

Poetry Series

**babitha marina justin**  
**- poems -**

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# A New Beginning

morning  
filters  
through  
the door  
ajar.  
you too,  
came in  
fresh from  
a bath  
a towel  
wrapped  
around  
your waist.  
leaving  
the nightmares  
of  
yesterday  
behind you!

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# Chikram: The Insane Wanderer

Chikram

the one who sounds the drums  
in the ripples of rivulets,  
wanderer,  
walking the streets insane,  
untrodden paths  
haunting the dark sinews of night  
daring the formless, headless sprites.  
he hides in the bushes near my house.  
in his mutterings  
he spells my distortions  
my tangled thoughts  
begging admittance  
to his own mirrored-self  
he bangs at my door.

once, I saw him grab  
his crotch, his intense  
glare scattered  
women in fright  
with a few vulgar jerks  
at the fleeing humanity  
he guffawed like a king  
and walked the roads alone  
searching his groins  
muttering outrageous  
secrets to his self

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# Detritus On The Swirl

a star dies quietly  
somewhere in the darkness  
Sans supernova.  
can you see that?

my small world  
my piece of sky  
my sand stamped on paper  
measured with chains  
my protons in  
the gaseous brew  
of expansion...  
I cling on  
to my boundaries  
my moralities, my miniscule  
worth space in the  
face of immensity  
that we dare not fathom.

Big Bang is God!  
only MATTER matters  
helium, hydrogen  
and gravitation  
in a split second  
that holds me to my narrow feet  
my world firm on the ground.

Dont I know, Im  
detritus on the swirl  
in the never ending  
face of enormity?

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# Epiphanies In The Train, Train(Ed?) Truths?

yawns  
aching hearts  
incessant  
droll of chaiwallahs  
puddles in paddy fields  
echo the sky  
shadows on still-water.  
etch and wash  
on nature's canvas

I live a surreal dream  
In the moving train.

our silence  
discomfort  
buried deep  
in the books we read  
'dangling conversation'...  
landscapes pass  
unscanned from  
the window sill  
mangled men  
line up for a coin or two  
eunuchs cat walked in pairs  
as men scrambled  
to their dens  
and train closets.

you kept your  
eyes away from me  
I tried to read  
with mine  
glued on you!

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# For De Sade

we met by chance, didn't we?  
ignorant of our existence  
we lived our lives  
in different worlds  
as man and woman  
white and brown with  
black shadows trailing behind.  
you were a monk  
in your abstinence  
till you indulged your  
excesses  
and killed those  
women with your eyes  
you, whispered to me:  
guilt is a wasted  
emotion young lady  
live your dreams with me

drawn by your wild  
woods, trailing your fragrance  
that maddened my senses  
intense, starry eyed  
my dream was you  
I lived the forbidden  
world, in a universe  
conjured by you and I  
your past and my present  
linked by ethereal words  
whispered by our despairs  
and no one knew  
our secret hideouts  
but just you and me.

from my daze  
I wake up to see me  
merged with you  
you were me  
and I was you  
and in us two worlds

different colors  
met, mated  
and became one.

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# For My Students: Living On The Edge

After Aerosmith

I want to tell them  
that the last oranges of the season  
which sieve into the markets  
are not grown on water  
manure or dust, but on tears.  
even rain has abandoned them!  
winter greens disappear  
slowly - we are nearing the edge-  
of a great canyon fall  
a thousand feet deep, you either  
survive not overstepping or fall  
into the beauty of the gorge  
turn to air, water and earth  
and a lightening blaze  
in our insipid memories.  
I want to tell them  
to stop gazing, day-dreaming  
to snatch a hockey stick  
or a bamboo pole and  
go on breaking the glass panes  
that come their way  
then shatter car windows  
glare at riling men, even  
slap fresh dung on their face.  
I want to tell them  
that rage is beautiful  
violence is marvellous  
it gnaws you from within  
if you are calm.  
I will also tell them  
that my smiling face is death,  
having misplaced rage is adultery and  
being balanced reeks of  
rotten flesh dug out of  
the rocky wedges from the river grave

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## For Pn

I know you died years  
Before I was washed down  
My mothers gullet  
Still I could make you my own  
For a night, may be for days and days  
And cage you to my whims  
When you came pleading for love  
I kept you buried in books  
Which I fished out  
During tedious trips  
crowded counters  
and empty restaurants  
to blend with your effervescence  
my voyeurism pored over  
Your passion and politics  
The strange ways where you  
Watched them copulate and die  
In each others arms,  
the promises and spasms  
that last and die in a minute  
Only you triumphed  
You had the last laugh  
Of the final creator/ killer  
And I had you  
Hardbound and fastened to me  
To tell you that it was you who  
Painted the moon for me  
That shone far away in the sky

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# Howl The Vagabond Blues

A shifting vagabond  
With a back-pack  
A few books  
A toilet bag full of  
Lotions, lipsticks, kohl  
Jeans, cotton tops  
Rolls of lint, faded hues  
Pencils  
Pairs of frayed  
underwear,  
To hold weary  
Fallen youth,  
(Without taste)  
Chipped broken nails  
Charred skin  
Far from being tanned  
A bag full  
Of nonsense  
Confusion and poetry  
Waiting for rain  
A little romance  
(surfing time zones  
strange faces  
stranger loves)  
On railway platforms  
Crowded bus stops  
Luxury of rickshaws  
Burning wallet  
House-hopping  
With a USB drive  
In search of computers  
To retch out  
Intellectual nonsense  
Which surfaces  
On cheap  
One-rupee  
Laser prints.

I am not what I think

A break  
An interlude  
From thinking  
Makes me what I am.  
Human again

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# I Hate The Way You Linger, Get Lost!

look! there are things  
that draw me to you  
the spontaneity and vigor  
your deft moves  
you act with a dart-like ease  
your smile  
and probably the songs  
you break into  
when drunk with my eyes.

at the same time  
there are things that i hate  
in your confidence  
oozing  
to the level of shattering  
the sheet of reticence  
between us  
the same maleness  
under the weight of which  
i act out my feminine  
part-real part-unreal self.  
your silence disturbing  
the crooks and crannies  
of my heart  
your silence that lets loose  
my eloquence  
on things that top  
my petty priority list.  
and I hate the way  
you dominate my thoughts  
and linger  
there with a familiarity  
which you should not have! !

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# I Want To Write A Happy Poem

I want to write a happy poem  
Maybe  
about the pond in the backyard  
still as Walden, changing colour  
with the sun, orange at sunset  
flashes of green-blue all day.  
They say its haunted.  
Once they found a dimwit  
midget's body there, three days  
after he went missing.  
People watched vacant  
unhelpful, wrinkle-snouted  
as his brother dug out  
rotting flesh, the stench  
of blood and brotherhood  
pervades there even now.

Or do I write about  
the playground, a plateau  
on slopes, where I used to  
go for a jog and morning air  
where five men and a child were  
shot dead unceremoniously  
on a calm September morning?  
Or about a student  
shot on the spine  
now confined to the wheels  
reduced to a bag of bones  
a wry smile on our memories?  
He who was young and handsome once?

I can tell you about  
the girls who meet their lovers  
secretly by the graveyard  
to steal a kiss or a touch  
on their wet virgin dreams.  
I have seen their eyes averted  
brooding, when their men  
search for more

in younger, buxom girls.

Or my gay friend  
fresh as a morphed lily  
powdered and rouged  
with a dab of mascara  
who receives threats from men  
over the phone, in dark  
unearthly hours.  
he dares not take his makeup off  
or his effete ways  
he wears them for this world.

Or, finally, do I write about weather?  
The sky shines blue now  
blotched with clouds  
but it was only yesterday  
the cloud burst  
and swept a family away  
down the rocky stream  
never to be found again! !

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## Incest Poem 2. Remembering Roethke

Not once, but  
Many times  
I bore my dad's  
Imprints  
As he laid  
His beefy  
Palms on me  
He would  
Wash them  
Away in  
Moments of  
Remorse.  
They have  
Fossilized  
In my memory  
Caked with  
Tears and hate.  
I remember  
The bolted door  
Papa's waltz  
Branding me  
With lashes,  
the leather-whip  
Drawn from  
His waist  
For my date with  
Five boys at one go.  
He loved me  
too much  
To let me  
Unbridle.  
My be I was  
Too 'dangerous '  
For a girl of  
Twelve! ! !

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## Incest Poem 3. Dad And A Mosquito

Today morning  
I saw a mosquito  
burrow deep into  
my father's arm  
drawing vials full  
of sticky-red- blood  
I fought my impulse  
to swat-it-dead-flat  
black-maroon-smudge  
over bitter-coffee-skin  
preferring our  
hyphenated existence  
I desisted from touch.

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## Incest Poem 4

there was a limp  
a slouch and shivering hands.  
age catching up with  
a man whose youth was  
panting against time.  
i slowed down my steps  
to match his, long back  
i used to trot  
trying to catch up  
with my father.  
i slowed down,  
my fading youth  
irked by its own mirror image  
my blood slowing down  
to match his; despite  
differences.  
my eyes looked down  
to a greying man  
the shadow which was  
strong and powerful once.  
he who was tall once  
now shrunk down  
to his vital essences.  
I...slowed... down....

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# Incest Poem: 1

For them

My brother was political  
and I was personal,  
Science was his passion,  
He was measured and sharp.  
Neck-deep in disorder, and uncertain art  
I was reckless and vague.  
'Mindless' my dad thought aloud.

Today

When I speak on political correctness passionately,  
My brother charms us with his toothy laugh  
and declares most Muslims are Jihadis.  
While I write papers on body and gaze  
He believes dress codes for women  
would do them oodles of good  
and save their species from violation.  
It taints his honor still  
when I, a thirty-year-old, get eve teased.  
He believes my unwieldy flesh is to blame  
(My droopy breasts and withered butts! !  
He, a pulmonologist, prescribes a tread-mill walk,  
"Have to lose 200 cal as a rule! "  
he jogs in his posh three-bed room flat every day)  
He loves being in the main stream,  
dreams of practicing abroad someday,  
pities me who is trapped in a jungle lair  
fit only for occasional male escapades.  
He tells me how to save money,  
how to live a healthy life,  
spirals of smoke rings fogging my mind,  
the broken bottles in my backyard,  
synaesthetic memories of reefers  
testify to my self abuse.  
He lectures me on spirituality  
knowing little  
that I believe in nothing,  
and I am ...  
but guilt and grime

and a bundle of nerves  
trying to unwind in chaotic poetry.

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# Jezebel's Lover

you have lost your innocence  
to say you love me  
love comes with conditions  
for you.

you are scared if love  
will tie you down to me  
or  
uttering this word  
will imprison you  
to the weight of its being.

instead you say  
'come sleep with me' or  
you are good in bed'  
you compliment me  
'a warm bitch'  
'an uninhibited lover'  
expecting me to gloat!

my love,  
love is not your instinct  
its measured in the time  
that you cash out  
in front of the monitor  
or in the steering wheel

you manoeuvre  
coursing traffic jams  
without rage  
or in the twitter of your  
daughter's laughter  
the future that you  
dream for her,  
or in the doe-eyed wife  
with long hair  
who preserves her fidelity  
just for you,  
or in the new home  
you have built with

your artistic hands.

you are complete  
in the small world you  
have spun -  
like a spider  
waiting in his trap.  
when unloved  
you turn to me  
raw blood and flesh  
wildness and nerves  
you tell me its not love  
i smile  
then disappear  
into my cocoon.  
my love  
i think i should tell you  
i survive despite you!

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# Muse In The Hospital

muse in the hospital  
the stench of urine  
mingled with phenyl  
women with children  
swaddled behind, weighed  
down by a range of  
emotional undress:  
howl, puke, drool, tears  
stain little snotty faces.  
I watched with a sling  
plaster-of-Paris ballast  
my cracked left-elbow.

there are moments  
when laughter echoes  
like snuffle and sob  
it curdles your blood  
along the narrow  
vaginal corridors  
of the maternity ward.  
women clabber past  
laden-shadows  
bear the burden  
of their massiveness.  
somewhere, an infant  
bawls in the background  
an ancient midwife  
in a neat modern  
apparel; white skirt  
shiny shoes and a cap,  
removes the bloody-gloves  
glares officiously  
through her glasses  
with her knowing  
expert-frown.

putrid smell of after-birth  
blood mixed with phenyl  
dissolves into the dark

hospital corners  
muffling the screams  
of hurt wombs  
and their losses and gains

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# One Day In The Life Of Madame Marinowitch

Ah! Brave New world

Of centralized air conditions, PPPs, director meetings coated with the soggy taste of biscuits, washed down with tea scalding my tongue.

Endless discussions on syllabus, optics, combustion, spectroscopy, vector spaces

Gobbledegooks

godknowswhatbullshit!

Ringa ringa roses

Pocket full of poses

Husha busha

We all fall down

The violence rhyming right from our childhood in London bridges falling down and Jack breaking his crown and Jill tumbling after, we take it to classrooms, teaching the art of articulation, grooming students like race horses, policing, reining, hoodwinking them to phatic dialogues and other Hypocritical niceties of life

How to smile and smile and be a villain

Then we etch their life on a graph with a curve. With a standard deviation

Hoping not to turn them deviant

Students are the clay

Mould! Mould! Mould!

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# Sea We(Ë/?) Ding

I smelt the sea  
(fish, salt and rut  
under the indigo sky)  
her blue canopy  
shimmered tinsel  
there tiny ships  
cast their mast  
and sailed calm.

I saw  
canoes gleamed green  
sun tongues glinted  
on power boats  
they were far far away.

I heard  
fishermen's shout  
muffled by salt,  
mist and sweat  
swelter in the morning sun  
they dragged their catch,  
sodden weeds  
refuse of waves,  
their termite line  
yelled and sang  
at every heave.

I was not human  
nor a mermaid  
but a whirlpool  
yawning wide  
to steal my life  
and merge  
with the ever  
expanding sea.

then the sea was mine...  
I wed the sea  
like Ophelia

in her calm repose  
filigreed with froth  
dead fish and  
residues of pain.

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## Seasonal Infidelities: After Wcw

after a winter sprig  
of mild mist, moonshine  
and drum beats from  
the heart of the hills;  
a warm gouache of  
autumnal-spring  
heralds in  
whorls of  
red, auburn  
tawny leaves.  
they glide, skate and fall.

those emerald beads  
once clung snug  
onto my bosom  
feel your racing pulse now;  
slashing a horizontal tendon on your wrist  
scoring an unsavory tale of love.  
I smiled, when you looked away,  
these beads have captured  
your pounding veins  
made them mine own.  
pardon me,  
that was without your knowledge.

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# Serenading Pn?

Dear Pablo,

I know you died years before I was washed down my mothers gullet, still I could make you my own for a night, may be for days and days and cage you to my whims.

When you came pleading for love, I kept you buried in books which I fished out during tedious trips, crowded counters and empty restaurants to blend with your effervescence; my voyeurism pored over your passion and politics, the strange alleys where you watched them copulate and die in each others arms, their promises and spasms that last and die in a minute.

Only you triumphed, you had the last laugh of the final creator/ destroyer, though I had you hardbound and fastened to me to tell you that it was you who painted the moon for me.

Yes, Pablo, sentimentalism is my forte  
shall I rant more, almost in your lines?

For instance, I wear for the world  
a pedicured soul  
sometimes I wake up at night  
to find its time to write something  
or nothing at all.  
in unearthly hours  
after drinking life to the lees,  
which often taste of guilt  
and lover's tears,  
night punctures the confidence  
that day dons on you,  
a shattered wine glass you would say.

Was it you who told me  
how life tastes and  
smells of the sweat of the man  
who snores near you,  
who etched pencil strokes of love  
soon to be erased by time?

In fact, there is absolutely no

violence in normalcy  
no pain, no grinding teeth, just  
a stupor that lulls,  
an ignominy that stays like a nag,  
only at times do we tout a single line  
of verse, a dead neonate  
on sleepless,  
endless nights....

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# Star Gazing With You

as a child  
later as an adult  
in the wild hills  
swooping down  
the distant sea  
star-spangled nights  
choked me  
by their  
profusion  
this city, grayed  
by smoke  
smitten by  
festival crackers  
shut its skies  
to me  
till you named  
each star  
their constellation  
their myriad colours  
mysteries...  
with smoke rings  
swiveling up the sky  
I was a star gazer,  
no longer alone

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# To Lao Tzu: An Apology For Being A Traveller

no fixed plans  
no intentions to arrive  
yet, a traveller  
writer of verses  
springing  
from a superficial self  
words  
jerk out in an tongue  
strange to me.  
words paint  
confusions of mind  
no fixed tracks  
paths winding  
into the labyrinths  
of mind's irresolutions  
no pearls of wisdom  
just letters, meaningless  
scored on paper  
living to tell  
the pain of being.

You tell me, my love  
that my eyes wander  
my tongue skirts taunts  
how do I match you?  
your queries  
don't have my answers.  
You echo me!

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# Trainscapes

landscapes  
jog with me  
during my  
long journeys;  
they spread wide  
to the horizon  
some rise up in  
craggy mass  
then fall into  
watery  
declensions  
shuttling the  
frontiers.

a blind singer  
played percussion  
on a concave drum  
tailed by a girl  
in sari tattered,  
torn blouse  
fallen sequins,  
half-worn  
in her sojourn in poverty  
a while ago,  
a chirpy  
young boy  
in an oversized rag,  
moped the foot-printed  
train floor  
on all fours  
his non-stop chatter  
earned him a few smiles  
extra coins  
an overdose of benevolence  
and he left behind  
the ugly grin and stench  
of life  
that lingered over  
deos and sprays.

- waterless loos  
crusts of  
fossilized excreta  
never-ending  
woes of travellers  
eager to get back:  
home/work-

drones wane  
at the glimpse  
of journey's end

(never-ending  
cups  
of sweetened tea  
unshelled  
peanuts  
for 'time pass'  
trinkets,  
smuggled  
Chinese goods)

beggars parade  
in different shapes  
and handicaps  
a puckered blind man  
displayed his stumpy arm  
dangled another  
like a molten pendulum  
he too gained our pity  
appraisals  
a few sorry pennies

the more grotesque  
the more you sell  
another hobbled in  
legs burnt to splinters  
all looked away  
extending blind alms  
I fished out a coin too  
from my empty purse

and I conveniently  
turned my eyes  
away to the  
lure of  
trainscapes

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# Winter Ruins And Ruminations

this winter sheen  
insulated the chill  
golden stalks  
snapped to  
splinters  
with a bristling  
dry crack  
grass blades  
crumbled  
between fingers  
in an impulse.  
A sadistic one.

jasmine scent  
was a memory  
trickling down my veins.  
An intoxicating one.

love was a feeling  
lost in  
rush of blood and lust.  
A cynical one.

I have grown up  
counting my  
ruminations  
lost in sensations?

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# Yesterdays And Todays

yesterday

I woke up with the mist  
of sad mornings  
shrouding my senses  
I leave them behind;  
they are scourged clean  
by the whiplash of your love

Today

I am happy with  
the small pleasures like  
a handful of forest spring,  
the chill of water-lips  
on my face.  
The blanket of fear  
on forest corridors  
strewn with warm  
elephant dung.  
Simsang's emerald  
anklets rippling round my toes

I gazed at the anglers  
paired with their rowers  
on the wharf  
who rowed downstream  
gathering, pleating  
casting three nets  
in tune with the nature's song.  
I have to find a method  
in my madness too.  
I peddle with my pain  
paint them rainbow hues  
offer them on a platter  
as my dreams lost on you.

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# Your Vacuum

my lips touched  
the brim of death  
I almost started  
loving you  
till you snuffed my fire  
with your humanness  
the black holes of your  
self almost sucked me in.

propelled by desire  
resisting your void  
I survived, laughed  
echoing Medusa's ripples  
welling from  
cisterns of pain.  
sorrow sustained me.  
a moment of lightness  
would have torn me  
towards your inner vacuum -  
the terror of love!

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