



## The Cost

*Many things in life,  
they had told me, were costly,  
but, to measure the cost,  
had taught me  
only one way.*

*A husband, a home, a vow,  
a household, a name, honour -  
so many things, very very costly,  
which I was to go ahead and get; but  
if their cost was to be met,  
it could be only  
with my willing death, or with,  
at the very least, a willingness  
to live a slow, slow dying,  
to melt, to drain away,  
and think myself drinking;  
to be cut from myself, split up  
in ten thousand pieces,  
and then to endure  
the insult of those torn pieces  
being called my many facets;  
to name a double, dishonest life  
the ability to adjust.*

*Perhaps they did not intend it,  
but, who knows how, it happened -  
very soon, in this life, grew a heap  
of many costly reasons to die.  
I had to search  
for just one cheap, one small  
reason to live.*

*I certainly did not intend it,  
but, who knows how; it happened -  
the small desire to be what I am,  
grew larger than that heap of theirs.  
Truly, it was not my doing but theirs  
that a poor, helpless, little mouse  
stood up against so large a mountain.  
Had this not happened,  
that little creature  
would have run up the mountain,  
shaped its life  
in the shade of the mountain.*

*But this happened.  
So it dug  
with its teeth,  
mined the mountain,  
mocked the peak,  
and laid tunnels  
in the base.*

**- Archana Varma**  
(translated by Ruth Vanita)