

RHAPSODY

By Lopa Banerjee

Every single day, I come back to your tiny miracle of chocolate dreams. I come back, to the softness of your misty sleep. You are still there, even as I breathe my coarse life amid stone, soil and sand. You float on the dreams of a silvery stream in Wonderland. The stream stares at me. I feel a candy-coated bliss as I embrace those dreams, spun with love and open air. I kiss the beauty of your liquid sounds, your lifting smiles. I kiss while I kneel at your tiny, curled up feet. I seek within your creases and curls, the fragrance and melodies of an ordinary love. I drink this love in whispers and living lullabies. Your lullabies have a tranquil light. The light shines upon the jagged edge where human flesh, blood and nerves face each other in a twisted, buckled mess. Your first screams and cries shine in this light of the velvet sun as I lie with you here, rocking you like Grandma's old, wooden rocking chair. Here I rock you with all my might and grace. I rock you while you twist and curl up, shivering, hungry, buoyant and surrendering. I rock you all the while, until I claim your body within mine. I rock you while you become the Ferris wheel of bursting glow, hunger and helplessness.

"You've got to understand pain when you become a mother," I've heard my mother say. "It is pain that brings love, humility and greater understanding of what human life truly is", she would add. To this, she would often intersperse some Sanskrit sloka's, and the knowledge of all this would be far more overpowering than I could handle. All my life, I've loved to create. I have loved being a girl with a thought, a beating heart that fostered ideas, a notebook held tight, and a pen that scribbled everywhere. Creation back then was a strange concoction of shapes that I

found, pictures that I framed in my mind, smiles that I crafted, words that I wrote. Creation was not thought of, back then, as a biological act of the body, the being and the senses. Creation was a consummation of thoughts, voices in my head, scenes locked in my eyes spinning off reality.

The making of your hands:

The paper boat that my little fingers strained to make while I was a young child floated on the muddy waters of the mossy little creek at the back of our house. It floated with a promise of love woven with a child's inarticulate hands at that little moment of her silly rejoicing. There was this promise of love and surrender even as I drew silly little shapes, objects and faces in white pages marked with lines. There was this promise of love and surrendering to the bounty of sweet nothings that my hands were producing. My hands were producing words, my hands were multiplying words. Words were wedded to words and bore words as I slipped into the creased white linen of my bed, with my notebook held to my breast. In my mind, I was far beyond the laughs and crackling noises, the ring of door bells and the lingering fights surrounding me, all of which suddenly lured me into thoughts of many faces, words and meanings. Words wedded to words and bearing words shaped the laughs and grins, the touch of hands and the fire that raced, as the days turned into nights. I was my own prisoner caught in this cage of love and surrender as my hands formed clusters and shapes. I have been in love with these moments of restlessness and release as these clusters have formed a pattern called words. I watched this written world of prose and verse, as with my hands, my body, I absorbed these nuances of creation.

Words and rhetoric have come to me in their own truth and beauty, in their gracious movements of rhapsody. Words upon my soul have bound me in promise, sealed my breath, echoed in the winds, danced to the rhythms and beats of the ocean of this life, standing by the wet sands of eternity.

Words have breathed in my hands. They have been as real as love struck at first sight, as the intoxication of a first kiss. Within words, I have sought the flame of rebellion. With words framed by weary hands, I have walked in life—crumbling, decaying and scattered in dust. My hands have often sensed the skeleton of their growth—floating around quivering shadows of dust and lies. In my mind, I roam around this illustration of birth, my hands soaking in the blood, phlegm and chill of the newborn words.

The making of your being:

“Deepajyothi parabrahma/Deepajyothi janardana/Deepo me hara tu paapam/Deepa jyotir namastute” (Sanskrit sloka for lighting lamp: “I fold my hands before the Lord, the maintainer of this creation, in the form of this light. I adore this light, which destroys all the pains from my omissions and commissions.”)

In the opaque stillness of the hospital room, I reach out for my hands. I reach out for them, quivering and straining with the numbing pain of my intra-venous medications. My hands are now holding the fruit of my labor of twenty sickening hours. My hands are now holding my offspring of love. My hands are now grabbing the joy of love and surrendering that grows with this illustration of birth. In this moment, as you melt in my arms, I understand the calling of my

senses and being. I understand the calling of my flesh and bones. I understand how the offspring comes to the mother, a petal bloom in glory, lust and greed of shivering nights. For nine months, my heart has pumped blood for you to wrap you around me. You have grown inside me as you have grown inside mothers, walking their lives on tattered soil and blackened streets. You have grown inside me, radiant and healthy, as they have grown inside the mal-nourished bodies of their mothers—cold, parched, starving infants. Together, all of us today wake in this whispered world of crimson blood, umbilical cords and the flickering flame of infant shrieks.

The hands that have created words and artistry, the vocal chords that have created songs, the brain that has composed the mosaic of sights, sounds and thoughts bow down to this ordinary scene of human love and surrendering.

Bio

Lopa Banerjee is a writer, editor and translator, currently based in Dallas, USA. She is the co-editor of 'Defiant Dreams: Tales of Everyday Divas', a collection of inspiring, women-centric stories published in collaboration with Incredible Women of India and Readomania. Her unpublished memoir *Thwarted Escape* has been First Place Category Winner at the Journey Awards 2014 hosted by Chanticleer Reviews and Media LLC. She is also an editor of *Learning and Creativity* e-zine.

Her poetry, stories and essays have appeared at literary journals and anthologies both in India and the US, including *About Place Journal*, *Words, Pauses, Noises*, *Camel Saloon*, *River Poets' Journal*, *Cafe Dissensus Everyday*, *Spark Magazine*, *Readomania*, *Incredible Women of India*, 'Northeast Review', 'Indian Review'. She has also contributed her poetry for the recent publications, *The Significant Anthology*, *Kaafiyana*, *Umbilical Chords: An Anthology on Parents*

Remembered, and Resonating Strings: Leher Leher Iktara. Her English translation of Rabindranath Tagore's novella *The Broken Home* has been serially published at *Café Dissensus*. She has received the Critics' Award at Destiny Poets International Community of Poets, UK and also a Certificate of Merit as part of the Reuel International Prize 2015 for Writing and Literature.