

## **Eternal Blooms**

*(In defense of poplars)*

Peering through my window bars  
I inhale the mild fragrance of the laburnum blooms.  
Gulmohars too, but, I think of poplars, why?  
Sigh. In my room, hangs a reproduction of a Monet painting  
of poplars four, blooming in linearity stark;  
eternally, lifting me from throes of gloom,  
catapulting me to bygone times, those pristine climes  
when sitting on the patio of our cottage near the Lidder\*  
We sang off- key rhymes, as birds chipped in with their tiny notes.  
A stout cloud hitched a ride on sun's fiery shoulders  
making place for the drugged night, hugging the boulders.

It was the month of June. Lo and behold!  
The moon dipped low [Or so it seemed,  
Or maybe we dreamed?}  
Suddenly you screamed,  
“Stop frowning, the moon is drowning. “  
Of course, I knew you were clowning.  
But yes, I saw, the moon; it was there in the water.  
Gasping for breath.  
Were the waves trying to strangle it to death?  
Near the Dal Lake, the boisterous throng, sang a happy song,  
their notes swaying with the mesmerizing canopy of the poplar trees.  
Walking on the promenade, furtively looking at the watch,  
“Was it time to go, huh, already?”  
I asked; my foolish heart unsteady.  
Now time wriggles on arthritic legs

But then it was Usain Bolt,  
Bolting fast, like a frisky colt.

These poplars on the wall keep transporting me  
to that cottage small and our joyous walks on the boulevard.  
Time takes heavy breaths, a tired colt. An exhausted Usain Bolt.

*\*LIDDER is a 73 kilometers long River, in the Kashmir region [India]*

### **I Am Thirsty, Mom\***

The train rumbles on, grumbling at the heat.  
Through the window, I glimpse a bedraggled fellow  
curled on a bench, lips parched, huffing,  
and an empty water bottle rolled to his side.

With a wrench, it moves on. Huffing and puffing.  
Clanging and squealing, rocking along.  
“I am thirsty, mom.” Pleads a tiny girl.  
“Hush, child .We have to save the water.”

Voices colliding against each other, in dearth.  
Shrieking, groaning and sobbing. Smothering.  
It grows hotter. “Water, we want water.”  
Nerves become taut as another helpless mother  
scolds her parch- lipped daughter.

A pugnacious voice booms,  
“How dare you touch my water,  
robbing me of the last drop, were you?”

A babelesque confusion of voices,  
screeching, squeaky, pesky. Lungs about to burst.  
A scuffle, a scrimmage. A hopeless rage.  
Voices hoarse with thirst.

Rattling pails, piteous wails. Palms sweating, hearts ticking.  
Hyperventilating humans. Dried tongues licking drier lips.  
Water deprived bodies fighting liquid battles.  
Frantic urgency. 'Water, water'.  
Nerves now become tauter.  
It grows hotter; still hotter and the cry for water dies.  
Die the people fumbling, tumbling, stumbling, and crumbling.  
Mumbling and moaning through singed tongues.  
No more the rattling of pails. No more!

Lo! Sudden music floats in the air, vibrating unshackled.  
Thrilling, free. No water. No wails. Just music.

A soothing musicality of liberation from thirst.  
The music of death. A threnody.  
The train rumbles on towards a waterless dawn.

*\*Poem triggered by a news item which said that the next big war will be fought for water.*

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