

# Saffron Rain

by Ankur Betageri (February 2016)

And it poured and poured  
as I held my umbrella and stood under the awning  
of the bookstore  
the creamy brightness of pages  
vanishing  
before the grim downpour  
of saffron urine.

It would stop  
I should just take a few deep breaths  
and relax  
maybe light a cigarette  
or watch the big-eyed girl  
in the bookstore  
who just looked up from what she was reading  
and shivered  
so I thought as I waited  
but wind-caught—it lashed on our faces  
over all of us  
scared citizens of the republic

huddling under insufficient shelters  
by the roadside.

It stank  
I felt dirty  
but I wiped my face with the hanky  
and began to walk.

It's better to brave the squall  
and reach home  
I can take a bath  
have coffee  
and forget all about the downpour.

Under the awning  
I was going to get soaked  
and the stink  
and helplessness  
in cold  
would have made me puke  
who knows on whose back?

But when I reached home

it rained rabid dogs

TV, phone and laptop

crackled with their barks.

And as I looked out the window

the urine poured and poured

yellowing the newspapers, history books and labs

as the roads of the nation

swarmed with flies.

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Ankur Betageri is poet, short fiction writer and visual artist based in New Delhi. His published works include [The Bliss and Madness of Being Human](#) (poetry, 2013) and *Bhog and Other Stories* (short fiction, 2010).

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