

Poetry Series

Prasanna Mishra
- poems -

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Prasanna Mishra(5th September,1942)

Lives in Bhubaneswar with his wife Smt Rama Mishra. Wrote most of his poems while working in the Government. Of late, writing sparingly and only small poems.

A Haiku

Vacation ends
The school bus honks
In the child's dream.

Prasanna Mishra

A Letter For Me

The crow in my courtyard
Crowed the whole morning
On the first day of the spring
The postman knocked
At the neighbour's door
Invitation to an honour
To be bestowed
On him.

In my room
My friend stepped
Into the heap of letters
Awaiting despatch
His neighbour
Getting ready
To attend the banquet
For the honoured elite
The crowing in my courtyard
Continued
Nonetheless.

At my door
He arrived and knocked
In an evening
At last I received
The postman
At my door
To give me
The notice from
My creditor
To return the loan
Repaid long ago.

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Prasanna Mishra

Birthday Gift

It was laden with fruits again this year
As it was each year
Cuckoos hid behind its rich foliage again this year
And sang, as they did, each year.
I fed it with backyard manure this year
As I did, each year.
I dug a trench around it this year
As I hadn't done, before.
A weather-proof cover did surface
That had not shown before
A small note in my hand
Written two decades ago
On a cool September morning
She had fever
Arranging her woolen shawl
Against the blowing wind
She had planted, smiling
A birthday gift to me, for ever.

Prasanna Mishra

Citizen's Journey

His leader convinced him.
He dwelt in poverty
And shunned prosperity
One was virtue; the other vice.
His family lived
In a cobweb of deprivation

Leader's son was returning
After his studies abroad
To take over father's baton
In a function.
He was in a hurry.

Indian political story continues,
Treading the beaten track,
Leader's opulence
Followers' penury

Prasanna Mishra

Come Rains

Pour dear clouds
Pour, with great vengeance
I would welcome your drops
At all hours of the day
Even if it makes
My television monitor blank
And keeps me away from
Brazil playing Holland
I yearn for the nectar
Oozing out from your
Dark bosom
In profuse abandon
The sinner needs the
Smart blast for cleansing
As much as does
The land parched
For quenching her thirst
And, for sustaining Life.

Prasanna Mishra

Cricket

Twenty Twenty, a haiku

Written on the bat by the ball on the pitch

On floodlight

Prasanna Mishra

Daughter

She decides from land far off
What her parents would have for breakfast
Her message in the chat box we convey to the housekeeper
And see her at the breakfast table.

Prasanna Mishra

Election

After the
spoken magic words
under a colourful canopy
clothed him
with a rainbow apparel,
pangs of disrobing
accompany
him home.

Prasanna Mishra

Euthensia

I hear them all
Saying their prayer
Gasping Governance,
Justice,
Sex slave in the desert,
Poor mother selling her infant
For Euthensia.

I thought God's world
Was for blissful living
Where we do our duty
And play with flowers
And Butterflies

Why then
Do I hear
The deafening Prayer
Resonating in the sky and the sea?

Prasanna Mishra

Evaluation

like the ostrich they buried their heads
into answer-sheets
while I ducked eye contact
with my invigilator and
looked at the rainbow
of red; maroon; pink; yellow dupattas;
jeans and shoes.

I gained experience
while the rest laboured
to vomit erudition putrefied.

the bell rang
I handed un-spoilt
sheets with empty space galore
for evaluator to write what he liked,
while knowledge scribbled
on other sheets evaluator
had no need to read.

Prasanna Mishra

Festival

From behind a restive bat
entangled in the thick cobwebs
God looks askance
at the brightly attired
approaching priest.

Prasanna Mishra

Happiest Moments

Not those moments
When I hear
The footsteps
Of the approaching gardener
To tend my roots
and body.

Not those
When my body is full
With foliage tender
And blossoms smiling
In their millions.

Not those
When the cuckoo sings
Perched on my arm
Caressed by tender breeze
Flowing through
Silky tender leaves.

Not those
When fruits ripened
Ready for plucking
By the caring hands
Of my owner.

Those are the ones
When the shiver comes
With the thought
Of the cuckoo's approaching perch
On my arm
To commence its song
Which ooze
The blossoms
From the void within me.

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Her Smile

Her smile tripped
over the perfume bottles
the shopping mall turned
to a fragrant valley
when her stroll widened
to a larger swathe.

Prasanna Mishra

Humming Bird

when lexicon
turns inadequate
when upsurge of dreams
fails to form
into twinkling stars
when emotions
grope for words
to move forward
and crash
against stone wall
when prayers
in their intensity
smoulder,
Muse flies
to be
a humming bird.

Prasanna Mishra

Hump On The Highway

The dry leaves
Year after year
Have the same message
Conveyed
The stage is for others

Stay therefore
I must
In the cage
Like the mute parrot
Newly bought
With only the pair of ears
My only
Acceptable possession.

A lifeless hump
On the highway
To ensure
Safe journey
For others
To endure
Their load
And exist
Silently
In my cell.

I hear one day
The evening cuckoo
I see someone coming;
Yes, he comes
To me
To me alone
Needs an answer
To his enquiry.

Must I then
Not break my silence
Like the deserted well
Built in days of yore

Quenching the thirst
Of a way-worn
Lone wary traveller
In an alien land!

Prasanna Mishra

I Am No God

I am no God,
I cry when a child dies of hunger,
When a mother sells her infant to the wine merchant, I cry
I have no appetite to be God
And get loaded with gold,
I am happy I have tears, to shed, to comfort
When I try but fail, I cry
While you God, you let the child die of hunger
You do not have even tears.

Prasanna Mishra

If I Die At Dawn

If I die at dawn
Stand at the window
And wait
For the breeze
To cheer you
For the rest of the day
With fragrance
Of the night flower
A handful of which
I always loved
To pour into your palms.

If I die
When the fiery disc
Is still young
Norture that plant
The bud of which
Had you not restrained
I would have plucked
And put on your soft lock.

If I die
When the sun is at zenith
Put that apron
Around your head
Which you said
Was my talisma
Even while you are
In an unfriendly crowd.

If I die
After night's approach
Take that walking stick
I had promised
You to buy for me
And take you out
On a stroll
In the evening
On the bank

To watch the stream
Flowing into the sea.

Prasanna Mishra

Last Sunset Of The Century

Piercing lumps of stones
Inflict bruises
His frame aches
While the carrier moves
He the lone human traveller.

Miles away the destination
The maidan
Non serious mentors
Would display
Effortlessly a plethora
Of fragile promises
of different textures
And weave
For him
A phantom apparel
And tickle
His impotent manhood
For a while.

Nursing fingers
Benign evening breeze
Stop tending bruises
The carrier stops
Driver alights
At the illicit brewery
To quench his thirst
Where one highway
Meets another.

Riot of colour
In western sky beckons
Nature is enacting
The last Sunset
Of the century;
The hue divine

He leaps towards
And stands
Erect.

Will the incubator
Of the incoming night
Devour this merchandise
Of the century
And give birth
To a man complete
To salute the rising sun
The next morning!

Prasanna Mishra

Mango Tree

It was laden with fruits again this year
As it was each year
Cuckoos hid behind its rich foliage, again this year
And sang, as they did, each year.
I fed it with backyard manure this year
As I did, each year.
I dug a trench around it this year
As I hadn't done, before.
A weather-proof cover did surface
That had not shown before
A small note in my hand
Written two decades ago
On a cool September morning
She had fever
Arranging her woolen shawl
Against the blowing wind
She had planted, smiling
A birthday gift to me, for ever.

Prasanna Mishra

Mother's Child

Her outstretched hands
in air guide
the tiny feet
the ten month old
turns and smiles...
a cocktail of
separation and
achievement

Prasanna Mishra

My Kalahandi

Rolling of tears
Occasionally
Looks natural
Like expected rains
Over,
The sky looks bright
Like a child's gleeful face.
Unabated tears
Corrode flesh
It flows
Baring bones
Outcrop of rocks
On those hillocks
Sans foliage.

Why then do you roam
Amidst rocks
Barren
He gave you
His wealth
His grains
And cows
You were in dire need
He thought
Gave on and on
To roam
Away, from home.

Let him
Now return
A humble man
And live,
Let waves of tears
No more
Swell the Indravati
Enough
My friend
Let him see
Butterflies

In his hillocks
And meadows,
Again.

(Indravati, a tributary of the river Godavari, flows in Kalahandi. Kalahandi is a district of Odisha that attracted wide attention due to widespread poverty.)

Prasanna Mishra

My Pebbles And Crabs

The ship had left the shore
With them

They were sulking
on the shore
The returning waves
Helped
My struggling catamaran
A bit
To go forward
Into the deep waters
And told me so.

They returned
With rubies
And whales
I with sardines
And crabs
They discarded.

The few pebbles
From the shore
Gone,
My cottage burgled
Those sulking
Did it
On return.

They lived
So did
The grand voyagers
My catamaran
Moves with me
For the crabs
And sardines
And a few pebbles

On return
From the shore.

Prasanna Mishra

My Treasure

How could it have
been otherwise?
You say the treasure
Paltry
Song feeble
The retrain brief
The play tragic
And the smile
Half lit.

Yes, I was on the sea
All these long years
But the boat
Entered a whirlpool
After another
Against wishes
Against efforts.

Perchance
A tiny beach
of a crowded island
Came my way
A very small beach
I could tread on
In my sojourn brief
A tiny lily pool
I rested by
only briefly.

That is why
The treasure meagre
The verse sombre
And the play
Tearful.

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Prasanna Mishra

Night

Sometimes
I find her
Insomniac, quiet and forlorn;
Sometimes, serene and asleep,
with incessant chirping
of the cricket resonating
Through the hills in the horizon;
Open eyed, sometimes,
In the wee hours
In airport terminals.
Leave her alone I pray;
Out of bounds for marauders.
If I were to be
The dispenser of justice,
I would pronounce her inalienable right
To a serene sleep
In the swinging singing arms of Mother Earth.
To usher a dawn of sanity.

Prasanna Mishra

Night Rainbow

Dark clouds would engulf again
I painted a rain-bow and a brief sunshine
In the interlude
To let you enjoy a packet of Alu Bhujia
With friends
Before you run again and again
To tell the elusive Tahasildar*
That the piece of land
The goon is building a palace on
Has been yours
That was forcibly taken away
You would cool your hurt psyche
And share tea with a stranger
Yet another victim
In the nearby tea shop and
Listen to your story from his lips
The Tahasildar has not shown up
Even on his eleventh errand
In the scorching heat.
Are you not entitled, my friends
Even to see a rainbow and a brief sunshine
I, a friend, paint for you
For the looming dark nights! !

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* Tahasildar is a local public official dealing with Estate.

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Prasanna Mishra

Puri On Sea

Those grains of ashes
I yearn for
On the beach
The sea breeze blew
From the collapsing pyre
In the west
After the fire
Had consumed
The mortal remains
Of our forefathers.

Those tiny-crabs
I yearn to look for
On the shore
Who fed on
Those drops of tears
Which flew
From the flood
From the eyes of the bereaved sons
Lighting the pyres.

That tribe of fishermen
On the shore
With majestic cone-crowns
I yearn for
Who had lifted
A lone sobbing one year old
That was me
five decades ago
Away
From the incoming waves
And deposited
In a police booth
With both the neck
And gold chain
Around it
In tact.

Those ruins of fortresses

And grand mansions
Determined groups
Of children built on and on
To be swept away
In a sweep
Of a playful sea
I yearn to see.

The balancing acts
Of tiny feet
On the yielding sand
Washed by soft brine
On its return journey
I yearn to see.

That ancient beach
Ever caressing
Both life and death
In grand serenity
In its pristine
Unspoilt whiteness
I yearn to see
Again

Prasanna Mishra

School

His quivering fingers grope
A corner of the school wall
Where unsteady fingers scribbled
Newly learnt alphabets
Seven decade ago

Prasanna Mishra

Song Of Life

Wilted leaves I knew
Do not revive
Yet I believed
When you said
They do

God does not answer
I had realised
Yet I believed
When you said
He does
When prayer is said
With tears.

I would never blossom
I was convinced
Yet I did
When you said
I would.

After the long walk
If you say
Your strong legs ache
With tears I would pray
You continue walking
And make me live.

Prasanna Mishra

Take Me Back Ashore

take me back

ashore, I plead

adrift for long

my yearning

grows more

to return,

be with me

in the rocking

catamaran

till the clouds

disappear

stay on

in my tossing

catamaran

the shore

is still

a cradle

of delirium

said

my dream

Prasanna Mishra

The Beast

I had watched her
Dancing
In the courtyard
Under the breezy autumn sky
With colourful kites
Year after year
In her years
Of adolescence

On some days
She crossed my way
With load of books
In her bulging bag
Running for the bus
Like other school girls

I had watched her
Grinding
Coriander seeds
And chillies red
Briefly
Every afternoon
For evening cooking
By her mother

In a spring
I saw her
on a swing
Transformed
A shy creeper
In bloom
With fragrance
In abundance

I saw the leopard

Shortly thereafter
That carried her off
To the bush
In an evening
Gnawing
In the thicket
With a garland
Around its neck
And whiskers raised.

Prasanna Mishra

The Man With Flute

Who is he
Coming so silently
Without a convoy
Without a banquet
And a welcome speech!
Some of us
Withdrew
A bit

He prodded us
To speak
We did
our wants were many
Ship, aeroplane, money
And chimney
He is impressed
we are simple
sincere and quick
He would give everything

Our invitation for lunch
He accepted
We ate
While he talked
offered his hands
For a lasting relationship

Why not plant a sapling
I suggested
In memory
Of his parents
To be protected
At my expense
Against errant cattle
He declined

Return he will

If not
Nor do we see
Ever his money
or chimney
The music will last
Long and kindle
His memory sweet;
He had played his flute
Into our hungry ears
While others didn't.

Prasanna Mishra

Through The Clubhouse

Rainbow on a cloudless sky
Vibrant legs
Some hidden
Immersed
In rhythmless symphony
Many riders
On the lone horse;

A childhood friend
I reminisced
Sharing of books
Of anecdotes
And tiffin-box
His stretched hands
I responded
He passed by
A friendly speck of nimbus
To shower
In the garden
Of someone else;

Silence of night
Outside
Filtered the distant music
An appetiser
For the feet
Frozen
At retreat;

A mighty peepul
In the suburb
At its feet
A dark faceless frame
Drum in hand
Sublime music
Before the poor's Trinity;

Sans pretension
Sans suppressed passion

I encountered
God's noble creation.

Prasanna Mishra

Togetherness

How does it feel
This togetherness
Those sporadic moments
After scores of lonely winters
That spontaneous
Upsurge of waves
After years
Of windless calm
Of a wave less ocean!

How does it sound
Those intermittent bouts
of endless whispers?

How does it look
That showing of scar
On the heart
By the relentless lashes
of piercing grains
of sand blown
By long unkind
Summer air
of years bygone?

How is it called
This togetherness
Will o the wisp!
Oh no;
Maybe it is like
Draupadi's robing
Through Krishna's
Compassion
Enriching both
Yet
Corrupting neither.

Tryst With Life

On the auspicious day
I also took my place
With a stoic frame of mind
Moved inch by inch
As the sluggish python
Continued
Its meandering motion

The eagerness
To place offerings
At the altar
Stupefied
The euphoria
of justlings
Near the sanctum sanctorum
Catapulted me
To an atoll
of isolation

Peace returned
After a while
I saw him
opening a door
In the rear
To let in
His own men
And women

Saw him
Bedecking them
With garlands
of those
Whose prayers
He had not answered

His big head
I saw from the atoll
That covered
His feeble conscience

His wide torso
I beheld
That hid
A tiny heart

I was lucky
I saw the door
In the rear;
I was happy
My hands were empty
When I joined
The procession.

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Prasanna Mishra

Visits To The Temple

I remember
The visit
A tiny palm
In protective warmth
Within grandfather's
To pay obeisance
In mumbling reverence
Before the majestic trunk
Smelling
The Sweetness of the ball
With yearning
To displace the rodent
And sit
At his feet.

With mother and aunts
And grown up family girls
The visit
I remember
To await
Someone's arrival
Incognito
In the crowd of devotees.

Before the goddess
While she wears
The blessed bangles
Lighting the lamp
I see
Her bright face
That visit
I remember.

With muscular followers
Making way
For me

The visit I remember
To the sanctum sanctorum
For a mute dialogue
face to face

Two quivering voices
Behind Garuda's pedestal
Searching His face
Through smoke screen
In the evening
I remember

Behind a black kiosk
Where dry wicks
Get greased
On the earthen lamps
Where monkeys roam
Now I seek a place
To stand
And watch
The banner meandering
In empty silence
Anxious
To snap the hold
from the wheel atop.

Prasanna Mishra

Voyage Of Love

Everyday
Your golden fingers
Place two intertwined wicks
on the shining brass lamp
And feed the twins
Belly full
With home made ghee
In that hall
Where both of us
Say our daily prayer;
One day
Lighting the waiting lamp
Before you could reach it
I asked
If this was love
Love is beyond mundane
You said, with a smile

I would form a rainbow to reach you
I said
Which both of us
Would climb
from both ends
And reach
The pinnacle of expectations
You pointed
At a spectre of nimbus
Snapping its continuity
The fear of falling down
From dizzy heights
Inhibited me
From climbing
You watched me
With a smile

I would reach you
Sailing the grand craft

Of ancient Kalinga mariners
I said
Crossing the seven seas
And bring you
From shore afar
You pointed
To the many wrecks
Of grand crafts
In the dark depths of lagoon
Even before
Those could sail
out of the harbour;
I forsake the craft
While you watched me
With a smile.

Then let me turn
Into a glow formless
Of love sublime
And row you
From an island of indulgence
To a hamlet of abstinence
From dazzling light
And deep darkness
To ethereal twilight
Of smouldering amber
Of Incense
I said;
You lowered
Your speaking eyes.

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Prasanna Mishra

Wasteland

In a wet morn
I saw a child
In a state of ecstasy
Watching a lazy water spider
Creating bubbles
In a cesspool
On the city-road.
With little else, except
The deafening silence around
To celebrate about.

Prasanna Mishra

Would You Like

Tell me
Would you
Ever like it
If the moon decides
To appear full
Night after night
And refuse
To take its crescent shape

If the meandering stream
Flows bosom full
Day after day
And declines to shrink
To its dancing frame

If the cuckoo sings
In your garden
Every morning
In season and out
Declining
To make its annual sojourn

If clouds
Cover the moon
Every fullmoon day
And block
Signals to the love lorn lily

If not dear
Why then do I yearn
Every moment
To look into those eyes
of yours
And listen
To their silent eloquence

To see those closed lips
Ever wearing
An idle crescent smile?

Prasanna Mishra