

Anthology of Deepak Vohra

Presented by

My poetic Side 



Dedication

To I.M, the dearest friend

Acknowledgement

These poems are pieces of my heart, shaped by the love, patience, and understanding of those around me.

To my family, who stood by me through every draft and doubt; to my friends (especially thanks to my dear friend IM), who believed in my voice when I couldn't hear it myself; and to the quiet moments of life that whispered poetry into my soul?thank you.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the team and readers of my poetic side for their invaluable guidance throughout the publishing process.

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Lastly, my deepest appreciation to the readers?your presence gives these words purpose.

About the author

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??? ???? ?????? ?? ???

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Debris

Debris

? After a school collapsed

It wasn't just bricks.

Not just beams and plaster.

It was a hundred years ?

a hundred years of chalk dust,

dreams with school bells,

and mothers packing bread

with red chilies and trust

in the shape of a folded napkin.

The roof came down.

And when it did,

it took a school,

a child,

a blackboard.

It took the lesson plans

and made them tombstones.

The clock ? it froze.

The cameras didn't.

The men in coats came.

They bent their knees,

not to weep,

but to find a good angle,

like they were choosing

a graveyard by camera lens.

The media opened their jars ?

tears on tap,

and guilt washed clean

in holy water ratings.

A boy ?

yesterday,

he was reciting tables.

Today,

his fingers stick out of the rubble

like a question

no one will answer.

No one asks

why the roof cracked.

Why pages turned to ash.

Why chalk wrote

with blood now.

The TV screams:

"Nehru did it!"

And while they argue over names,

they build another wall

between god and god.

Democracy ?

it holds a press meet

on its own stiffened body.

No,

the wombs don't grow futures now.

They grow contracts ?

with clauses and cement.

Children cry ?

and the numbers rise.

Each scream is a cell

in a spreadsheet.

Each name,

a row with a serial number.

This country?

You won't find it on a map.

It doesn't ping on radar.

It's the hush

in a poor man's eyes at night ?

the soft blink

of a star long dead.

Waiting for Godot

Waiting for Godot by Deepak Vohra

(Godot pronounced as Godo)

We are common people.

We always wait for Godot in every age.

We know very well :

You never came,

You never come,

You will never come.

Still we all wait for you.

But we never yield.

We never lose heart.

We never admit defeat.

We have heard since our childhood:

From our parents,

Our parents from their parents,

Their parents from their forefathers,

You'll come one day or the other day!

We have heard since our childhood

In the 21st century everything would be changed.

No hatred, no jealousy, no discrimination, no caste, no creed, no colour!

There would be no place for walls.

There would be no room for boundaries created by fanatic politicians.

Whenever you come,

We would get everything as we wish.

Bread for hungry!

Water for thirsty!

Clothes for ill-clad!

Home for homeless!

Employment for every hand!

Many many things

Which can't be discussed in a short poem!

But nothing is changed.

O Godot! You have not come yet,

But Modo has come.
Bastard sons of Hitler are his staunch followers.
Media is his great tool for popularity.
They are always showing him as Godot.
They are always spreading hatred on the name of religion.
O Godot! We all know,
You will never come
Still we all wait for you
Because possibilities never die.

Raksha Bandhan ? Just an Excuse

Raksha Bandhan ? Just an Excuse

A sister needs only a reason
to cross the threshold of her childhood home.
That is why two days
shine brightest in her heart ?
Bhai Dooj and Raksha Bandhan.
Not for her
the claim to her father's land,
nor the glitter of gold and silver.
She longs only
to step once more
into that sunlit courtyard
where her laughter once rang,
where her mother's gentle hands still linger,
where her father's scoldings
were laced with love,
and her brothers' arms
were always open.
No storm can turn her back,
no searing heat, no monsoon flood;
not winding roads
nor mountains high
can keep her from coming.
Through every bend and stone and climb,
she walks with joy
to tie the silken thread
on the wrists of brothers and their sons.
They say a woman has no home of her own ?
yet she returns to hers,
the one that first cradled her,
so she may laugh a little,
weep a little,
and press her palms

to the earth that still remembers her steps.

Raksha Bandhan?

It is only an excuse.

The truth is ?

a sister has come home

to touch her roots.

? Deepak Vohra

The Flower

The flower has fallen
from its branch,

yet its scent drifts
through the restless air,
soft, unbound,
lingering where it pleases.

And in our memory,
it blooms again?
fragile, fleeting,
yet eternal,
woven into the quiet corners of our hearts.
~Deepak Vohra

Love Is Not Fear

Love Is Not Fear
All your life
you held yourself still?
a vessel brimming,
tilted by unseen hands.
One day
the vessel cracked.
Your scream
was not a scream at all
but molten fire,
splitting the earth
wide open.
And his smile?
that was the sharpest wound,
as though your breaking
was staged
for his delight.
The rivers of rage
that slept in you for years
rose up,
yet he mistook them
for a game.
Your room
tightened into a prison.
Doors, locks, splintered latches?
silent witnesses
that fear, too,
is a country
whose borders shift each day.
And love?
It kept changing shapes?
a song,
a chain,

a hand closing
around your throat.
Until one day you knew:
love's other name
is never fear.
You rose?
like a bird
from a burning nest.
Now your lungs
hold air again.
Your words
are alive again.
And in their quiet flight
they carry only this:
Love
is not fear.

Unity In Diversity

Unity In Diversity

Waterfalls

cannot wait

they lean forward, trembling

to touch the rivers.

And the rivers

reckless, laughing

cannot help themselves

they rush headlong

into the embrace of the sea.

Flowers open, aching

to release their fragrance.

Butterflies hover, restless

spilling paint across petals.

The wind carries sweetness

into the fever of summer.

Clouds break

pouring down their gift

to soothe the earth's dry throat.

Trees

reaching too far for the sky,

sometimes forget

the ground that holds them.

Waves collapse into waves

as though meeting

is the only faith they know.

Flowers

if they do not bloom together,
are incomplete.

The sun pours itself
into the arms of the earth
and moonlight, every night
leans down to kiss the sea.

So tell me
who are these ones
who stir poison into the air,
who believe
they were meant to live alone?

~Deepak Vohra

Salt

Salt

The son said,
"Mother, today the food is bland."
The daughter smiled,
"It tastes just right."
The husband frowned,
"You always use too much.
What's wrong with you these days?"
And the woman,
listening,
measuring,
kept adjusting the salt?
but not her sorrow.
She began to believe
salt was not only in food
but in life itself:
without it,
nothing had flavor.
The taunts kept coming,
grain by grain.
She dissolved salt
into every silence,
into her love,
her anger,
her patience,
her giving.
It seeped into her?
into the wet corners of her eyes,
into the lines of her hands,
into the long fatigue of her days.
And later,
when she looked into the mirror,
she saw what she had become:

a small heap of salt,
disappearing slowly?
offering taste to every life around her,
leaving behind
only a faint remembrance
on the tongue.

~Deepak Vohra

The Woman with a Cigarette

The Woman with a Cigarette

Arundhati's photograph
a cigarette between her fingers
and suddenly the world panicked
caught naked
in the mirror of its own hypocrisy

The moment a woman inhales
she is stamped
immoral
characterless
a whore
shameless
loose
loud-mouthed
brazen
as if the smoke itself
could etch her soul
into disgrace

Your outrage reveals
what still burns within you
patriarchy's throne
the Manusmriti buried
like live coal
in your chest

How strange
a man smokes,
blows rings into the air
and it is leisure
A woman smokes

and it is sin
Nehru's cigarette was culture
Che Guevara's smoke
revolution
But from a woman's lips
the same smoke
is a crime

I am not astonished
I have seen women of my lanes
the aunt with a bidi in her blouse pocket,
the old grandmother
sitting on the doorstep
lighting up
No feminism
no slogans of freedom
no revolution in their throats
only a small treaty with fatigue
or an evening circle
to share sorrow and laughter

Manto once wrote:
cigarettes destroy lungs
not character

Yet your masculinity is so fragile
a single picture can shake it
Yes, smoke is poison,
everyone knows this
but it is only a woman's smoke
that chokes you

It isn't smoke you fear at all
It is the mirror in your own mind
where the Manusmriti
still smolders

refusing to die

The Flower and the Butterfly

The Flower and the Butterfly

From the earth
a flower rises?
a luminous letter,
its fragrance
an unseen invitation.
In the light,
its petals open slowly,
as if whispering:
Come...
come closer.
The wind,
a secret postman,
slips a message
into the air.
And then?
a butterfly,
a shard of color,
descends so lightly
it feels like
a dream
settling on the eyelids.
It kisses the flower's brow
and carries away,
mid-flight,
its future?
tied delicately
to a thread of pollen.
The flower needs the butterfly
to keep its blossoming eternal.
The butterfly needs the flower

to keep its flight alive.
No burden,
no debt?
only a hidden music
of living together.
And listening to it,
you begin to feel
that even the earth
is slowly
becoming a poem.
Life, too,
like fragrance, like color,
spreads quietly
across the soil?
a never-ending verse.

~Deepak Vohra

The Poet and the Poem

The Poet and the Poem

~Deepak Vohra

A poem

is never just words.

It's stitched from the dreams

a poet doesn't dare say aloud,

a quiet sigh

that rises straight from the heart

and slips into the world?

soft, trembling,

like the unsure steps

of a civilization

feeling its way through the dark.

When a poet writes

water,

it doesn't stay water.

It becomes a river?

flowing toward cracked earth,

lingering in tired eyes

as the last shimmer of hope.

When they write

human,

they're not talking biology.

They're igniting

a small, steady flame?

a warmth that glows

in the heart of a child

who hasn't yet learned

what it means to be unequal,

to watch faith bought and sold,

to speak in the bitter tones of hate,

or play the cold game

of power and politics.

No?
a poet might not
save buildings,
bridges,
or monuments.
But if their words
can protect
the elegance of language,
the quiet art of kindness,
a wild, beautiful dream,
or the honest smile
of a child?
then maybe,
just maybe,
they've done something greater.
They've saved
an entire civilization?
without ever raising their voice.

No More Messiahs

No More Messiahs

They came
barefoot in dust
words like banners stitched to the wind
their eyes filled with fire
their voices full of ancient thunder

They crossed deserts and mountains
whispered in caves
shouted from rooftops
each claiming
"I am the light."
"I am the way."
"Follow me."

And we ?
we followed.
We carried flags ? green, saffron, crimson ?
as if colour could cleanse the blood from our hands.

We tied crosses to our foreheads,
draped ourselves in crescent moons,
clutched swords like scriptures.

We believed.
We screamed their names into the sky,
built altars from bones,
and etched prayers into the trigger of a gun.

In our wars,
we called it salvation.
In our victories,

we sang hymns soaked in the blood of strangers.
Everyone claimed their messiah was the true one.
They believed their war was holy.

And still they came ?
more messiahs,
more golden pages in the books of men,
more faces in stone,
more shadows in our hearts.

But the devil ?
ah, the devil did not die.
He changed flags.
He changed languages.
He wore their robes,
memorized their verses,
and laughed ?
laughed as we marched
deeper into the fire,
chanting freedom,
spreading ruin.

The earth ?
she cannot bear it anymore.
Her skin is cracked from the weight of prophecy.
Her rivers run red ?
not from miracles,
but from memory.

And now,
when another voice says,
"I am your savior,"
she groans beneath our feet
and whispers:
"No. No more messiahs."

Inspired by the Hardeep Sabharwal's Hindi poem: Messiah

She's Not Just a Housewife

She's Not Just a Housewife

You say
She's just a housewife

As if that's all,
As if the word doesn't hold
a thousand quiet revolutions.
As if it doesn't carry
the scent of morning tea,
the weight of sleepless nights,
the soft armor of patience.

But she?
she moves through time like it's silk,
folding days into rhythm,
seasons into order.
She keeps the world turning
without ever asking for applause.

She doesn't just live in the house ?
she becomes it.
Each wall remembers her touch.
Each corner carries
her fingerprints of care.

Without her,
rooms are just space.
A house,
just bricks.
Love,
just a word.

She wakes before the sun
so she can hang it on the windows.
Measures silence in teaspoons.
Wraps routine in ritual.

She teaches the kind of lessons
no textbook dares to write:
how to give anger a soft landing,
how to turn hurt into forgiveness,
how to be fierce
without ever raising her voice.

No ?
she's not just a housewife.
She's the keeper of warmth,
the unsung flame
that makes the whole damn place glow.

A lighthouse,
still burning
even when I lose my way.

She makes a house a home
with her breath,
her hands,
her laughter.

So say her name
with pride.

Because without
her,
I'm just a half-written story.
A dream
missing its ending.

~ Deepak Vohra

You and your Memory

You and Your Memory

when you're gone,
your memory returns
like a smile
pressed inside an old diary,
a rose still breathing in paper.
each time I open it,
the air fills with you.

you
a sweet thirst,
a quiet promise
the world keeps waiting for.

at night,
when the fields fall asleep
and the fires grow cold,
your memory comes ?
lays a hand on my shoulder
and sits beside me
without a word.

you'd ask:
why do you love me
this much?

I don't know.
maybe because
you just keep happening to me ?

in teacups,
in warm bread,

in the folds of books,
in songs I never meant to write.

last night,
you came again.
quietly.
stood near.
your lips moved.
I almost heard you.

sometimes I'm afraid ?
you're only a dream.
or an old poem
I never finished.

but you're here.
I know it.
all around me ?

like the air,
like the soil,
like that one song
still waiting
to find its voice.

All I Wish

Let me look at you ?
not just glance,
but drink in every detail
like a secret I've waited a lifetime to know.

Let me be near you,
no words, no reasons ?
just your presence
like a quiet flame beside mine.

All I truly want
is to whisper this truth:
You are beautiful.

Before the world calls it a sin
to love this deeply,
or the stars burn out,
and
time runs out on us.

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Happy Diwali

Happy Diwali!

Yes ? Happy Diwali.

Go ahead,
Celebrate loud,
Light up the sky with fireworks,
Fill the streets with sound ?
But don't turn someone's poverty
Into a punchline.

Brighten every corner
Of your home ?
Candles, lamps, fairy lights ?
Make it a festival of glow.
But don't forget
To place a single lamp
In that house
Where sunlight never reaches,
Where walls still wait
For a touch of warmth
They've only heard stories of.

Feast well ?
Laddoos, barfis, every sweet you love.
Feed your family, your friends.
But save a plate
For the one
Who's only known
The taste of hunger.

If you meet someone
Eyes sunken in silence,
Drenched in disappointment ?

Give them a smile,
Even just one.
Sometimes that's enough
To hush a storm.

And if you find a house
Collapsed
Under the weight of hatred,
Build it again ?
Not with bricks,
But with love.

From podiums and pulpits,
They planted thorns in our path,
Sowed riots in the name of gods,
Taught us to hate
In languages of caste and creed.
If you can,
Step away from those false gods.
Celebrate Diwali ?
But stay human.

And to those travelers
Who lost their way
In the political heat,
Whose minds were scorched,
Whose hearts became deserts ?
Be a tree.
Offer shade.

Let the rooftops gleam,
Let the thresholds shine,
But melt the ice
That's settled deep
In people's hearts.

And if
You can celebrate
A Diwali like that ?
Then know this:
The light has finally
Found its way home.

Let my heart turn to stone

I love you
like a fish loves water.

I want to drown
in your love
like a river
wants to disappear
into the sea.

I want you
to the depth
where dreams and reality
start speaking to each other,
where questions
find their own answers.

I want you
while making tea,
while showering,
while waking up,
while falling asleep,
while eating,
while reading a book,
while writing a poem,

while walking toward you,
and even while walking away.

I want you
without measure,
without reason.

I don't know why

I want you this much?
I just do.

I ache for you
like a poet aches
for the perfect word
for a line that won't leave them alone.

I want you
in my breath,
in my laughter,
in my tears,
in the small, quiet moments
that belong only to us.

Let my heart turn to stone
If I cannot melt your stone heart
with the warmth of my deep love.

And if one day
I'm gone,
you'll still feel me?
in the wind,
in the sunlight,
in the tiny things
that keep reminding you
that I was here,
that I loved you,
that I still do.

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Poetry Has a Voice

Killing a tiger?
that's violence,
that's inhuman.
Killing a lion is a crime,
killing a deer is sin.

But fishing?
catching fish?
is entertainment,
peaceful,
a way to connect with nature,
a pastime with friends.

No one calls
fishing inhuman.
Why?
Because fish do not have
vocal cords,
cannot scream,
cannot say,
"I too am alive."

When one cannot speak,
killing becomes
entertainment,
a way to pass the time.

When society's fish
cannot scream,
poetry speaks instead.

For the crushed, the oppressed,
poetry has

vocal cords.

Poetry can scream,
raise its voice.

For the voiceless, the powe
rless,
against power, cruelty, tyranny.