

DIOGEN pro culture magazine & DIOGEN pro art magazine -ISSN 2296-0929; ISSN 2296-0937

Publishers online and owners, Peter M. Tase and Sabahudin Hadžialić, PhD. candidate

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**Rati Saxena poetry**

**Dreaming in Another Land**

by

Rati Saxena

Translated by Seth Michelson

## My Sheet

That morning when I woke, I saw  
a small hole in my sheet,  
the result of being lost in sleep.  
So I struggled with silken thread throughout the day  
and by night had stitched a window  
for glimpsing a few, new dreams.

The next day I woke to a new hole  
and this time added paint to the thread.  
Before dark I'd built a door.

My dreams could leave now and wander  
instead of gazing out a window,  
dreams freed to roam the entirety of the night.

Each morning brought new holes;  
each day bustled with thread and paint.

Today my sheet is an enormous courtyard  
with a banyan tree filled with birds with beaks like red stars,  
though both sun and moon remain absent.

So I spend my mornings searching for holes

where a sun and moon might be woven,

not only in this galaxy

but also across

the many, layered others,

knowing at the end there's a final hole

through which to exit

and join the great beyond

in a seamless realm of light.

NEKOPIRATI

The Body in Motion

With my first step onto the seventh-story floor

I removed the coolness like a shoe

that I'd brought from the courtyard

painted with cow dung.

I donned the new room like a sweater

with windows, shelves, and walls,

the surroundings climbing my body like bougainvillea.

Whenever moving between homes

I carry bits of the old ones on my body.

The walls of the next home are made of sunlight

that disappears with darkness.

To put on this home

is to enter dreamfulness

as a road to reality.

At the final home, a pillow waits

on my side of a shared bed

beside a window facing south.

The south is the house of death.

I make it my body

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and lie down on my pillow.

Now

I am ready.

NEKOPIRATI

## Mother Used to Save

At any moment,  
under any conditions, the storehouse  
of mother was never empty,  
she saved oils, grains, pickles, beans,  
salt in clay pots, glass jars of jaggery,  
all of it living for centuries  
in her magic storeroom, and available  
in an instant  
without a single “Open, Sesame!”

Mother saved flesh, too:  
on her waist and hips, for her  
seven hungry children, born  
one after another,  
and for the next generation:  
to love grandma’s soft, sweet feel.

And she saved stories, myths,  
unknown rhythms, steps  
for the grandchildren’s dreams,  
a way of keeping her with them  
after she’s long gone.

In her final moments, her last  
breaths left her daughters a home,  
through which she keeps dissolving  
like a sugar packet into water.

NEKOPIRATI

Before leaving

close all the doors, one

by one,

hear them shut with a click,

pat each knob farewell,

and try never to promise to return,

not even by mistake,

don't fret over who next

might pass through; each door

itself decides this

before leaving wipe away

each footprint

and fingerprint, no longer

needed by anyone,

before leaving, pack your things,

bundle every rusted story

and decorate the table with memories of laughter



before leaving, check every book,

throwing out the pressed flowers

dried in their pages

before leaving erase every line, break

open all the knots

and smile with strength

until life comes to sit

in the corners of your mouth

before leaving, close the final door,

and the rest will close themselves

NEKOPIRATI

Dreaming in Another Land

He wanted her to smile

the dream of living in another land.

He wanted her to dance

like a melody on a violin's strings.

He wanted to see in her lap

the milk-stained mouth of a sleeping child.

He looked after her

like day-old bread to be relished.

He was trying to save her

from the barbed wire

around Albania or Siberia

that bloomed like flowers from stone.

He loved her more than his country

but lost her far away like his dream,

the same as a young man

of his enemy country.

Nichola's Mother

Her world is only as large as her bread,

her sky

the blackbird

flying across the window,

all juices for her

start and end with grapes.

She stands on her toes

and starts to twirl.

Borders draw and redraw themselves

across her chest, languages

peeping and pecking grains

from the palm of her hand.

She's been so many countries

without ever moving

from her axis as Nichola's mother.

\*Nichola is a Macedonian poet and his mother's home has been ruled by three different countries in her lifetime

Amzad Ali's Sarod

Amzad Ali lifts the sarod to his lap  
like a jumpy rabbit and slowly begins to stroke it.  
With a hiccup, strings clear their throats  
then a *gamaka* bites, sharp as a knife.

Amzad Ali closes his eyes in the glow of raga  
while Night Queen wakes from the magic box, peeking out  
at the *jhinjhoti* strutting its nine-beat swagger.

In that instant, I see a cry, my chin  
cupped in my palms as I watch the sounds  
of music dancing, my eyes numb, the rhythms captured  
in the clap of the tabla as it weaves its silk.

I watch the cry flutter with each note,  
and I lose track of time,  
can't tell if anyone else here  
sees through blind eyes.

I'm carried away by Amzad Ali's rendition  
of "Let Us Walk Alone," and I forget the cry,  
which falls asleep like a small child sucking her thumb.

And though I'm freed now to enjoy Amzad Ali,

the sound of the cry resurges,

suffusing the *jhinjhoti* and "Let Us Walk Alone."

Cries call me now to the town square, where

they become flags draped on bushes like dusty rugs. I want

to reconnect the broken strings of the great teachers,

drowsied, half-strangled by the coiling serpent

of rhythmic waves of music

that make us deaf to youthful cries.

Amzad Ali's sarod doesn't know the language of the deaf,

and I'm almost deaf with the non-cries of this crying.

Roots

An itch in the sole of my foot

reminds me of my roots

and while searching for them

I wander aimlessly

though they're not very far:

only five feet and a few inches down

not very deep,

but they shift in the evening

so by the time I draw near,

my soles are disappearing

into their own shadow.

Migraine

A woodpecker hooks  
its claws into my temple  
and pecks into my brain,  
his beak snatching up  
the tiny worms  
of my thoughts and attachments.

There is no fixed date for the arrival  
of this woodpecker,  
who instead of fruit prefers the dry wood of brains,  
devouring my every thought.

I close my eyes to his *tuk-tuk*  
pulsing in my veins  
and disappear into the bird.

A Thread Is Being Spun

A thread is being spun

a seed sprouting

the earth waking

and the sky is turning into trees

meanwhile a small sparrow

flutters down, lands

on a finger on my left hand

\*

You, a shard of light

You, the dew on a thorn's tip

a sprout in parched earth

a secret told in goose bumps

like a clairvoyant's vision

You have come to me

Against all the souls

severed in the womb

Against a lake of a thousand sounds

buried in deep waters



An earthworm burrows into a ditch

A conch writes a word

The thread of a web

snaps, is broken

\*

I try to read

the letters of dreams

written on your eyelids

want to learn

the script

written long before civilization

emerged from the Indus Valley

scripted in its streams

between the mountains and rivers

I want to dip my faded paintbrush

in the colors of your dreams

absorbed from the sky by trees

before taking birth in the earth

I want to write a poem

soaked in the gurgle

of your innermost soul

like an oil-soaked wick's

dancing flames

And in this

I wake

with the heavenly music

of the unstruck sound

hidden deep inside my navel

\*

How do you recognize

the tunes

the hidden rasas

the mind and spirit

the sounds produced

against classicism

how do they become sweet as milk

upon reaching you

your eyelids

becoming heavy

as you listen to my lullaby

how do you weave dreams

with the words of sleep

and how do you find

the meaning

of what's not there

but spread

like a maze of tunnels

until reaching the past

where you and me

converge

in a single point

I'm perplexed!

\*

I spin your cry

into a thread

I embroider your smile

onto the weave

and I see in you

the face of my mother

who stretches her feet out under sunlight

counting moments of peace

with closed eyes

She sat spinning

golden rays of sunlight

visible to me only from a distance

looking disinterested

with a strange enmity

an incomprehensible stiffness in her fingers

or pain in her knees

I never longed for her hug

You smile between the cries

and I kiss your forehead

as if kissing the painful fingers

of my mother

In her half-woven sheet

mother descends four steps

and sits on my lap

I find in my cupboard

two masks

nearly thirty-years-old

a bit dirty

but firm as new ones

Your mother dusts them

to be decorations

and hung on the wall

they begin to smile

freed from thirty years of prison

I wonder if

mother too smiled that way

when getting up from her cot

and hanging on the wall

You learned to respond to the smile

I want to get rid of all

the debris and rubble of the world

want to remove all the nails

so that your smile can spread

like morning sunrays

\*

History

I do not know the history

you wrote on horses during war

I don't accept the books

that test you on religion and spirituality

I ignore the cobwebs  
that constrict my neck  
with their red and blue noose  
while I feel the whip of the Rajiya Sultan  
the neighing of Lakshmibai's horse in my mind

I like to think  
of all the brackets  
that still confine people  
of the drugs  
that have fused our brains  
of that shriek  
still stuck in the throat

History  
has never been my friend

\*

I did call you  
a parcel of sun rays  
I will close you in my fist  
and then open, so slow  
you can weave a silky thorn on your body

Then I'll toss you gently

towards the sky

so you can open your wings yourself

You shall fly

without forgetting to crawl

then crawl while flying

and search for all the answers

to all those questions

in the eyes of my mother

as question marks

moments before her death.

NEKOPIRATI

## Stray Dreams

Each morning

my dreams begin

to wander around

They know where not to go

Destinations

are never marked in their plans

They don't go to Fairyland

The beauty of the stars

doesn't attract them either

Among those living on Earth

they love only black ants

which are not less than elephants

Trees and birds don't

attract them

Their most interesting practice

is to trail running cars



Abandoning cities and villages

they reach

those satellites

where live those

we in our languages call the dead

The story of dead people is different too

They don't recognize the new ways of life

and go gossiping to the dreams

By night the dreams return

home

and place their bundle on the stump

in the middle of my mind

where they themselves sleep

the bundle opening me awake

in my nights with its gifts

Varicose Pain

A few ants

traipse down my thighs

to the ground, bottling up

in their mouths

the dreams of those

saved by living.

Leaving behind blue oblivions

they descend further.

Pain melts in their mouths

in thin blue smiles.

I encompass the pain

in soles consigned to earth.

NEKOPIRATI

Varicose Pain II

Within my torso

two bags huff and puff

filled with the tedium of things

Among the boredoms is a list of work

that exceeds my limits

I don't know which worthless law

decreed me this list

and I, a fool in the night,

have forgotten that I myself

am not even on the list

My swollen veins

question me—

*bang-bang*—

and I rub my feet with my hands

to keep the cries beneath my tongue

Knee Pain

Above my calves two oleanders

bloom, piquant and climbing

all aggression, tireless,

till they morph to hibiscus

with biting pain

on these axes like a bobbin

Until time blossoms

on my palms

Until the lines open up

twin pains wake in hibiscus

and control my journeys

Still I walk, two stars

on each calf, forgetting

the count of destroyed time

against all the pain

centralized

just below my thighs

Spiders

On the back of each of my hands

a spider climbs

weaving the warp and woof

from neck to feet

I think only of mother

I don't remember Kabir

and his sheet

don't even remember the two girls

singing a hymn to Prana

I think only of mother

and her veins soaked in oil

I put my palms on my lap

and stroke them

as if they were mother's forehead

Time Near To Me

Today I woke late  
and ignored my cup of tea  
reading an unknown  
poet from Lithuania.  
His poems were open like a glass jar  
and my words began  
to fill the gaps between them.

Today I ignored the dirty dishes  
in the sink, didn't bother  
to fold the washed clothes.  
I turned on the TV, flipped  
channels, and let my room  
fill with many voices.

When words took flight from my fingertips  
on the keyboard, birthing  
a poem by computer,  
that movement  
"time" wandered around me  
like my tame dog.

The Wings of an Ant

They say an ant has no wings

and that even if she did, she couldn't fly.

And if unable to fly, why suffer the pain of wings?

The ant's death rides on her wings,

but death itself is flight.

The ant started to fly

by pale blue light, bending

her wings to the south,

an illusion of silence amidst noise.

Towards the yellow light, she flew

against her life,

carrying flight in her every cell.

She saw the seeds of flight

for the next generation.

When he plays the drum,

the sea steams

and his beloved's brow

beads with sweat,

when he beats the drum,  
huge stars implode  
and the curtain  
flickers in his beloved's window.

Sweat-soaked pain sprays out  
from his beating drum,  
the Earth losing its way,

a small bird  
landing on his beloved's roof,  
her hair  
showering down,  
the trees  
bathed in its sweet perfume.

The Swamps of Alzheimer's

1

Her trembling feet inch forward  
into the future, they  
slip suddenly, she falls



into the past, starts

to chuckle, Look! The trees,

they're talking to me,

and she starts chatting

with branches, the leaves

of the Neem tree,

in the courtyard of grandfather.

I pull her back with force

from the heights of coconut trees

and she gets irritated,

runs to words,

granduncle's storeroom,

where she searches

for inked addresses

long wiped clean.

I pull at her

and she becomes again

and again a little girl,

mother in the swamps

of Alzheimer's.

2

It's my turn,

I'll comb your hair,  
you're pulling mine,  
apply more oil.

Raking fingers  
through gray thin hair  
the daughter thinks  
of the little girl  
grown up and the old mother  
changed into a little girl.

3

These days she's upset  
by riotous memories,  
whatever happens now  
is wiped away,  
a crowd of memories  
rushing backwards.

She's forgetting  
the meaning of key words,  
forces her way  
into stories, sometimes  
sleeping, sometimes hiding

in the kitchen pantry.

4

After wetting the bed  
she tries to hide it  
with a pillow,  
inspects it and smiles  
like an opening bud,  
even after a scolding  
mischief swims  
at the corner of her lips.

O, is this my mother  
or a careless little girl?

5

These days  
everyone talks to her,  
each chair, table, and box,  
they come to her room,  
dogs, lions, and leopards,  
without fear  
she plays with houseflies,

dances with ants,  
mother a friend  
to everyone  
who cannot be seen  
by we, the intelligent.

Like a kite  
slipping from hands,  
mother drifts  
through the swamps of Alzheimer's.

Remembering the Camps of Exiled Kashmiris

These days I'm forgetting  
a number of things:  
a pen, spectacles,  
and sometimes I can't even recall  
what I've forgotten,  
but today, after two long years,  
I can still remember well  
the exiled like the memory of my own mother.

When I met them that day, I recalled mother,  
a woman often compared to them  
because of the color of her skin  
and her pink lips.

I met them again

and I thought again of mother,

who still looks like them,

her pale, dull skin, her lips.

Mother lost control of her legs

then her arms, and finally her

neck; bedridden, unable

to talk, she's full of wounds and waste.

They first lost their feet

in their land, then their arms

were pinned down by a political system;

their voices taken away by hunger,

their hearts filled with bloodshed.

One can see their wounds in their eyes.

How strange after two long years

to recall them

as clearly as the sky on sunny days,

suffocating sounds

come from mother's throat:

*ghon, ghon.*

I get restless

and think of them, I think

of a new bride wrapped head-to-toe

in a red sari. I remember

the windowless room, the ventilator,

fifteen family members packed in there.

I choke on the thought

of a newlywed couple

waiting to celebrate their marriage.

I remember mother when I recall the eyes

of angry youth,

a number of questions on their lips.

When I think of their exile

I cry for mother, forced to live

against her wishes

in her daughter's home,

forgetting to die.

Why do I mix mother

with them

when in many ways

they share little in common?

I ask myself and begin to cry

for their land, their sanctuary,

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my flood of tears

washing mother's feet.

NEKOPIRATI

The Sea

1

The sea is quite different  
from the sky,  
different too the clouds  
from one another,  
but when, as she stands  
on the shore  
and he takes her in his wavy arms,  
wets the hair  
strewn across her face,  
fondles her thighs,  
lays his head at her feet  
and looks up at her,  
where, then, is the difference  
between him  
and a starved lover?

2

Every evening  
the sea gathers  
the sacred wood of clouds,



strikes the holy fire of the sun,

and sets out an offering of waves

to conjure its black magic,

every evening the darkness comes

from that magic, spreading

the news of a conspiracy,

and from that conspiracy

this world has grown.

3

As evening withers

a star sprouts

on the sea,

with a finger at his lips

he bids everyone quiet,

says Be careful,

you're not the only one

alone,

we're each alone

in our own sea.

4

I saw him

and the sea that evening,

he was bobbing

in the water, the sea

flowing over him.

He saw me

and the sea together,

the sun sinking

into the water,

and me sinking with him,

each of us

sinking

into the other.

5

In the quiet black

of night, the earth grows

a ray of light,

what's unusual

is how the sky hangs

lamps of light

each night, looking

at the sea

he stays behind,

blows the line of light

into an oven burning

across the sea.

6

Somebody says

It's an open sky,

open

as an opened fist.

Somebody says

It's a deep sea,

deep

as the heart of man.

When I saw it

it was an empty canvas

without

a single scratch.

7

It's the sea, smell

of bodies,

of floating light,

the smell making nostrils

flutter like fish

darting through water.

The smell enters

every pore

like pieces of shell

and the body changes

into a sea of smells.

8

Keeping innumerable colors

close to his chest

like floating lights

and laughing rocks

how lonely the sea is

who knows?

Even the sea doesn't know

his reverberations,

the waves laying their heads

on the shore, bursting bubbles

whispering into ears

how lonely the sea is

who knows?

9

The sea is getting wet

in the rain

laughing

like a desert child,

the sea is getting wet

with its own tears

smiling

like a young woman

sitting on an island,

the sea is getting wet

with a shower of love:

his sobbing pain

at getting separated

from his loved one,

the sea is getting wet

in the first rain

after summer.

10

The smell of the sea

is different

from the soil

wet in the rain,

has no relation

to the smell of flowers,

doesn't know

the sharp taste of passion.

The smell of the sea

doesn't enter through nostrils

but through every pore,

touching gently,

hypnotic.

The smell of the sea

speaks the story

of the sweat of fishermen,

the play of sea life,

the legends of ships.

## Old Lady Talk

The old lady's stomach  
was a drum of chatter:  
*rat-a-tat* here,  
*yippity-yap* there,  
playing so long  
loneliness passed her by  
without even knocking  
at her door.

Then one day she went  
quiet.

The sun rose;  
she said nothing.

The moon bloomed;  
she stayed silent.

Wind, flower, ants, lizards—  
all came and went,  
the old lady  
remaining silent.

People say  
that was the time

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of the great collapse

of walls

between heaven and hell.

NEKOPIRATI



## Tongues

My mouth teems with tongues  
of many tints and flavors,  
similes and metaphors.

At first I had one,  
just one  
that I fastened early  
each morning and gave over  
to sleep's care  
each night.

I don't recall  
when it split and branched  
like an aloe plant,  
dividing into two,  
three, four sections.

All these tongues talked  
even in sleep,  
causing days  
to lose their count,  
and striking the dreamworld  
dumb.

And in the midst

of so many tongues

I had none.

NEKOPIRATI

Cry

My cry

finds no place

on Earth

nor in the sky

and so seeks

shelter in my chest,

my belly and thighs,

my womb.

They fear my cry

and so rip

at my skin

with nails, wishing

to remove

my womb.

I bury my womb

in the earth

and stand still

until turning

into a tree

that grows with thousands

of cries

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against the nails

of artificial

civilization.

All this can begin

in a single cry.

NEKOPIRATI

## A Faithful Prayer

Deep love cannot surface

during faithful prayer.

It's a sin think of love

while praying.

But prayer within love?

That's the greatest virtue!

NEKOPIRATI

The language of the poetry

At the tip of my pen's nib is a colander.

My words sieve through it like fine sand:

a few words, a few spellings, and a few meanings

always stick to colander, turning

the language that makes it through

babble the critics say. The language of poetry

cannot be babble.

Grammarians do not accept the language even

I scrape the stuck spellings, meanings, and vowels

from the colander and blend them into language.

It's still not poetry

because it's plastered with corrections.

So I leave the language and colander

and take only expression:

I fly it as a kite into a sky of emotion.

Now a poem can walk the earth

and face the sky.

Now there's no colander on my pen

and no critics look at my poems.

Refugee

They came to this land  
as if by sea, the way wind  
clings to spar, like the dew  
on a humid morning  
somewhere near the equator  
or the way moths on a rainy evening  
fly towards the light,  
they took shelter in this place  
the way wasps nest in the holes  
of old wooden doors, or a letter  
with a wrong address in a post office box  
or unwanted email in an inbox,  
they settled in this land  
the way ice floats in a glass of juice,  
like kites holding tight to the ruins  
of buildings,  
they return each night  
by marshy paths where  
their footprints stipple the land  
like goose bumps, their hunger  
stubborn as the blackened ash  
stuck to the bottom of a pan,  
one step backward

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to lurch one forward

they disappear into the land

that does not belong to them.

NEKOPIRATI



Laughter Is a Prayer

Laughter is a prayer

needing many intonations

to go from chortle to song.

The chortle wakes the gods,

but its the first note of song

that connects with time.

The second note of laughter

flows from the eyes,

not the lips.

Laughter is a prayer

against all unrepeatd prayers

and against all deities

who dare call my laughter uncouth.

Poet/ Translator/ Editor (kritya) / Director Poetry festivals -kritya and vedic scholar. She has 11 collections of poetry in Hindi and English and one each in translated in to Malayalam (translated), Irish, and Italian, and English by other poets. Her poems have been translated in other international languages like Chinese, Vietnam, Albanian , Spanish, Uzbek, Indonesian etc .

She has a travelogue in Hindi “Cheenti ke par”, a Memoir in English “ Every thing is past tense “, and a criticism on the work of famous Malayalam Poet Balamaniyyamma’s work. Her study on the Atharvaveda has been published as “The Seeds of the Mind- a fresh approach to the study of Atharvaveda” under the fellowship of the Indira Gandhi National Center for Arts.

She has translated about 12 Malayalam works, both prose and poetry, into Hindi and two poetry books from Norwegian languages. she has participated in several national seminars and published articles in a number of journals. She secured the Kendriya Sahitya Akademi award for translation in the year 2000.

She has been invited for poetry reading in prestigious poetry festivals like “Poesia Presente” in Monza (Italy)( 2009 ), Mediterranean Festival (Rome)( 2009 ),International House of Stavanger (Norway)( 2009 ), Struga Poetry Evening (Macedonia)( 2010) ‘3rd hofleiner donauweiten poesiefestival 2010, Vienna , the prestigious poetry festival in Medellin -Colombia (2011 and 2014),And she also taken part in in China’s Moon Festival and Asia pacific poetry festival Hanoi (2015)

She is the only Indian participant in some imp poetry festivals like Iran’s Fajr Poetry Festival , Iran (2014) , International Istanbul Poetry Festival (IIPF) Turkey (2014), 4th international Eskisehir Poetry Festival Turkey (2014). She has also been invited to some American Universities like Mary Mount University in Los Angeles and University of Seattle ( USA) to talk on Vedic poetry and recite her own poetry.

She is the founder member of the World Poetry Movement. She is the only Indian whose poem has been chosen in popular book of china “110 modern poems of the world”and a Special poetry reading in A Caruna , Spain ( 2015), Poetry reading at Foundation Vicente Risco, at Allariz ( Spain ) 2015, International female poetry festival, created and host by Fundación Casa de la, Cultura,Cereté-Córdoba (Colombia).2015, 10th Edition of “ Ritratti di Poesia” Feb 2016, International,

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poetry week, at Suiyang Country, ZUNYI CITY , China in 2016Her three books  
have been translated in to Estonian, Vietnam and Irish languages

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NEKOPIRATI