or shall I say monster-in-law, that this was the family that looked after the bride when she lived with her paternal grandmother in their ancestral village for ten years. They had come all the way just to bless her and her husband, as to them, she was still their little princess. His wife added that she and her husband were abroad due to their job postings and had always regarded these angelic people as their family members and not as servants. They had given their daughter more gifts in a million ways than anyone in her life.

The loud monster had stopped growling and looked embarrassed but refused to apologize and ran towards the steps to climb down from the stage. All of a sudden, the partition between the stage and the steps broke, and she fell right in between them, into a hole, and came out with blackish dust all over her face and clothes. The entire crowd started laughing while the groom and his family helped her get out of there. I couldn't control my laughter either, but my Dadda gave me a sharp look with his tiger-green eyes, and I swallowed the mirth. Everyone was talking about how she deserved what happened to her, and somehow, to an extent, I could hear my mind agree.

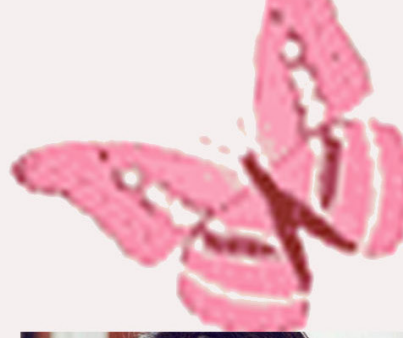
Being judgmental and treating people in such a bad way in the name of caste or looks or money should never be encouraged. That is what Dadda said, although he didn't like that she had fallen. We found out soon enough that she wasn't hurt, so that was a relief. We congratulated the couple and gave them a gift, which was classy and expensive as my mother had bought it. Otherwise, that monster-in-law would probably chase me down to the gate. Well, that is what I visualized until I realized that Dadda was with me, and she would probably faint with fear if she saw how ferocious he looks when he is angry.

Though all of this brought a smile to my face and I felt justice had been served, I learned that God is watching us, and when He has created all of us equal, we have no right to discriminate among His children. Dadda also taught me that this incident was an example of how one must be humble, check all the facts before reacting or reaching a conclusion, and never insult others, no matter who they are or create such a pathetic and painful scene on any occasion or even on a regular day.

It was nice to see that the bride and her family had so much gratitude towards those people and also honored them; people whom others would have not even remembered after so many years had passed by. It was the last wedding that I had attended, but it was the first time that I was educated by God through a practical presentation, for which I feel grateful and blessed.

**By Vizzmaya Jalal**

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