

*LOVE UNDER THE TAMARIND TREE*

**By Dr. SantoshBakaya**

This is the story of my school times  
When I got hooked not on drugs, but on rhymes.  
My thoughts in the form of poetry unfurled  
Around me, metaphors, and similes uncurled.  
My head buzzed, busy like the busiest bee  
Scribbling love notes under the school tamarind tree.  
When naively , my heart , for him on paper I poured  
With poetic superiority my dream boy roared.  
When my sublime feelings ran pellmell  
Alas , the brute called it a pathetic doggerel.  
Fuming and frothing, he reprimanded me  
Mocking me, as I sat hunched under the tamarind tree.  
"Of juvenile thoughts this is a fusion  
Nothing but delusion, crass confusion."  
Smugly opined the rhymester seventeen year old  
I shuddered , breaking out in sweat cold .  
With his verdict , I wanted to disagree  
But kept mum, under the shade of the tamarind tree.

In a voice laced with sullen savagery  
He critiqued the heartfelt imagery  
To feel so nervous and weak kneed  
Was a sentiment hackneyed  
He opined with malicious glee  
Would my dream 'dry like a raisin' under the tamarind tree?  
He rolled his vain eyes upwards  
And minced absolutely no words  
"Someone killed the rhythm in your poetry  
Who will unravel this unique murder mystery?".  
He remarked , making mincemeat of the poetic plea  
Of the sixteen year old under the tamarind tree.  
My feelings ah, so genuine  
To him smacked of saccharine  
"The metaphor could be better",  
He said returning the letter .  
No bending down on one knee  
Before the girl who sat under the tamarind tree.  
He had nothing but contempt for my love note  
"You are no good", he said, I shamefacedly quote .

A nincompoop that I was, pathetically meek  
I was sure his remark was tongue in cheek.  
He felt strangulated , though my verse was free.  
My wounds I licked under the tamarind tree.  
When thus, in a voice terse, he cursed my verse  
In wrath my lips I did purse  
Throwing away the mushy poetic stuff  
Wiping a silent tear with my shirt cuff.  
He was bloated with poetic pride, you see  
With lachrymose wrath, I burst under the tamarind tree.  
My feelings had been so ruthlessly derided  
Never again, to love a poet , I decided  
Never again would a rhymester stir  
Any imagery, simile or metaphor  
In a teenager writing love notes under the tamarind tree.

***WARD NUMBER FOUR***

Till that night of November 27, nineteen seventy three

She was like the free bird in the tree

Bright eyes rippling with reams and reams

Of ambitions and dreams

Alas, a gruesome act sent her to the bed in ward number four.

She, who wanted to be a mother, a wife

Was brutalized at the very cusp of a promising life

Dreams cut short by a dog's leash

Amputating every blossoming wish

Dreamless, she now lay in her bed of ward number four.

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Attended to by nurses who were a sliver bright

In her life which had morphed into a dreary night

While the sun outside was warm

She was dull and pathetic her form

In that bed of ward number four.

For forty two years by death stalked

She had limbs but never walked

Eyes which did not see, ears which did not hear

Her loved ones moved on, but she stayed on

In that bed in ward number four.

In the window, sunbeams played hide and seek  
Cheated of life and love, she grew progressively weak  
Unappreciative of the love games  
Of the jungle babblers who canoodled in the trees  
As she curled in that bed of ward number four.

Generations of nurses came and went  
Talking and feeding one condemned to a living death  
Hope in their bosom and prayer on their lips  
Singing away to one whose heart beat  
But never felt, in that bed of ward number four.

In silence hushed  
They walked past the woman cruelly crushed  
Around her, heated arguments raged  
While she lay caged  
Brain dead, in that bed of ward number four

With atrophying bones and wasting muscles.

Intellectuals locked horns and had verbal tussles

About an iconic symbol who breathed

Was fed, and cared for with compassion

But lay comatose in the bed of ward number four.

Every dawn the windows were sun tinted

But soon she was like a picture sepia tinted

Forgotten and patina covered

Around her solicitous nurses hovered

As she lay in that bed of ward number four.

They say that on May 18, 2015, she breathed her last

But had she not died forty two years back

On that horrific night?

Was it not her merely her vegetative body

That lay on that bed in ward number four?

The sun has risen on another day, the storms still rage

The battered bird has limped out of the cage

They split hairs over mercy killing

Unperturbed, the birds continue trilling

Outside ward number four.

FOOTNOTE :-

( ArunaShaunbaug's promising life and career as a nurse was cut short at age 25, on 27 November 1973, when she was at the receiving end of a brutal attack which resulted in her slipping in a PERMANENT VEGETATIVE STATE . As she lay comatose in bed, a heated debate raged around her, regarding mercy killing. She breathed her last on 18 MAY 2015. The debate still rages on.)

***LOVE NEVER DIES***

The sky overhead throbbed and pulsed with starlight

When the evening turned into a scintillating night

Dropping streaming threads of gold into the water

As the surroundings resounded with the laughter

Of the twenty year old love-drenched couple.

The boy dreamy eyed, the girl svelte and supple

Stars twinkled through the veil of clouds torn

She pranced, now and then tripping on a stone

Waltzing, pirouetting, traipsing, gamboling

The river went on babbling and rambling  
Every tree vibrating with their love notes  
Their love songs floating in tiny paper boats.  
Hey, what unwelcome sound was that?  
Piercing the night with a rat a tat a tat?  
The dance stopped, sadly, the song fell silent  
The atmosphere suddenly became violent.  
Two hearts pounded, as guns resounded  
The cicadas and the owls were astounded  
When their bodies fell to the silvery ground.  
The wind sang a dirge, going round and round  
Two love birds had fallen to firing indiscriminate  
And to the lethal venom of corrosive hate.  
On the ground they lay, their dreams dead.  
With their innocent blood the ground red.  
To an end had come a pristine love story  
Falling to nefarious designs, evil and gory.

But, hang on folks, it is said, love never dies  
From the ashes, it has the propensity to rise.

At night, wreaths of milky mist rise ghost –like  
Then love with myriad hues is all set to strike  
With love’s magical strains the paper boats echo  
When Cupid comes out with his arrow and bow  
Although, alarm still lingers in those dilated eyes  
And the thick woods shake with their sad sighs  
Yet, the twosome waltz away to the music of love  
Watched on by an indulgent dove-and how!  
Pixies sway to the music of their love sublime  
The merry trees slough an ethereal rhyme.  
The birds applaud from the foliage of the trees  
More and more rambunctious becomes the breeze  
Bent on drowning rancour, hate and its clamour  
Spreading the message of love and its glamour.

***LOVE AND ITS GLAMOUR***

Exhausted, the tiny vagabond slumps  
on the bench in the park, as night falls.  
With the bird calls

at dawn the sun comes out of its lair

After a bout with a dark cloud

And rides proud .

Untangles the vagabond's tangled hair

With a thousand and one golden fingers

And near his sunken face lingers

Smiling indulgently like a mother fond

Tightly embracing the vagabond

with a thousand golden arms.

With two fistfuls of dreams close to his chest

the vagabond sleeps

Under sun's Midas touch his fists turn to gold.

The shimmering air is incandescent

under the blazing sky

And the flowers on a high.

The sun continues to drench him in gold

from the blue canopy above.

The homeless vagabond rich

Now others' tries to enrich

His sunny smile beguiles

A hibiscus lazing away.

Smothering its yawn

In the verdant lawn

the lazy flower with his sunny power

jumps into the maelstrom of another day

And is reborn .

AH,WHAT TIME WAS THAT ?

Hey , why do I thus trip and slip ?

Ah , it is a chameleon with a stiff upper lip

Trying to distract me by its pushups on a boulder

Oh, Suddenly the weather becomes colder.

Memory slivers , like snowflakes

Drift towards me tangoing , twisting , pirouetting , waltzing , twisting

Eyes misting

I see a girl under the neemtree , eyes gleaming with spunky mischief

looking at a stout chameleon in the verdant garden .

What is that commotion

That hue and cry, and childish emotion ?

Is that the ripple of laughter juvenile

Bursting forth from the figure fragile

Standing under that neem tree

Shining with a glint of mischief

After a humongous tiff?

Some notes of old nursery rhymes

Of those idyllic and beautiful times

Still echo among the bushes

Some old jingles mingle with new ones

Ring ringaroses , a pocket full of posies

When we all fell down

Along with Humpty Dumpty

While all the kings horses and all the kings men

Wrung their hands helplessly near the wall

After Humpty's ignominious fall.

Someone bending down to tie a buckle

Another hiding a chuckle

Muddles and cuddles splashing in puddles

Plotting in muddled huddles

When the rain refused to go and come again another day

The faint glint of the sun after the unrelenting rains

was like the sparkle of ill humour

in the rheumy eyes of a cantankerous old man.

But we glowed and gleamed , shimmered and dreamed

Hopping and skipping away our puppy fat

Ah , what time was that ?

**Bio:**

Novelist, poet , essayist, Dr. SANTOSH BAKAYA, winner of the Reuel International Award for writing and literature , 2014 , is the writer of the critically acclaimed BALLAD OF BAPU, published recently by VITASTA PUBLISHERS , DELHI. Besides that, her book of essays FLIGHTS FROM MY TERRACE was published as an e-book by SMASHWORDS. Her poems have appeared in many national and international anthologies, and she has figured many times in the highly commendable category of poets, in Destiny Poets, A U.K based website. Her mystery novels, written for young adults were well received by teenagers in the late 1990s. Right now, she is giving finishing touches to her latest novel, SANAKPUR SHENANIGANS.