

In Your Sharaf, Palestine

~~~ *Rajeshwari Guha*

Chirp-chirp-chirp  
A glamourized religious song  
Wading in through the dirty  
Window panes  
Soft sunlight, thick air

*Siya Ram, Jai Ram*  
Two *paranthas* dropped on my plate  
With a cube of butter  
Mouth runs dry  
There's blood in my *aachar*.

Unlocking the dim lock-screen  
(brightness doesn't suit the times);  
Instantly,  
Tears roll down, the heart  
Sinks into the stomach, heavy and  
wet, pushing everything else  
Out of the way

Thump-thump-thump  
Staring at the shattered dreams on my screen  
'I want to be a doctor  
I want to be a professor  
I want my father to not die.'

Sparkling eyes, bright smiles  
Clutching onto the nearest kitten  
Soft & helpless

Mothers with their hearts  
In their throats  
If they could, they would  
Pluck it out, hand in mouth  
And hide it in their thoub  
Pretend it is alright  
For the children's sake.

They have also found love  
In other women  
As they go to the Jordan River  
To wash away  
Period stains, divine blood  
Restorative, regenerative  
Wishing they could give  
Their blood instead,  
From their wombs, their  
Hearts, even.

'Please don't kill my children,  
don't kill my babies,  
spare my husband,

My *al'umu*, *'ab*

My *'akh*, *'ukht*, *'afdil sadiq li*

I am strong - divinity

I would hang

Your severed heads

Around my neck, if I could.'

No terrorists here.

One doesn't mean millions

Learn to count, the children

Do it better.

Dreams cannot be taken away

Even if

An entire generation is wiped out;

You count their days,

But they count yours.

~~~ *Rajeshwari Guha is a passionate poet who studied at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi.*