

Poems

by
Shivaramani*

War Time

*Amidst the tension of
the night-time hours
of wartime
our children come of age;*

*they lose
their childhood.*

*Each blood-soaked body
destroys
their beautiful dawn
which soared like a bird.
Walls crack open
a the sound
of their childish laughter.*

*A burst of gunfire
from an automatic weapon
shatters the silence
of the star-lit night.
The meanings
offairy stories
fall dead.*

*In the hours of daylight
left to them
they no longer play 'kilithoddu'.
they no longer
run behind toy carts
made of palmyrah seeds
These are the forgotten games
of their past.*

*They learn
to shut the gates early.
They learn to discern
the subtle differences
in the sounds of dogs barking
in the village.
They learn to remain silent
without asking questions
they remain to learn silent
when there are no answers to their
questions.
They learn to accept
whatever situation confronts them.*

*In fun,
they tear the wings off
a captured dragonfly.
They play at war
with bits of stick
for guns.*

*As they play,
they kill each other,
laughing*

*Amidst the tensions of
the night-time hours
of war time
our children come of age.*

War Time Night

Shivaramani became concerned about women's issues while a student the University of Jaffna. She was a member of the Women's Study Circle and was on the Committee of the Pporani Women's Centre. Shivaramani had some poems published in Jaffna in 1986. She had just graduated from the University and was in her early 20s at the time of her death. She died in Jaffna on May 19, 1991. She was one of the best young poets of Sri Lanka.

*In the evenings
all burdens weigh heavy.*

*inevitably
heat and light
graze side by side
on the lifeless day
like writings
on a slate
that rub off
and leave no trace.*

*I count
my breaths,
not merely
to pass the time.*

*Fireflies
fall dead
by the lamp.*

*What should I
dwell on?*

Fireflies?

*Or the stars
shining
with no meaning
like the light
that gleams
in a corpse's eye?*

*Truth
is not visible
in this darkness
To discern untruths
is not an easy task.*

*O younger sister,
preparing for your exams,
Can I ask
what motivates you,
why you peer
into the darkness*

*All are in a hurry.
I am left
with only
reminiscences.*

*Outside
calm, silent trees
cast tattered shadows.*

*When anguish
and chaos
rule the streets
with barking dogs
and locked doors
checked and re-checked
in readiness for the night,
I cannot think
of the sun
rising tomorrow.*

*The night
is important to me;
like yesterday,
another friend
may be lost
in this darkness.*

*The night
is valuable
to me.*