

*Ranita Hirji***Waiting on Rain**

I hear you cry and rush to come
But I have lost my way
Those well-worn paths nowhere seen
Before me unending waste

Where are the kindly mountaintops
Their trees teasing the sky
Urging me on with their dance of grace
As I climbed on the wind to fly

I hear you thrashing, rasping for water
To turn over enough of yourself
Your sons have returned in rotting carcasses
Begging to be buried in their mother

But you are too hard, too near your end
Your dim eyes search in vain
I cannot cry...my acid tears
Will only burn parched skin

I wait and trust in your strength to hold
Our children will heal...come back whole
And I will find my way again
To cover you all with life and rain

Cobbler: Lockdown

You crank up your shutter, it creaks a little
 And I know my day has begun
 You lay out needles, leather...pillbox open in all weather...
 Cobbling existence till your day is done.

I empty my teacup, see the first feet arrive
 Twisting in pain, soles gaping wide
 You glue with patience, bind with a stitch
 Anticipating the length of their stride.

Now more stumble in...stages of despair...
 Feet in tatters plead for repair
 You patch the tears and hand them over
 They walk again their distance to cover.

Then no feet, street empty... I drink cold tea
 Shut in, I peep out... you stare vacantly.

Grass grows on pavement, cracks fill with weeds
 Squirrels play hide and seek with birds in trees
 Cloud and sky laugh, at last they breathe
 No longer choke on smoke and dust of feet.

We wait and we wither...waste in fear...
 I must trample that grass again; you must hear feet.

Ranita Hirji is a retired Professor of English and Communications. She taught English and Communications in Mount Carmel College from 1981 to 2002, during which time she designed the syllabi for the media courses leading to the BA in Communicative English at Bangalore University. From 2002 to 2016, she was Dean of Commits Institute of Journalism and Mass Communications in Bangalore. She has considerable experience in training students in public speaking, writing and theatre; and many of her students are prominent personalities in the Indian media industry today.