

*Shanta Acharya***All You Can Do**

Here's your thunder stolen by others,
your losses, ships that never return.

Here's your life passing slowly by,
your body of song promising all it can do.

Here's your heart reaching out to others,
your thoughts fresh rays of sun.

Here's your dream scattered across the sky,
falling stars not knowing what they can do.

Here's hope, gold at the edge of the rainbow,
casting a spell on us as we go.

Here's your fear walking in front of you,
thinking there is nothing you can do.

Here's my hand, place yours in mine,
I'll show you the world is yours.

Here's your true love waiting for you,
your tree of life, radiant in bloom.

Here's what you do, what you can do,
it's your future, make of it what you will –

Here's life in all its squalor and splendor,
here's your world and all you can do.

[From *What Survives Is The Singing*; 2020]

Aspects of Westonbirt Arboretum

If you can discover the first leaves of honeysuckle unfolding,
fly fearless on a magic carpet of snowdrops in spring.

If you can rejoice with the flowering cherries in April,
tall columns of mahogany-red bark crowned by clouds
of blush white blossom, fragrant brides against the sky.

If you can be startled by clumps of primroses in bloom,
by bluebells waist-high, a purple haze on the woodland's floor,
by orchids, wild garlic, and dandelions, you will encounter
the spirit of the arboretum exuding from each leaf and bower.

If you can watch the bumble bee tumble out of a foxglove's throat
and hear the laughter of Silk Wood ringing through The Link.

If you can rest in the venerable oak's dappled shade
in the tranquillity of filigreed foliage,
mosaics of maples in bronze, copper and ochre,
a thousand and one shades of newly born green,

you will have a vision of heaven with all its munificence –
rhododendrons and azaleas, camellias and magnolias,

clusters of pink and red, mauve and purple, white and yellow.

If you can sit under the autumnal canopy on a mattress of leaves
as the afternoon sun refracts the rich, kaleidoscopic colours
and hear the excited voices of children blend in the breeze.

If you can listen to the sound of acorns falling,
worship the Japanese maples in crimson, gold and ruby,
flaming lanterns against the sombre yew at dusk –
you will be one with the universe, free.

[From *Imagine: New and Selected Poems*; 2017]

Something To Do With Love

Surveying the locked down map of my world,
 windows opening to landscapes of uncertainty,
 Time dances like a god in the changing light.
 Dwelling in possibility, I take nothing for granted –
 accept life as it comes, not the way I want it.
 Something to do with love, a prayer to protect
 us from an innocent touch. As the death toll rises,
 so does fear and courage. Key workers keep carrying
 on, laying bare the injustices of our world.
 Knowing there is no going back, we hang on
 with the furloughed, believing in blue skies, bird song,
 and spring in the dreadful winter of our hearts.
 Hope lives like a virus born with a message –
 Life's a gift, a thing of beauty, cherish it.

Shanta Acharya, born and educated in Orissa, India, won a scholarship to Oxford, where she was awarded a doctoral degree in English. She was a visiting scholar at Harvard University before joining an American investment bank in London. Her doctoral study, *The Influence of Indian Thought on Ralph Waldo Emerson*, was published in 2001. A poet, novelist, reviewer and scholar, her poems have been widely anthologised, appearing in major publications in the UK, USA, and India. The author of twelve books, her latest poetry collections are *What Survives Is The Singing* (2020) and *Imagine: New and Selected Poems* (2017). Her novel, *A World Elsewhere*, was published in 2015.