

## **A Day in the time of a Pandemic**

I wake to dark grey skies  
A thin drizzle that easily  
Discourages me from my morning walk  
I peer through the bamboo fence  
A persistent few are out in their windcheaters  
Determined to get their daily constitutional  
Some wear masks that match their sweats  
I spot an Ikat print bobbing along  
And oh wait! Is that a Kalamkari?  
Fashion reengineered in a pandemic  
Selling at a premium  
Part of wedding trousseau  
A friend spots me and stops for a chat  
Her mask artfully positioned on her chin  
At a socially responsible distance  
Nothing to discuss, the mundane is now profound  
The pandemic is now paramount

My kitchen sink awaits  
Filled with unwashed dishes  
“Anand, it’s your turn to wash the dishes” I say  
I collect the milk packets and dunk them in water tinged with turmeric  
I place them on the counter to dry

Beneath my bed lurk large dust balls  
Waiting for my domestic who hasn’t come in three weeks  
And I am learning to ignore corners hidden behind desks and coat stands  
A cursory sweep that would have earned my maid a scolding is all I can manage  
Swabbing will have to wait for another day

“It’s khichadi today, folks”  
Till the cook comes back  
I may look up recipes later  
To cook an orange pumpkin pasta  
It must look good on Insta  
And earn enough likes

It’s noon and the day exhausts me  
I lie on my unmade bed and watch Netflix  
I’ll look at my emails tomorrow  
Not much work coming my way, mostly pro bono  
I try and write a few lines but it’s been a dry spell for a while  
I close my eyes and wake up to hard rain lashing at my windows  
Is it dawn or dusk  
Is today yesterday  
Or yesterday today  
I run to bring in my now soaked clothes, weighed down with water  
They droop bent over from the fury of the wind  
My indigo Gabru printed mask though, flutters proudly at half mast

