

Poetry Series

**Sutapa Chaudhuri**  
**- poems -**

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## Sutapa Chaudhuri(Dec.1970)

Born in Kolkata, India,1970, Sutapa Chaudhuri, a PhD in English Literature, is a bilingual poet and a versatile creative writer writing in both Bengali and English. A scholar, a critic, a translator, and an academic, Dr. Chaudhuri has several publications, critical and creative, in a number of reputed literary journals, magazines and books to her credit. She has written many travelogues and essays for children too. Dr. Chaudhuri has lived significant parts of her life in the U.S.A and Japan; and spent 10 long years in Gujarat in western India, a place she considers as her second home. She is currently an Assistant Professor in English, at a College. She lives in south Kolkata with her parents, her teenage daughter and her scientist husband.

# Anastasia

however you might trample me  
I will rise again.  
untouched, unloved, unheeded-  
defined, deified, dismembered  
bone from bone, enslaved in eternal bonds;  
raped, ravished, rescued in false gallantry,  
till every atom of my self is broken down;  
branded, cremated, burnt at stake  
I will rise again.

mother, angel, witch, sati,  
devoted daughter, devi or rakshashi-  
out of my ashes regenerated,  
I will rise again.  
my charred corpse, phoenix like  
will block out mighty sun,  
the centre of your universe-  
wings spread, making sweet music  
ruthlessly light up your funeral pyre  
cold ashes scattered to the wind  
acrid smell of flesh burning-  
your world, your cosy nest of spices  
strangled, choked up in eternal glee;  
amidst the carnival of death  
I will rise again.

\*Anastasia means I will rise again

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Anniversary

the day passes  
silent slow idle  
like a wisp of snow  
falling on bamboo leaves  
in an alien hill slope  
stems undulating noiselessly  
the soft flight  
of white herons  
ghostly pale in a dull moon night  
time torn to bits  
trying to find a lost life  
a tiny space to breathe in  
just a bit of air  
a minute breath to exhale  
wishing and wishing again  
to forget the long forgotten  
truant memories  
the deep wound oozing blood  
slowly draining, breaking  
blocking the veins  
the arteries choking  
slashing with slow deliberateness  
arrested life  
the night passes desolate, futile  
lulling the self to sleep  
singing a lonely lullaby  
the circle turns slowly  
the year passes again...

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Appreciation

Fresh faces gazing, adoring  
eyes full of starry aspirations -  
nurturing dreams of greatness  
believing, trusting, loving...  
looking up to you for support,  
something to believe in -  
trying to understand life.

Holding dear every gesture,  
clinging to your every word  
as if an irrevocable truth.  
The very zest for life  
reminiscent of youth,  
the timeless vigor of  
childhood days long perished,  
making one believe too -

There is good in life still,  
love has power yet  
to transform,  
to heal...

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Blue

blue  
the colour of desire  
comes  
in never ending  
shades  
each tint and hue  
kindle tiny flames  
merge to shape  
the iridescent  
deep blue sea  
the azure sky  
boundless  
the sapphire  
lapis lazuli  
lonely glinting  
blue with cold  
yearning for  
a rainbow warmth.

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Brave Heart

Brave hearts don't survive  
The vicissitudes of dark life  
Ogling in sadistic anticipation  
Lips licking they wait just round the corner  
Ready to pounce on unsuspecting life

Brave hearts die an easy prey  
Dreaming of a better future  
Always elusive, forever eluding,  
Deceived, abandoned, outcaste

Yet brave hearts survive still  
Dreaming, just yearning for  
An impossible existence  
A future never felt

Brave hearts carry on  
The everlasting life  
In a chimera called  
Death.

Sutapa Chaudhuri

## Come, Share

Come, let us now share the loneliness, I say!  
the chilling loneliness of a long distance runner.

Come, let us lose ourselves  
in the frenzied maze of life  
ever winding serpents of darkness  
hissing, raging, rising  
in abysmal deeps.

Trapped in cocoons of platitude-  
come let us now fight for wings.  
Gossamer wings, warm, ethereal  
yet strong enough to carry power.  
Serpents hiss below still.

Sutapa Chaudhuri



# Crossroads

a lone tree  
stands at the crossroads  
vacant eyes peer out  
dimly  
from dusty crevices  
momentarily  
the view blurs  
the vision  
scant  
ages rooted to a spot  
eons of dust  
engulfs  
eclipses  
the scorching midday sun  
the vigil continues  
roads mingle  
vagrant birds bear witness  
rain song incessant  
shrouds the mind  
a lonely storm  
travels the distance  
hazy

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Crystals

frost locked  
recreating warmth  
thawing emotions  
icy chills  
the bubble bursting  
suddenly,  
droplets of illusions  
scattering the choked  
fossilized  
Arctic dreams.

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Death Rites

Up close and personal with death  
A catalogue of soulless formalities  
Business rituals mundane matters  
Penny pinching nitty-gritties of life  
The humdrum chaos of grief and ceremony  
The dear departed turned merely  
To a Body, numbered, queued for cremation  
Shrouded in white the inert selves moved along  
Like baggage lying on cold crowded platforms  
The makeshift bamboo stretchers wait patiently  
The metallic warmth of the yawning electric furnaces  
The blazing fire turning in an instant  
The well-beloved into a miniature mound of ashes  
The burnt bones smoulder fiery on charred wheel burrows  
Waiting to be set free by unaccustomed tender hands  
The wizened old river muddy with use  
Indifferent to the grieving cinders offer no shelter  
Distancing lonely souls from matters of life and death

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Desire

Ephemeral dialectics  
of desire  
course through  
the body silent  
swift, sure  
currents roam  
lighting up hidden crevices  
the long forgotten  
stirrings deep down  
float slowly  
like a soft gush of warmth  
seeping in  
thawing the ice  
gradually  
warming the heart to the core  
in a swift lightening flash  
lives fall apart  
centre cannot hold.

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Existence

the real me  
lost in the darkened alleys of oblivion  
the living core has died  
replaced by shadows  
the corpse, left open, uncontained  
festering slowly, surely, silently  
the chains rattling an ominous warning  
as if i've lost the last links to sanity  
the deep, dark, deadly void opens  
alluring  
a ghost roams the silenced earth

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Feminism

No.

Feminism

Doesn't mean you're promiscuous  
Only that you refuse to be contained-  
Determined in defined categories.

Feminism

Doesn't mean you hate men  
Only that you express a choice  
The desire to live life on your own terms.

Feminism

Doesn't mean you reject society  
Only that you want to be  
Integrated in yourself-

Feminism

Inspires you  
To take pride in your identity  
Being who you are.

Feminism

Isn't negative  
Only it views reality  
Alternately.

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Flood

the flow of blood  
brings with it  
memories, warmth  
flooding the soul  
yearnings deep down  
wishes never-to-be  
un-quenching thirst  
for life itself  
wrecking havoc  
irrepressible  
a void deep down  
a nothingness  
obliterating others  
submerging self

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Gone Awry

Look dearie! ! !  
Wanna watch?  
Look'ere Son!  
Catch it now!  
Playin' action ...  
Watch'n' see! !  
Lots'a cunnin',  
Sleigh' of hand,  
Juggl'rs tricks...  
Magic's own -  
Falsities!  
'n Down, down, down,  
Drops the birdie, - THUUD! !  
Hop'n a jump  
Sets th' rhythm.  
Aim's done  
Arrows taut  
Shot high straight  
Upwards too!  
Stin' y'ur heart  
Whoosh  
Like that, - CAUGHT! !  
Crawling, sliding, creeping, slowly  
Nets a snare  
Gostho Cuz'n -  
Steppin' out,  
Basket borne...  
Arrows get  
Th' creature down, - NOW! !  
Oh Dear mee!  
All awry! ! !  
Dup'd 'n gone...  
Heyy Cuz'n 'ou,  
Senile sudd'n?  
Scrunchin' past y'ur  
Ribby cages  
Did th' arrow  
Zoom unawares - ZAP! ! ?



\*This poem is a free translation of a famous Bengali poem 'Phoske Gelo' by the celebrated children's writer Sukumar Ray.

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Humans

while playing, who start fighting are humans  
while laughing, who start crying are humans  
harder than the toughest mountains, are humans  
they, who roam inside out are humans  
and who divide in two heaps are humans  
they, who have the power of the sun clan are humans  
yet swoon in midday heat are humans

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# I Want To Know

In this wide world have I  
Many, many things to know...  
Sitting here, I have to know  
What not to lose.  
Where is the fringe of the earth  
And where does the sun come from?  
Why is the  
Koel black,  
Parrot green,  
Herons all white?  
For what is the winter cold?  
Why does the summer scorch?  
What makes the thunder  
And lightning  
In the rains?  
Things like these  
Much have I to learn  
Much is left still  
How can  
The yellow banana be ripe?  
Why beasts walk  
With four feet,  
Why wings, birds?  
To see this world  
Who has given me  
Eyes? !

\*This poem is a free translation of a famous Gujarati poem 'Mare Janvu Che'  
by the celebrated writer Zinabhai Desai (Snehrashmi) .

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Ikebana

breathing under water  
slow, laborious  
standing on a bed of thorns  
living an exotic life in death.  
readily giving up life  
to make some enclosure lively  
contained in a small vessel  
sacrificed to preserve nature  
in an unnatural death  
the emblem of nature  
a defined set of rules  
captured in an embrace of art  
an entity, before  
now a token, merely.

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# I'M A Woman, I

Creator, Preserver, Destroyer,  
I'm a Woman, I.  
I'm Mother, Mother Earth.  
My Being luminous  
Heralds the dawn of hope  
Cradling nascent seeds of Humanity—  
My Blood portends Death,  
Erased of all Existences  
Hope suffers annihilation.

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# In Tune With My True Colours

My true colors lie hidden  
not fair, nor dusky  
I search for my true colours  
I want to be like myself  
not sanvli, not gori  
not independent, not depending  
not yours not others  
I wish to be mine myself  
in tune with my colors  
I recognize me as I am

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Indifferent Nexus

Huddled together in  
A common cause  
They live sheltered lives  
All bonding against  
The monster's tyrannies

Their closed doors bar  
Me  
Me they leave out  
Me they spurn  
They mock  
They malign  
They mollify  
Me they betray  
Me they don't love  
Shut out of their nexus  
Shunned out of existence  
I live life unheeded

They are all I have  
They have all  
Besides me...

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Just For A Day

Just for a day  
we'd face the sun  
just for a day  
we'd dare  
just for a day  
we'd make believe  
just for a day  
we'd dream  
just for a day  
we'd unite  
just for a day  
we'd love  
just for a day  
we'd live  
just for a day  
we'd be free.  
Just for a day  
you'd be mine!  
together  
playing house  
fulfill  
our desires!

Sutapa Chaudhuri



# Let All My Love Rush Towards You

Let all my love rush towards you  
My lord, only towards you.  
Let all my deep desires sound in your ears  
My lord, just in your ears.  
My heart, wherever it resides,  
Let it respond to your call.  
Let all the shackles break  
As you draw me towards you,  
My lord, only towards you.  
This outward beggarly bowl of alms  
Let it be emptied altogether this once—  
Let my inmost soul be secretly filled by your gifts,  
My lord, your precious gifts.  
O my friend, the precious inmate of my being,  
The things of beauty in this life  
Let all play together in harmony,  
My lord, in your song, only in your song.

\* this is a free translation of Rabindranath Tagore's song Dhaye jeno mor sakal bhalobasha

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Letter To Myself

I've given up  
Everything  
I once possessed,  
Everything  
Ever  
I was.  
Only  
This letter remains.  
My only link  
To myself  
To sanity  
Attesting the fact  
That oft forgotten  
Unheeded fiction  
I exist, still.

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Lyric

In bright and beautiful hues  
Warmth nestles in a lovely face '  
Innocent, unknowing still,  
Oblivious of reality,  
Born of me yet apart.  
Bright and beautiful as a sun flower  
Blowing softly in a May breeze'  
All the love the heavens hold  
Enfolded in her tiny arms.  
Mine own yet separate,  
My world, my daughter.  
My poem, my lyrics evermore'  
My sunbeam, moon ray, stardust.

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Madness

I'm going mad, I say  
the everlasting tedium of my days  
the endless unappreciated work  
the platitudes of daily life  
strangle as if iron bars  
I shout 'n' shout  
in rage  
in pain  
yet  
fail to shatter  
the glassy calm mirror like  
the placidity of loneliness  
the utter deafness  
all around

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Me

I'm the same woman  
as you are  
only I don't believe  
in carrying a mark  
taking up a forced identity  
an imposed self  
parasitical  
surrendering my freedom  
losing the self in the lonely doldrums of life  
I'm the same mother  
as you are  
only I believe  
in keeping my space  
my signatures  
merging my life in my daughter's  
projecting my dreams, my fears  
that's simply not my style  
I bequeath her roots  
I gift her wings too  
I want her to grow  
let me grow alongside, too  
let us grow together but not in each others shadow  
so we both shouldn't die  
a stultifying death

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Missing Notes

sometimes I miss them so much  
my childhood friends,  
my companions from bygone days  
the long hours on a lazy afternoon  
whiled away in a carefree maze  
laughing, gossiping, gambling, giggling  
dreaming of loves never to be  
planning, leaving, yet planning again  
those trivial, then so urgent rapids in life  
Sometimes I miss you so much  
my closest ally,  
my youthful days  
the secrets, the adventures  
careless freedom strewn paths  
the shared history  
never ending phone calls  
desiring, dreaming, discussing details  
whispering the sweet nothings of love  
knowing life just a phone call away  
Sometimes I miss myself so much  
trudging up the blinded alley  
dark unknown faces  
crowding, poking fun  
million miles separating lives  
the gap yawning  
unbridgeable

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# My Heart Holds Nectar

My heart brims with nectar, do you desire it?  
Alas, perhaps you failed to notice!  
The sweet fragrance of the Parijat, can you smell?  
Alas, perchance it too seems out of bounds!  
It's raining love, alas, aren't you even aware of that?  
Today with the rumbling clouds,  
Do you let the peacocks dance in your heart?  
I've strung the chords on the sitar -  
I've tuned the melodies of paradise...  
Would you like to sing the notes with me—  
Our hearts and souls in unison?  
Alas, may be you couldn't come to the concert!  
Again and again Nature has called out, did you respond?  
On this day of Jhulan, all hearts feel the sway  
Yet only your heart fails to move!  
The recesses of my heart hold nectar, do you need it?  
Alas, possibly you don't even care to know!

\*This poem is a free translation of Rabindranath Tagore's song Amar praner  
majhe sudha achche, chao ki?

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# My Laptop

The only semblance of sanity in an insane world,  
The blank page, a tabula rasa, imprinting thoughts and emotions  
The cursor, alive, blinking, responsive, inspiring one to dare  
Creating experiences, marking memories indelible on a virtual page  
Making realities out of unreal existences  
A home long desired for the rootless mind  
An invitation to belong, to live life without a mask  
A room of my own, nurturing the soul  
Where unabashed creativity gets wings to soar  
Non-living yet full of Life

Sutapa Chaudhuri



# My May Born

my jasmine spreading perfume in the wind  
my sprite of sun dancing on the rays  
my starlight, moonbeam  
undaunted, blazing,  
emitting rays of life...  
youth, intelligence, will  
powerful, radiant vibrant -  
softly glowing in tenderness  
like the yet unborn dawn  
innocent like the blushing twilight  
reflected on still waters  
making life beautiful  
the principle of light  
gently merging  
becoming the principle of life itself  
in a harmony of songs  
ensuring peace  
tender, innocent, trusting  
happy and joyful  
putting a smile on sad faces  
my daughter, my life, my entire universe.

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Nagasaki

rejection confines  
the very fibre of life  
bones chilled  
frost bitten  
flesh seared  
bleeding  
permeating tangible death  
burnt shadows of bird life  
etched deep  
into exiled souls  
unfeeling ashes  
dig out callous imprints  
on stone  
mushroom clouds hover  
dark threatening  
hope shatters into tiny fragments  
miniscule slivers hurt  
piercing momentarily  
hiding the burns inside  
every atom  
reduced to the bomb  
just darkness remains  
as a deep dull silence  
reigns

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Namesake

Smile in your heart  
Unfurl your dreams  
Nurture your ambitions  
Wish for the ultimate  
Respect yourself  
Inspire others  
Touch your spirit  
Aspire for the stars

\*This is an acrostic written on my daughter's name- SUNWRITA

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# O My Native Soil, My Motherland

O my native soil, I bow my head to you in deep obeisance.  
In you rests the universe, on you is spread the love of the universal mother.  
You have become blended in my body,  
You have united with my heart and soul,  
That verdant, tender form of yours is imprinted forever in my heart of hearts.  
O Mother, my birth is on your lap, on your breast my death.  
On you, all my play of sorrow and happiness.  
You have put succour in my mouth,  
You have comforted me with cool waters,  
You have always been the all enduring, all suffering mother's Mother.  
O Mother, much have I eaten out of your hands, I have taken gifts galore—  
Yet what have I given you in return I know not!  
My life has gone by in futile pursuits,  
I have spent my days hemmed in within my room—  
For naught have you given me vigour, O Almighty.

\*this is a free translation of Rabindranath Tagore's song O Amar Desher Mati

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# On Her Fifth Birthday

I became a mother today,  
You a little girl-  
A soft cuddly ball of love  
Held close in my arms.  
Eyes a little off the focus,  
Curly hair all askew,  
I laughed and cried  
The moment I saw  
And fell in love with you.

Five years have passed since then;  
Five years of togetherness,  
Of growing up to the  
Little lady that you're now.  
The tiny hands outstretched, -  
As they reached out to me,  
Hold on to a pencil now  
Dipping in the knowledge sea.

I look into your face and think  
What more could happiness be  
And as always I give you  
The most precious,  
Most enduring thing alive  
The gift of a mother's love,  
Dear daughter,  
As you turn five.

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Play

in another place,  
in another time-  
in a lost world long forgotten...  
youthful laughter  
played hide and seek  
in bright alleys  
of glittering life.  
'I spy you! '  
rang out confidently  
in dimly lit  
fragrant doorways.  
flavoured with warmth  
and spicy company,  
a touch of colour  
lingered still  
on cold grey days-  
bursting into myriad hues  
at a touch.  
chasing away all fears...  
blind folded in darkness-  
yet never missing light...  
never going astray-  
secure in the knowledge  
of belonging  
for ever.

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Play On, Dear Poet

Play on, dear poet, your tunes melodious  
    In intensely profound tones in my soul—  
Molten let my life rain down like a waterfall on your feet.  
Let me forget all joy or woe, worry, unfulfilled desires—  
Liberated let the heart traverse amidst the endless universe  
    Borne along forever on the blissful breeze.

\*this is a free translation of Rabindranath Tagore's song Bajao tumi kavi

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Proposal

I'm so lonely,  
would you be my friend?  
just be a friend that's all  
I want nothing more  
just be there, nothing more

My hands are so lonely  
would you hold them strong?  
just a little company, that's all  
they want nothing more.

The fingers are so cold  
would you give them warmth?  
just let your blood course through  
the death, that's all  
kiss them with life,  
tips tingling,  
a bit of life, nothing more

My life has lost its motion  
would you lead me to dance  
just one dance, that's all  
I need nothing more.

Sutapa Chaudhuri



# Rape

R

A

P

E

Ruthless

Atrocities

Perpetrated by the

Emasculated

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Response

your voice  
like warm blood  
courses through  
my veins  
your promises  
fire my fantasies  
my core opens  
a newly blown bud

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Routine

A long day ends  
incessant drudgery  
lights up the dusty crevices  
night descends  
like a pall  
lonely, silent.

A deathly embrace  
grips the naked soul,  
a shaft of pain courses swift  
piercing to the core  
dusky empty spaces  
again.

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Shadows Kill

the world wrapped  
in black and white  
sheathed in shadows  
deathly daggers  
glint  
ready to kill  
the last traces of contact  
erased evermore  
sensations slowly  
recede into darkness  
an omnipresent silence  
engulfs all  
hidden away  
in a niche of oblivion  
lost in the alleys of life  
the tormented self  
forlorn  
dies a slow death  
empty darkneses fill up  
the fathomless crevices  
dislodging forever  
long cherished  
memories

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Song

The gale rises on the sails of the song—  
Boatman mine do stay strong at the helm.  
That gale of yours, that gale gathers strength  
It yearns to be set free this very moment,  
The boat of life dances gaily on the waves  
In rhythm attuned to the tempo of the gale.  
The day has waned, the long night waxes slow,  
There's no one to accompany me on the quays.  
Slash the ties, please let me sail—  
We'll journey in the light of the stars,  
The melody stirs apace at the hour of the voyage.

\* This poem is a free translation of Rabindranath Tagore's song Haoa lage ganer pale.

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Soothing Showers

Tears brimmed over my eyes  
Beneath the empty recesses of the heart there loomed  
Dense water-laden clouds borne along by a graceful gentle breeze  
Pleasant, the night awoke again in joyous delight  
O slaker of the sweltering sun, the saviour of the afflicted  
The only refuge for the thirsty at heart -  
Hail her for her benevolent mercy, sung in a hymnal tune  
Wake up in bliss, O my eternally thirsty chatak heart wake up,  
For slowly in sweet silent drops of honeyed drizzle  
Love rains down surely in soothing showers.

(\*This is a free translation of Rabindranath Tagore's Bangla song Nayan bhashilo jale)

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Stillborn

My life  
a stillborn baby  
deformed, sterile,  
a quivering bloody mass  
just born just dead.

Torn from the gaping womb  
the alien dark uterus  
helplessly bleeding on  
the pristine white page  
a sacrilege to sanctified lives.

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Temptations

A million eyes  
Blinking, beckoning  
A million lips  
Whispering promises  
A million gestures  
Serenely seductive  
A million smiles  
Assuring fulfillment  
A million ears  
Listening kindly  
A million hearts  
Loving, nurturing  
If momentarily  
A million touch  
Generating solace  
A million arms  
Hugging welcome  
A million years  
Strangely tempting  
A million lives  
Stopping by.

Sutapa Chaudhuri



# The Call

I can call anybody now.  
All have their numbers listed.  
Phonebooks also at easy access.  
But there's no one to call.  
Somehow I'm still searching  
lost in a maze  
the jungle of names  
too easy perhaps.  
Even without a reading glass  
my naked eyes still make out  
the smallest of prints.  
That very print seems blurred  
washed out of existence.  
The directory at war with life.  
I pick up the leaden handset,  
press the buttons one by one,  
the limbs freeze,  
the heart soars in expectation-  
the apathetical beep, cold, metallic,  
infuriating  
jar my nerves,  
hungry for a little answering warmth.  
Listless, the chasm yawns deep  
only a dull, dead,  
dark silence reigns.

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# The Finale

My words are ended.

The Noté plant is severed.

"How art thou severed, O Noté? "

"Why didst the cow eat? "

"Why dost thou eat, O Cow? "

"Why didst the shepherd not graze me? "

"Why dost thou not graze, O Shepherd? "

"Why didst the wife not serve rice? "

"Why dost thou not serve rice, O Wife? "

"Why didst the banana plant not shed a platter? "

"Why dost thou not shed a platter, O Banana plant? "

"Why didst the rain not water? "

"Why dost thou not water, O Rain? "

"Why didst the frog not croak? "

"Why dost thou not croak, O Frog? "

"Why didst the snake gobble? "

"Why dost thou gobble, O Snake? "

"Shan't I gobble up my tangy tasty treasure! ! ! ?

Shan't I slither to my snory snorty slumber! ! ! ? "

\*This poem is a free translation of a famous Bengali folk poem 'Phuralo'

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# The House Of Death

Shrill whistles bellow from steaming cookers  
The tinkle of tea cups resonate with hushed voices  
A few tears mixed with officious rituals mourn the sad demise  
The stale old sari gets discarded in a heap of washing  
The charwoman laboriously sweeps out the remnants of life  
Lingering still on massive cold grey floors  
Mingling laughter with tears, anguish and duty  
Bare rooms bereft of life get made up ready to receive visitors  
Adorned with flowers and incense, unconcerned in a pall of white  
The body, dust and ashes, smeared on mantels  
A patina of discarded memories, cherished voices long lost  
The story of death recounted countless times to inane sympathies  
Hushed silences shatter as the final journey begins  
A ceremonial cacophony in God's name  
'Bol Hari, Hari Bol! '  
Life goes on.

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# The Malady

lurking always in corners  
the darkened alleys  
of existence  
a fear prowling  
laying in wait  
ready to take on  
pouncing  
unawares  
a deathly hug  
wrenching  
the breath out of you  
swiftly in  
lethal assault

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Themes

the same themes  
over and over again  
strangle me  
choking as if  
damming  
life at source  
winds die down  
dreams sink slowly  
suffocating in  
doldrums  
the masts brave  
waver  
momentarily  
then drown.  
in the dull  
Sargasso Sea.

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# To My Daughter

Life is a gift of love, enjoy it;  
Youth creates life, embrace it;  
Roots sustain life, depend on it;  
Ideas enhance life, hold on to it;  
Conscience holds life together, never lose it.

\*This is an acrostic written on my daughter's pet name- LYRIC.

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# Woman Poet

A woman, a myth, a deity-  
you chose to be a poet.  
You sang of magic lore  
of ancient times and unknown lands...  
the listless strife of womankind-  
trudging through the soulless drudgery  
of mundane pursuits, slavish concubinage-  
cankering the soul, festering the mind.  
A rebel, possessed of a unique power-  
to silenced utterances, scattered in the wind,  
you gave a voice...  
rekindled again their hopes—lost so long ago.  
They killed you into art...a token woman  
an idol, merely, of their designs  
yet, rising, phoenix like, you uttered  
that supreme truth-'Soham'-  
I am she  
the almighty  
universal, supreme, pure  
the one and only being  
face to face, immanent.  
I Am, even I.

Sutapa Chaudhuri

# You Just Need To Say No

Stand up and say—No  
Firmly say -no -to  
All those tiny little  
Pricks of duties  
Of consciences, guilts  
Innumerable, never-ending

Say 'No' to all that  
You've done, been doing  
would have done  
but didn't want to  
all that you must do  
against your own wishes  
all that you need to sacrifice for  
your 'selfish' desires let go  
you need only to say -No—  
to affirm yourself  
to satisfy yourself  
for once.

Sutapa Chaudhuri