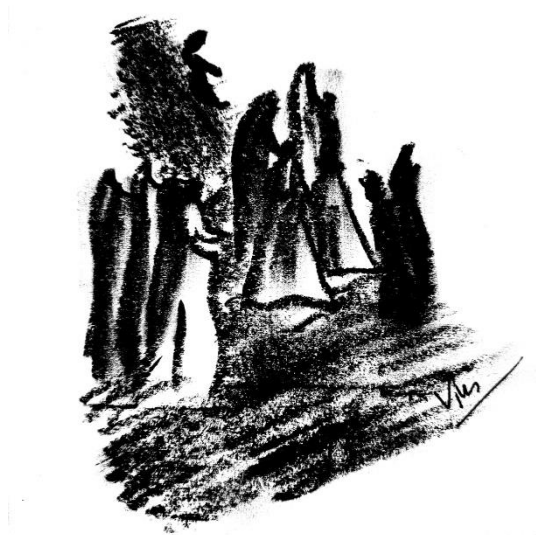


Two Poems

Ayesha Salma, VNRVJIET, Hyderabad, Telangana, India*
Email: ayeshasalmaqm@gmail.com

Nothing Scares Me More

Nothing scares me more
than a dead eye.
A talking eye, a singing eye—
now muted hopelessly.
No taunt, no tease,
not even a dirge it sings today.
The iris lies damn indifferent
in a motionless corneal sea.
It darts up and down
towards the edges—
uncontrolled, like a destitute kite.
When the eye dies, what is it
that communicates with
the heart, mind, and soul?
A blind eye is still alive—and listens.
But not the dead eye.
It seems the soul is siphoned out
through the pupil.
The tortured eye
lies limp.
What is ‘not being alive’



The dead eye demonstrates.

It slowly attains a mossy black tinge—

the sclera,

Like the decomposing egg-white.

The dead eye resists life.

The dead eye feels hopeless of some accountability.

The dead eye speaks some mysterious truth

to the dead souls around.

The Lamp

Death wasn't as frightening as I imagined it to be.

I woke up in a beautiful realm that resembled
the mysterious lands of Shambhala.

I felt peaceful, happy—

sorrow and discontentment were not there at all.

I walked along a pavement of rare, smiling orchids.

They spoke to me most congenially.

Colorful butterflies welcomed me
as they sliced through a profound silence.

The breeze was heavenly—healing and therapeutic.

I walked beneath dense orange clouds
that shaped themselves into swings, beds, and couches.

Water, sweeter than honey,
irrigated the soils and quenched thirsty souls.

As I was relishing this rare ecstasy,
every drop of it,

two guiding stars suddenly emerged from the skies
and politely escorted me to the Supreme Soul.

The Supreme Soul welcomed me
and assured me that I belonged to this place... but—

He asked me to unknot the lotus on my cassock,
the knot resting just above my heart.

He said He only wanted to see the lamp

He had lit in the niche of my heart

when He created me—epochs ago.

He said He wished to see whether the lamp still cast light.



Only then, He smiled, could I reside there—permanently.

Shivers ran through my spine.

As I unknotted the lotus and drew aside the cassock

to see the lamp,

all I could see was a lifeless black dungeon,

and the unbearable stench

of charred coconut fibers.

I knew I could no longer stay there,

in that sacred realm of white lakes.

I had to bring back the lamp and the light

from wherever they had vanished.

So desperate I was—

in a state of deep repentance.

Time pulled me back into her web.

When I opened my eyes,

I was blind and hungry again.