

A Letter to my Mother

By - Inamal Haq

Dear Mom,

I am not really sure where to start this letter, because I have so much to say. I think it's always difficult as a child to express a lot of things to their mother, especially if it's just telling the trauma through which I am going. The trauma is not one-sided and I know you feel more than me. Dear mom, there is no communication between us as you know that Indian dictatorship has scrapped the Article 370 and had done bifurcation of our state. But before that, they made stories and issued a notice to their people to leave the valley. The story was interesting that we are listening from 1947 that there is a terrorist threat from Pakistan. However, they were successful in taking out their citizens. Do not be confused that why I am using their people. Obviously, when care and concern are given to one section and left another section on the mercy of God, then this difference is visible (Hum aur Aap). The Britishers also used such terms in their colonial era, when they were framing laws and regulations or making decisions in India. India only changed its cover and applied the same strategies and methods in Kashmir. There would be plenty of questions in your mind that why are we being deprived of basic rights. If India celebrates and why Kashmiri people are being sieged in their homes, Indefinite curfew, communication gag, internet snapped, roads blocked, even patients dying at home and why such detention is being imposed here.

Dear Mom, I cannot explain to you all, but I just inform you about certain things through which you can understand, why our rights do not matter. Detaining people or curfews and other deprivations are basically one of the tactics that are applied by a state with the help of their law enforcement agencies especially against those who are against their policy. India is using all these practices not for the interest of the public, but rather to states interest. The heavy militarization in Kashmir with unlimited powers is a form of state violence. The state violence can be destructive because it manifests itself in the bodies of individuals and causes physical pain and mental distress. The law is one of the tools that help the state to regulate violence for the maintenance of social order and seeks to change human behaviour. However, instead of that, it asserts authority on the lives of individuals and even asserts authority over authority itself. In this process, somebody loses liberty, property, family and even life (Parry, 2006). The principle of modern states violence which operate through the principle of law and state powers are known as 'exceptions' in which inhabitants are stripped of their basic rights like the right to liberty, expression, and freedom and submitted to the sovereign power of the state.

According to Agamben, the twentieth century had produced a paradoxical phenomenon known as legal civil war which is enacted between state and non-state actors. In this matter, the "state of exception" remains undeclared allowing for its subjugation (2002). In this suppression, not only political adversaries become the victims, but the entire categories of the population that resists against the state being integrated into the political system. In modern democracies, the intentional creation of a permanent "state of exception" has become one of the dominant measures. A "state of exception" is a lawless void, in which state authorities act in extreme situations with the force of law. The force of law makes law and life indistinguishable. Giorgio Agamben is of the view that every action should be dealt with legal action, but unfortunately, that is not possible in the "state of exception" because the functions of law depend on violence. The state uses its extra-legal violence against its own people in order to combat an emerging threat and there is no role of the judiciary in the state of Emergency/Exception.

Dear mom, in the next letter, I will text you further about the exception and how rule of law works in it. Thank you for being there for me whenever I needed you. In such Panic situation, I need you again and every time, I am thinking about you and father. I cannot eat and sleep well like you. Not on phone, but everyday I am talking to you in Imagination. I hope the blockade would end soon and I shall contact you and want to share and listen from you.

With Love!
Your obedient son

Haris Adhikari: Going for Finest Whiskey in Writing



HARISADHIKARI

IT Exclusive

HARISADHIKARI is a widely published poet and translator from Nepal. A lecturer of English at Kathmandu University, Adhikari edits *Misty Mountain Review*. He has three books of poetry and translation to his credit, and is currently working on his upcoming book of Nepali poetry and an experimental poetry project—clipoetry, apart from some works of research. In the past, he has served as a researcher, interviewer, translator and contributor for *Nepal Monitor*. He has also been a guest translator for *Grey Sparrow*, a US based literary journal. His poems and works of translation have appeared in various national & international journals. **Siam Sarower Jamil** talks to him about his poetry and dreams for *Imphal Times*.

Siam - When did you start writing and what do you think attracted you to poetry?

HARIS- Writing, particularly poetry, has always fascinated me. I wrote my first poem when I was 9. Initially, it was nature that filled me with awe and inspiration. In particular, flowers, birds, rivulets, rainbows, the open sky, and the illusive horizon attracted me the most. Later, frictions of different kinds—from socio-cultural to personal ones—ignited my poetic sensibilities. But I wrote sporadically until 2007, in Nepali, English and Hindi languages. Then, after my master's studies, I gave more of myself to reading and writing poetry, and in recent years, to poetry translation and my research interests. I think in the last ten years I've focused more on personal, spiritual, social, and cultural

venues, also for my other books.

What I have learned is good writing requires not only a lot of passion, diligence and rigor but also a lot of patience, humility and honesty. Rejection or disagreement, like success, is part of what you do as a writer. It's not the end of the world. Eventually what counts is learning and improvement.

In this regard, I remember a wonderful occasion from last year, when a senior friend of mine took me to Dufftown in Scotland, where we made a tour of the famously traditional Glenfiddich Distillery and learned about the whole process of whiskey-making. I was so impressed to see how the finest and most expensive whiskey comes to us after nearly half a century. Even the eighteen-year-old whiskey that I got to taste there still lingers on my tongue, with its perfectly fine flavor and tantalizing scent. I just happen to think of this whenever the issue of good writing pops up! It's amazing how the oak casks take the raw liquors in for years and decades and enhance their colors, soften and round out their flavors, imparting their entire aroma to their being and becoming! And it's amazing how long people (can) wait! I'm convinced that it takes a lot of hard work and patience to be or have such 'finest whiskey' in writing.

Siam - How do you think you've evolved as a writer over the years?

HARIS- I am still learning. My interest in poetry has now led me also to poetry translation and research in different areas of creative writing and translation. Of course, my experiences in writing, editing and publication are what I've learned a lot from.

One example: One of my manuscripts of English poetry was going through editing process for publication last year. The editor and publisher was so excited to publish the book. We worked on the manuscript for about three months. But then, at the eleventh hour, after more than 3 scores of correspondences, we could not agree on certain linguistic and ideological issues. Then I kept the manuscript aside for some months before I made some significant changes in it. Now I'm looking for publication

Siam - How do you balance your writing life and teaching life?

HARIS- These days in the university, I get busier in different sorts of activities, ranging from teaching to editing to reviewing papers to doing research. And I often bring home some of these duties. So, I've not been able to devote as much time as I should. But I do make good use of holidays and vacations. I'm also a kind of nocturnal being!

Siam - You've translated several Nepali & Western poems. Do you think that translating has affected your own poetry? How?

HARIS - Yes, it has. The books and papers on translation and poetry that I read during and after my translation and research projects helped me broaden my perspectives of writing and translation and refine their craft of mine. I came through gradual changes of perceptions, to take the original texts as 'organic whole' and the translated ones generally as 'sum of the whole,' to borrow from Gestalt theory.

The translation efforts I made have enriched my repertoire of mythological, historical and cultural as well as literary knowledge. And I've found some interesting areas for further research. I also came across, among other things, different matters of semiotic layers and styles, textual contexts and connections, cultural nuances and dilemmas, and tone and texture, from which I do hope to, somehow, enrich my poetry. I think some of this learning gets reflected in some poems of mine, basically in matters of register, experiment, variety, and craft. All these experiences have led me to how I can make my poetry organically rich from every angle.

Siam-How do you respond to writer's block or not knowing what to write?

HARIS- At times, I get restless. But I try to find inspiration from movies and documentaries I watch, from places I visit, from books I read, from people I interact with. I think it's important to fill you first with something interesting, something funny, something disturbing, or something serious—so that you get to churn it in your heart and mind before you take it out!

Siam- What's the best experience you've gained through your writing?

HARIS- The most important thing is writing has time and again helped me regain my sanity and peace of mind. It has helped me open up and express what I probably would not have expressed,

what I probably would not have been able to express in other forms.

There are many miscellaneous experiences. But for now my focus is more on learning—learning from the processes involved. As an aspiring person in this field, this is what counts as most important for me.

My last year's project was unsuccessful. But my experience of working with the native editor has been helpful for me. At any rate, I saw certain places where I needed to bring finesse in. The craft and skills I learned from the editing process are enriching. I basically learned to refine my language, especially as regards the personas' age factors and milieu, avoid tautology and repetition, and make the writing concisely structured with fine tone and texture. I also learned how the native speakers express in poetry a certain idea not as an idea alone, as in a usual sentence construction, but as something deeply felt. For instance, I remember how I once translated a passage as *they taste sweet*, which the editor changed to *this sweet taste*, thus changing the meaning just enough to better reflect the native language and culture's understanding of a deeply-felt concept. Apart from this, I learned to take as well as give constructive inputs on manuscripts. In short, I learned to revise, reformat and refine during those three months' intensive editing process.

Now, after a whole year, the manuscript has undergone significant changes, and is a (more) beautiful butterfly, I suppose!

Siam- Where do you see yourself going next?

HARIS- I'm simultaneously working on three manuscripts, tweaking here and there in them. Hopefully, I will find some good publishers for them this year.

I will also be (re-)working on my papers—on poetics and translation, street theatre in Nepal, myth dominance in life and world, teaching and learning, systemic regeneration and its persistence in Nepali academia, etcetera. I also have plans to bring out books of experimental poetry and poetics.

Kashmir And Manipur: Shared History of Fear, Betrayal & Alienation

By - Angellica Aribam
Courtesy-the Quint

Shared Stories of Tasting Fear in the Air

Over the years, my Kashmiri friends and I have shared stories of growing up in an environment where the Armed Forces Special Powers Act was so real that we could almost taste it in the air we breathed. We bonded over our understanding of how it was like growing up in a state where there were more curfews than school days, when police personnel could enter households at any time without warrants and arrest whoever they wanted, where women and girls became silent victims of sexual harassment during 'combing operations' while young men faced physical violence. The parallels existed in legislation as well; while Jammu & Kashmir had Article 370, Article 371-C was

implemented in Manipur. The developments in Jammu and Kashmir in the last 24 hours have been a hot topic of discussion across India. There are people on both sides of the spectrum either in support or criticism of the government's historic move, and they are free to air their opinions as we still live in a democracy. But what's concerning for a democracy is the complete blackout of the people whose lives are directly impacted by this decision—the people of Jammu & Kashmir and their elected representatives.

Curious Case of Manipur's Accession

The exclusion of the stakeholders from the decision-making process reminds me of the history of Manipur, an erstwhile princely state. When the British left in

1947, Manipur became briefly independent. Maharaja Bodhchandra acceded the union subjects to India but gained internal sovereignty with a separate constitution and a legislative body.

Two years later, in September 1949, when the Maharaja was in Shillong on a personal business, he was put under house arrest by the Indian authorities urging him to sign the Merger Agreement. The Maharaja wanted to go back to Manipur and consult it with his people and apprise his government, since a constitutionally elected government existed in Manipur. However, his requests fell on deaf ears and he remained in house arrest for four days. Ultimately, under duress, he signed the agreement to merge with India.

With the merger, the existing Manipuri legislative body as well as the Constitution were abolished and Manipur was made into a Part-C state. The people weren't consulted throughout the process and were, undoubtedly, unhappy. When protests intensified over the years, as people's awareness increased on what the merger really meant, Manipur was made into a Union Territory in 1956. But it didn't douse the fire of dissatisfaction and secessionist sentiments started brewing. After a few years, insurgency groups sprang up. In 1972, statehood was granted in an attempt to contain the angst of these groups but it failed.

Kashmir Has Scratched the Old Scars of Manipur

The mothers of the Indian state of Manipur have lost

generations of their young sons to militancy. For decades, they have witnessed armed combats, violence, and murders. Though majority of the people have no secessionist desire, there are still a few odd elements within the society who feel oppressed and continue to harbour such sentiments. The situation has not reached a stage of complete normalcy yet. Even after all these years, the scars etched in the memories in our mothers are yet to fade.

So when the government blacks out the people of Jammu & Kashmir, without learning any lessons from our histories of bloodshed and lost opportunities, it is alarming. Our government seems to have forgotten that 'We, the People' are at the heart of our democracy, that 'We, the

People' form the bedrock on which the Constitution rests. It is, therefore, a fraud on the Constitution when the people and their representatives are not even consulted with.

If the past is anything to go by, the events which have unfolded will alienate the people who are the subject of the proposed Amendments. Jammu and Kashmir has been fighting for more autonomy, and in an ironic twist, the state has been dismembered.

At this time of utmost peril, I can't stop thinking about my friend. I wish there were a way for me to tell him that though our lived experiences are different, I extend my solidarity to him and his people. I owe him a phone call, but our country has taken away that right from him.