

Poetry Series

Lalithashree Ganesh

- poems -

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Lalithashree Ganesh()

A Poem For Death 108

You have undone
what is not yet done

Whiffing off bright long candles
innocently shining their light
onto a greying world

Putting them off
before they have melted, with age, experience, purpose and dreams.

The world is getting darker and darker
The flames, they are disappearing
The memories, they are fading
The cries, they are growing faint...
Silent almost

The world is exhausted.
Exhausted all its tears; swimming in a flood of grief.
And yet it cries,
with all its heart
in helpless pain; over and over again.

The people, they ask you to stop your games.
Stop putting these bright beautiful flames out,
and leaving the world
in pitch black.

Oh Death! Respectfully walk away, now.
And let us remain.

Until we melt away,
in our own time...

Goodbye to you.

Lalithashree Ganesh

Free Afghanistan

'I do not know what it feels like
To be held hostage in my homeland

I do not know what it feels like
To be ripped apart from my family

I do not know what it feels like
To live in fear every moment

I do not know what it feels like
To be clothed head to toe. Invisible.

I do not know what it feels like
To have a gun pointed at me

I do not know what it feels like
To not be allowed to study

I do not know what it feels like
To be afraid to step out of my home

I do not know what it feels like
To have nowhere to run to

I do not know what it feels like
To safeguard my loved ones from terrorism

I do not know what it feels like
To bow down to the enemy

I do not know what it feels like
To not speak my truth

I do not know what it feels like
To silence my thoughts, my voice

I do not know what it feels like
To be locked in with a key that doesn't open

I do not know what it feels like
To look away from injustice

I do not know what it feels like
To not paint, write, sing or dance at my will

I do not know what it feels like
To be homeless

I do not know what it feels like
To have no one to turn to

I do not know what it feels like
For you'

If that's why you turn away
From Afghanistan,
From oppressed parts of the world
Soaked in suffering
Immersed in pain
Plagued by injustice
Silenced by weapons...

Removed from your reality,
Far from your truth...

Find your heart.
Find your soul.
Find your voice.
Find your conscience.

And then speak up.
For everyone
whose voices
are unheard.

You don't always have to know
What it feels like....
To help humanity.

You only need
to wake up!

Lalithashree Ganesh

A New Day

Slowly
the grey clouds part
and disintegrate,
disappearing into ether.

The lead weight
of its droplets,
no longer there
to bear.

The darkness
no longer poses
a threat.

The sun is shining brightly
the sky is clear blue
there is a bird
flying above,
up high.
Saying, a new day has come,
and it is here
just for you, my dear
it is here now.

Do not fear.

Lalithashree Ganesh

No Entry, No Exit

You can't come in.

Not today
Not tomorrow
Not for twenty one days,
Perhaps more.

You can't go out -
No.

You're afraid.
You're afraid you'll forget how the green grass smells
How the sky changes colours
How the dogs run in packs
How the river gushes to the sea
How the raindrops fall on your cheek
How your neighbours look...

You hide.

You hide
From the invisible.
No, not a figment of your imagination,
But the truth.

You hide.

From a truth that can kill you.
Invisible. Fatal. Ruthless.
With an army entire,
Imprisoning the world
With its infectious smile.
Entering your life
As you struggle to leave.
There's nowhere to run
There's nothing to hold.
Nothing but hope.

And now,

All we have
Is this moment.

All we have
Is each other
To stay afloat
Until the storm ceases
Until we reach the shore.

That's when we know,
With our feet on the ground
And a great big smile,
That peace is here

With open arms.

Lalithashree Ganesh

Limbo

Stuck in time,
Fixed to uncertainty
They walk together
Step by step, breath by breath
Nothing to quench their thirst upon
Not a morsel to touch their tongues.

They come together
As one
'Where do we go? ' they ask
The voice on the microphone
Makes no promises
The canes leave marks
On their tired bodies
Sapping their souls and grasping their faith.

Neither here nor there
Everywhere and nowhere
Just another statistic, nothing more
No address, no bank account
Nothing to their name

And you spray them with disinfectant
Like you do to insects

Confused. Fearful. Hungry.

They lie down
In the street,
on the grass in the parks

Waiting

Waiting

Waiting

Limbo.
Limbo in the body entire.

The sun goes down slowly
They hear loud rumbling growing

What's all that noise?
Hunger hunger hunger...

Limbo.
Nowhere to run

Limbo.
Nothing to reach for

Limbo.
Is anyone coming for us

Limbo.
Don't take forever

Limbo.

Lalithashree Ganesh

Where's My Nose?

Rainy evening sky
The cat purrs lazily
on the black stone stair
Its tail moving in synchrony
to the strumming ukelele
In my sister's hands

I watch. I listen. I smile.

In my room
It's time for a tealight candle
The match strikes. Let there be light!
Drop by drop
The geranium oil falls into the water
The diffuser is ready to do its duty

I wait. I inhale.

Once again.

Deeply.

I sniff.

Once again.

I apply the oil on my pulse points.

Nothing. Nope.

No smell.

Only the memory
of the scent. Now fading.

Geranium. My Geranium. When will I meet you again, I wonder.

I can wait. It's not that hard. Is it?

Tea tree? No smell.
Cypress? Nope.
Citronella? Nothing.
Myrrh? No.
Clove? Nah.
Lavender? Absconding.
Vanilla? Where are you?
Chamomile? Vanished.

I run into the kitchen.
Twist the lids.

Lemon pickle, coffee, tea, cinnamon, nutmeg, garam masala, kefir, garlic, onions
and more.

Weird.

No smell.
Nothing.

Super wierd.

Not an iota of scent. Nope.

Time to get tested, I think to myself.

Tomorrow. Tomorrow. Tomorrow.

For now. Be at peace. Breathe. Let go.

So?

Where's my nose?
I don't seem to know for now.

Perhaps, just perhaps,
It's on an impromptu vacation! :)

Lalithashree Ganesh

Quicksand

The storm came
Silently. Tiptoeing.

We were singing in the rain

The storm grew stronger
Silently. Brewing.

We were humming in the wind

The storm grew wilder
More silently.

We were whispering in the sun

The storm grew darker
Ever more silently.

We shut our mouths.

We
almost
shut
...
our
breath.

The storm laughed roaringly
Devouring, thundering. Conscienceless. Heartless. Reckless.

Striking us down with thunderbolts
Pinning us to the ground.

Tearing our lungs. Apart.
Tearing us. Apart.
Shutting us up.

Shaking us up like a fizzy bottle.
Over and all over again.

Our bread. All rationed.
Our tears. All around.
Flooding us with fear.

Injecting us with uncertainty.

Parallel lines emerged. Merging.

A collective kindness
Birthed...
Fighting against the storm

Waving goodbye. Asking it to leave. For good.

Yet. It isn't enough.
Here we are.
Now.
Sinking...

Quicksand.

Quicksand everywhere.

Closing in. Silently.

She is sinking
And we won't let her. No.

NO.

NO.

Quicksand.

We're pulling each other out...

Lalithashree Ganesh

Unbroken

Today I am set free.

The cage is broken
by the truth

Today I breathe
Into my bones
Into my nerves
Into my heart

I hold my soul close
So tenderly
So dearly
Without fear
In a warm embrace

Today I smile
With my eyes
Sparkling like the sun on the river

Today I embrace

New beginnings
Old friendships
Dreams, path, spirit and purpose

Today I feel

Today I release

Today I fly

Today I laugh

Today I dance

Today I sing

Today I am free.

Lalithashree Ganesh

Healing

Hills and valleys
Shadows and storms
Wounding and healing
The light is in being.

From trauma to grounding
From assuming to accepting
From fear to rootedness
From ego to clarity
From darkness to blossoming
From pain to growth
From grief to joy
From them to us
From abandonment to love
From one to all
And everything in between.

Here we are
Being born again,
As ourselves.
Here we are,
Healing.

Lalithashree Ganesh

Poverty Is A White Prison

Poverty is a white prison,
With red floors
Strewn with bones
and dry dust.

No stomach
to swallow the penniless days,
No pity
If you lay in a pit
Only tears,
insipid tears
that quench no thirst.

Where's the burning candle?
Did it melt away,
before time?
Leaving no sight of tomorrow
or today.

Where are you
and where am I?
We stand,
Divided
by a pretty banknote
I can never reach.

And still, I wait.

I wait.
For the white walls to tear down
as I wash them in blood
and let them drain
away -
from thought
from reality
from existing.

I wait.

I wait.

I look.

Doubtfully, I drink.

Barely breathing -

transparent, unseen, unwanted,

as I reach out

for the dying candle.

Will there be light again?

I ask

Lalithashree Ganesh

Farewell

FAREWELL

Farewell is just a word
But,
For you and for me, it is more

It is a word, Loaded like a gun
With emotion, feeling,

Sorrow with a tear
Anticipation and fear...

Of letting go
Of leaving
A comfort zone,
A promising hand,
A shoulder to cry on,
Mouths to cheer,
Drinks to share,
Tea juice or beer

Why say Goodbye? ? ?
This life is
To meet and to part
And meet and part
And
To meet again

Beaming smiles with teary eyes
Surprise or emotionless...

One last Photograph
One last Dance
One last Memory

To hold, to keep, to guard, to bring back from the Past

Farewell Farewell

Only to meet again

Lalithashree Ganesh

The Truth Must Be Heard - In Memory Of Gauri Lankesh

Hush now, hush.

'But -'

Sshhhhhhhh

'Never say too much, my dear.

Never say too much.'

'But -'

Sshhhhhhhh

'Let the real thoughts pass, my friend.

Some things are better left unsaid, ' he said.

'But -'

'No, no, no, no. NO.

Silence is golden, sister,

Don't you know?

So keep quiet, stay unheard.

Won't you? '

'But -'

Sshhhhh!

'Come on, now. Plaster his mouth, delete her thoughts,
silence his voice.

Stitch up all truths

and burn them into ash and ether.'

'But -'

'SILENCE! Speak not

for others. Speak not

for yourself... Hold that truth by the neck,

real tight; and bury it deep.
Till it gets too rotten
to unearth
after almost being erased...
from collective memory.'

'But -'

Ssshhhhhh!

'Kill the truth.
Kill the lone voice.
Bullet the brave.
Burn the righteous.'

'But -'

'Ssshhhhh citizens! We urge you
to mandatorily shut your mouths.
Or get ready for the quiet grave,
so everything you are and everything you feel,
can cease to be.'

'BUT! We beg to differ. We say, that's enough now.
We've had enough
of You, you, and You!
You, the thief of freedom and courage,
are no democracy.
You! Are the demon
against light,
against change,
against LOVE,
and truth.

We, the citizens, urge you
to stop trying
to control our thoughts, and cut our tongues.

We won't stitch up our mouths.
NO, we won't.
We will no longer stifle our thoughts,
or suppress our feelings.

NO, we won't.
We will not listen
to the words of petty-minded fools.
NO Sir, we won't.
We will not deny,
the many truths that are aching
to be heard.
We will all, rise up,
against every tide
and every bad guy.
We will speak and write
the truth.

For ourselves
For others
For the those who are afraid.

We will not live in boxes of silence
and cages of oppression.
Not for the government,
not for the criminals.
We will speak our truths...

For it is only fear,
that can stoop so low
and throw bullets,
into the heart of truth.'

~

Lalithashree Ganesh

Make Friends

Make friends, not enemies
Make love, not war
Make peace, not rage

Make friends, today!

Don't just make friends.
Make colourful friends,
Mix and mingle
walk and talk
cook and eat.

Make a friend, look around!

You can't buy friendship.
Friendship is made,
with trust and love,
and care.

Make friends, one of every colour!

Life has its sunny days
and its rainy evenings,
but your friend there
is the rainbow that's beside you.

Make friends, one of every religion!

Friends aren't to be judged
Friends aren't to be gossiped about
Friends aren't to be misused
Friends aren't to be ignored.

Make friends, one of every flag - black and white, blue and red, green and yellow, black and orange!

Friends are laughter,
bearers of stories,
sharers of warmth

and smiles.
Friends are your good times,
your shoulder to cry on.
Friends are your goldmine,
and your diamond,
and platinum box of jewels.
Friends are
your lifeline,
till your time runs away.

Make friends, down the street, in the bus, on the train, at the cafe, in the
classroom, at the office, in the dance class!

Friends are the only ones
always around.
At your home, and in your heart.
Age doesn't age them,
nor does time.
Friends remain just the same
although, they change from time to time.

Good friends can be hard to find, yes!
But when hearts connect,
there's no turning back!
Two feet become four become six...
you dance together, two left feet
or six.

So make friends, today.
Turn around and say, 'How about we meet again! '

~

Lalithashree Ganesh

Save Kabul

Tears and blood, mixed.

Clueless, shell-shocked, they move...
toward nothingness.

Toward a frail ray of hope...

nobody thought much
about the Kabuliwallah's heart.

nobody knew what he lost,
for no fault of his own.

There is no justice,
in a world controlled by fools.
only a fight exists,
ignited by emotion, loss, death

...brewing like a storm
and striking like frightening lightning!
A zil-zilla in the skies, carried to the earth,
a dance of destruction without a cause,
a pain so numb to feel anymore.

The questions have dried up
the tears have lost their salt.
The hearts have stopped smiling
the words and promises, they are all empty.

The war is a weed we do not need.
May the wars die
and end the fights fought without a thought.

Tell me, why do you call for martyrs
to lay down their lives,
to water their blood
to nourish your selfish dreams.

Why spill tears and tear apart the beating heart

into peril,
for a motive without love?

We don't need no war.
We don't need no hate.
We don't need no bullets and no bombs.

All we need is love.
All we need is brotherhood.
All we need is compassion,
and a heart to empathize
and understand.

O people of the world!
Let our voices be heard, firm and clear.
Let our voices be strong enough, gentle enough,
to vacuum clean the black from their hearts.
Let us not endure
the wrong any more.

The time is short.
Let us help each other,
before the world becomes a heartless pile
of rubble.

~

Lalithashree Ganesh

That's All There Is, My Friend

Their tattered souls
scream in agony.
The wrongs they performed,
are out
in the open -
dissected, scrutinized,
hidden no more
from existence.

There is no way
to undo,
what has already
passed.
they say, 'break those walls, fellas,
break those walls
and see eye-to-eye and heart-to-heart.
Shake a hand,
and share a hug.'

Fix their tattered souls
with LOVE.
With all the love you have -
and go on,
on your way...
gathering goodness
in your pockets.

That's all there is, my friend.
That's all there is, to know.
And that's all there is, to do.

~

Lalithashree Ganesh

Harvests Of Rain

Little portions of land
divided together,
One for you
One for me
And one each for the rest of the world.
Under sunset skies,
the harvest is shared.
In bags and bowls,
and home stores..
we grow, we tend
we (may) spray a little pesticide.
we grow, we take, we give.
we eat
all the harvests of the rain.
~

Lalithashree Ganesh

The Whistle ~

'Phee ee! '
you hear,
as you walk
with your mother
on the roadside
after dinner at a restaurant.

Hungry, curious eyes
staring at you.

You had a long day,
But
you walk back.
And stand.
Face to face
asking
(in the local language)
the two idle rickshaw drivers,
'Why did you whistle at me? '

Waiting for an answer,
You see their faces fall
into their smartphones.
Lost. Speechless.

You wait,
a few seconds more.
No reaction.

Mother, protective
as always,
storms to the two men,
Angry. Questioning.

Afraid and guilty, they turn away
saying, 'We were whistling...
at something else...'

You give them a hard stare

with raised eyebrows,
and brush it aside
with a sad laugh.

The traffic policeman
In the background
Is occupied,
with other matters
on his smartphone.

The everyday fight,
Is yours alone.

~

Lalithashree Ganesh

No Home For More Shoes

rickety boats, rocky paths
tired bodies
lost feet, looking
for homes
and a hearty meal...

who are 'they'
where do 'they' come from
wither do 'they' wander
where will 'they' go

bruised.
hungry.
HURT.

with half a ray
of hope
they surrender

and flow
like a river,
until
they find,
the ocean

'who are they
wither do they wander, do you ask? '

'Refugee, refugee, refugee, that's what they're called.'
'Freedom, freedom, freedom, that's what they long for.'

Auden knew. Eliot knew.
The Dalai Lama knew.

And now,
we all
know.

But then, my friend,

we are a tad too busy
to pay attention

'Refugee? ? ? Perhaps I've heard that word before', he said.
'What's that? ', she said.

Lalithashree Ganesh

Morning Conversations With A Rickshaw Driver

The morning begins
with conversations,
sparked
by potholed roads,
and ambulances
sirening by.

The wheels
they go rolling...
amid hurried faces,
of men chewing paan
and women buried
in smartphones.

The conversation,
it continues...
metamorphosing ~
into stories.
of life,
of death,
of poverty,
of drunkenness.

And,
somewhere in between narrations
interspersed with curses,
the conversation
shapes
into chapters great
and small.
Stories unfathomable -
More twists,
More turns.
Until the pull
of a brake
and the screech
of the wheels.
We halt. Standstill.

Destination. Arrived.
Mission. Accomplished.

It's time
to say thanks
to each other,
for the great morning sharing
of words
and experiences...
Jolting. Enriching. Unimaginable.

Which
I tell him
would be best inked,
in a book.
In a language
he knows best.
So that the curses
remain raw,
and the stories remain honest.

~

Lalithashree Ganesh

Wind Blown

Roar, roar, uproar
the wind ROARED
above
and beyond.

Brrr, Grrr, Sweep and Slide,
Razed
to the ground.

Scattered wheat, broken boats.

Storms, hurricanes, cyclones...
Take away,
what we grow, what we fish.

We are wind blown. Yes.
We are the changemakers,
altering the weather.
From our greed,
for more
and more
and MORE.

We are the new-age revolutionaries
who consume
and consume
and CONSUME.

We are the ones,
Killing
Slowly
Our Mother Earth.

We are the greenhouse gases.
We are the cyclones and the volcanoes.
We are the ultraviolet and the storms.
We are the drought.
We are the Wind Blown.

~

Lalithashree Ganesh

When I Write

When I write
I place the world
Inside my pocket
And let the pen decide,
What arises
From wet blue ink.

When I write
There are no walls.
Only the Truth
Remains,
With memories
Palimpsest like pressed flowers
In an old dictionary.

When I write
How I enjoy
The delightful Silence
And the stillness...
While the World
Is asleep,
Inside my pocket.

Lalithashree Ganesh

Burning The Midnight Oil

We burn
like melting ice
on a coal fire.

Is not April
the cruellest month of all?
(echoing Eliot)
To burn us 'Cool Dudes'
like butter
on a hot pan ~

While you work
Like a bee,
And then like an ant.
When someone suddenly turns on the AC
and you turn into Arctic ice-cream sizzle.

Yet,
You know you had a good day.
Despite all the odds,
and Ends.
And,

You know that tomorrow,
There will be a greater test
for you to face.
To challenge you
and to push you harder,
and closer,
towards one of your most important goals.

So remember now, to keep your spirit,
Your smile.
Your soul,
and your heart too.

And to stay awake tonight,
Burning the midnight oil...
For today's work

is tomorrow's bread.

~

Lalithashree Ganesh

The Polar Bear Who Loved Strawberries

She was just a baby,
when
He found Her...
perhaps
it was Her smile
that kept Him alive,
through the freeze...

when everything got warmer,
playing and running...
on icy sheets... forgetting time -
SKID...CATCH...WET

Time glided by -
Unknowingly.

as They walked,
toward the brown earth.

away from the white, blue cold...
into strawberry country,
where She ran
into sweet colour,
for the very first time...

among red, green and blue
Drenched
in a strawberry dream - for real...

munching deep red fruits,
with Her happy Friend.

When suddenly, a voice was heard
Deep within...
'Time to come back home, Baby Polar...'

Baby Polar bid adieu...
to the man She saved.

and walked back home,
with jars full of sweet surprise
for Her Mamma and Pa.

~

Lalithashree Ganesh

The Highwaywoman

The highwaywoman came riding
Riding, riding
Upon her black bike
From far, far, far away.

Across pothole-filled roads,
onto claustrophobic flyovers
and speedy freeways.

Pausing at signals
(cussing at buses)
Braking. At horizontal commuters.

And going. Beep, beep-
BEEEEEP

The highwaywoman comes riding
Riding, riding
Upon her trusty black bike.
No highway too difficult to surpass.
No road too smooth to skid upon.

The highwaywoman comes riding
Riding, riding
Now. Watch out.
For her speedy entails.

Beep. Beep.

Lalithashree Ganesh

Soup Treatment

A certain place
With a certain order
Went all haywire
when the weather changed.
The orderly people
became disorderly,
when the sneezes refused to cease
when the temperature refused to reduce
when the aches and pains,
knuckles and joints
gave a hassle.

But then, a saviour appeared
with confidence, and a promise
too cure them all
of their ills.

He examined them
from head to toe
each to each
and prescribed
for a month,
the very same thing
to every being
~ S.O.U.P.
Vegetable Soup -
for every meal of every day.

The disorderly people
jumped with joy
and happily filled their saviour's pockets
with all that they had.

Two months have passed.

The disorderly people
are more chaotic and ill
than ever.
Their saviour,

has made his disappearing act -
with his pockets full
of his heart's desire.

Lalithashree Ganesh

Lizards, Police And Laughter

Two Lizards fell
from a tired ceiling
after a warm sunny chase

the inspector
was writing
two others
were talking
we were seated
all around
when they suddenly Fell.

And i cracked up
in laughter
while all eyes turned. looked at me
and laughter followed
serious faces became smiley
and everyone laughed for those few moments
forgetting their problems
forgetting. and laughing

i thank those lizards
for falling. on important police paper

Lalithashree Ganesh

Samosa

A fried triangle
Stuffed with potato,
Mostly
Steals the hearts of plenty
Of people
Dipping it in ketchup or date and mint sauce,
In tiny rooms and mansions of space
In trains and planes and small lanes,
On rainy evenings and sunny mornings.
Humble it is,
As it stares you in the face

Saying 'Why do you delay?
Eat me quick, before he attacks you
And tears me away from your hand.'
There is always time to savour it
The fried triangle, when eaten with chai,
Brings together a universe, and lights up taste buds
Filling an empty stomach with a happy smile.
I wonder,
Would you have eaten it if it was not triangle?

Lalithashree Ganesh

Evening At The Lake

The weather is dry and warm,
On the street, there are dry fruits from Kabul
And Pakistani pomegranates, ruby red.

A pearl-like shine from the dew on the jasmine,
The tulsi leaves dance; to the sway of branches.
Pushy wind. Dry.
A sense of freshness from the crisp sunset,

The most orange orange
Reflections in the lake,
The snake-bird watches,
As we walk toward her; away she flies

Above the lake. Ninety degrees.
The pied kingfisher plunges; beak first; straight down!
The sun is setting.
Birds fly to their homes

We walk back; satisfied :)

Lalithashree Ganesh

The Sun

She is going, going
Going into the pink blush of the Earth
The peacock waits
Looks
And away she flies...

All is pink in a patch of blue

Lalithashree Ganesh

On Poetry

Let it flow from your veins
As blood
As wine from berries
As strength from a Mother
As sparkling ocean currents
As white energy from afar
As a love far yet near
Let it flow
Into the white sheet
Of paper in Ink

Lalithashree Ganesh