

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

