Saffron Rain

by Ankur Betageri (February 2016)

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{\sf A}{\sf nd} 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
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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?

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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 <u>The Bliss and Madness of Being Human</u> (poetry, 2013) and *Bhog and Other Stories* (short fiction, 2010).

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