

# **Ekphrastic Writing Challenge:**

**Lorette C. Luzajic**

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# Self-Portrait

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after *The Best is Yet to Come*  
by Lorette C. Luzajic (Canada), 2019 C.E.

*for Family, Friends and Lorette*

A book on the loft, I am  
A bunch of scriptures, maybe;  
Or a booklet of prayers,  
A Chapter of the Kamasutra,  
Or a prescription for venereal diseases.  
I realize nothing out of these.  
(Someone would have read had I been one.)

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—Amrita Pritam<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Pilgrimages

In my life,  
I've had the privilege of performing three major pilgrimages:

1) In 20<sup>th</sup> Century C.E.:

during my childhood,  
to The Kaaba<sup>2</sup> in the heart of Masjid<sup>3</sup> Al-Haram in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

2) In 21<sup>st</sup> Century C.E.:

during my intellectual maturity,  
to The Acropolis in Athens, Greece.  
Perhaps, the site should be declared

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<sup>1</sup> This is an excerpt from her poem titled 'Time and Again'. Translator: Suresh Kohli.

<sup>2</sup> The Kaaba is the ultimate Holy Site for Muslims.

<sup>3</sup> 'Masjid' is a transliteration of the word مسجد from the Arabic language, which means Mosque—a place of worship for Muslims.

The Holy Place for all philosophers, poets and artists.

3) In 21<sup>st</sup> Century C.E.:

during my conscious transcendence,  
to Mohenjo-Daro<sup>4</sup> in Sindh, Pakistan.  
Perhaps, the site should be declared  
The Holy Place for all historians and philologists.

I should like to confess:

the second experience has been the profoundest.

A verse and/or discourse on why and how on another occasion now.

Currently, I'm on The Pilgrimage to Self—  
the most significant of all, after all.

For, in the words of Bulleh,<sup>5</sup> then:

your resources and claims  
and acclamations and proclamations  
of knowledge and wisdom:  
learning by means of cramming  
—devouring thousands and thousands of  
all manner of volumes on top of volumes.  
but have you ever endeavoured  
to read and learn about your-self  
—inner-and outer-selves?

all your life,  
you've remained a permanent resident  
at the so-called house of lord  
—temple, synagogue, church,  
mosque, gurdwara, shrine et cetera.  
but have you ever cared to spend  
a few nano-moments  
at the house of self?

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<sup>4</sup> 'Mohenjo-Daro' means 'Mound of the Dead Men.' The city happened to be one of the major cosmopolitans of the Ancient Indus Valley Civilisation from 2500 BCE (approximately).

<sup>5</sup> The most revered Punjabi Sufi (Saint) and poet, Syed Abdul Shah Qadri, or Bulleh Shah (1680 – 1757 CE) from Kasur, Hindustan (India). Kasur is now a city in Pakistan.

latterly, you've been preoccupied  
with rather rigorously sanctioning  
all manner of battles and wars  
against all manner of devils  
of all manner of worlds.  
but have you ever considered  
embarking upon an odyssey  
of self-reflection/reflexivity  
—supervising, monitoring and regulating  
your ego/super ego?<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Love and Romance

Throughout my life,  
I've been exceptionally privileged  
to have always had the love of my mother.  
And of course, of my father and siblings.  
And of course, of many dear friends from across the globe.

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I'm absolutely convinced:  
Mother is The Face of God!

And in my life,  
I've had the privilege of experiencing  
the romance and romanticism of many  
loving, caring, intelligent and beautiful  
women too of various classes and creeds.

And I'll keep (re)emphasising  
until my material and immaterial being ceases to exist:

EVE IS NOT FROM ADAM'S RIBS!

Phallocracy/chauvinism/patriarchy may be

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<sup>6</sup> This is my non-literal and a rather long translation of the first six verses of a poem by Bulleh Shah.

The Order of the Day (governing the mechanics  
of societies in many regions of the world today),  
but as Heraclitus<sup>7</sup> said:

*only  
thing  
that  
is  
permanent  
is  
change.*

And the ones in denial  
of the inevitability of change  
are, but delusional, I'm afraid.

### 3. Languages, Art and Literature

#### a) Languages

Right from the onset i.e. the very early childhood,  
pursuing the trait of being multilingual was instilled in my brain.

Hence, the basic knowledge of many and proficiency in some  
languages i.e. Sanskrit, Farsi (Persian), Arabic, Turkish, French, Punjabi  
and Urdu, English, respectively.

Urdu (the so-called Mother Tongue) is a transliteration  
of the phrase اردو, which literally means a 'caravan.' The  
language is a chimaera—formulated by blending Farsi (Persian),  
Sanskrit, Arabic and Turkish. I should like to confess: I'm still learning it.

There is a theory, you know, which states that "the language  
that you speak in your dreams is your Mother Tongue." Thereby,  
I can rather conveniently claim the English language to be my  
ultimate forte and fortress. A consequence, I would say, of the  
postcolonial syndrome, apparently. The British ruled the so-called  
Indian Sub-continent for over a hundred years, after all.

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<sup>7</sup> Heraclitus of Ephesus (535 – 475 BC) was a pre-Socratic Greek philosopher.

And throughout my life,  
I've had the privilege of having an unhindered access  
to all manner of local and foreign art, theatre, and literature.

Such are the virtues  
of a liberal and postmodern upbringing.

b) Art

During the infancy,  
I was fascinated by calligraphy. And I learnt to carve bam-  
boo stems into calligraphy pens. The craft was taught to  
me by our gardener in Kotli, Kashmir. I was encouraged  
by my family and friends to participate in the Calligraphy  
Competitions at school and won a few awards, too. I still  
possess a few of those calligraphic pieces (wood, cloth,  
stone and paper) from when I was only thirteen years old.

During the adolescence,  
my existence became exposed to the marvels of Surrealism.  
I was nineteen and a half years old. The stage was the post-  
modern Babylonia i.e. London, UK. And the *Metamorphosis  
of Narcissus* by Dali was the culprit. And to this very moment,  
I have not been able to free myself from the hypnosis. Although,  
I never did take the canvas, paint and brush as my brides.

c) Literature

To me, the apotheosis of my existence has been  
the publications of a few florilegia of verse in English. A  
feat—i.e. becoming an internationally published author—  
that has never been achieved before by anyone in neither  
my maternal nor paternal family. I know, it's nothing too  
extraordinary, since it has not been done for the very first  
time ever in the history of humanity, but the milestone is  
something to take pride in, for sure, I think. For, after all,  
Family History is made. Although, I haven't any offspring

of my own to carry the Legacy forward.

The words of my first-ever poem are still vivid in the cosmos of memory. I had written it for this girl named Amina from my neighbourhood in Kotli, Kashmir. I had a very serious crush on her. And I was too shy to confess it to her face. So, I wrote a short poem for her:

The luminous crescent of Ramadan<sup>8</sup> is even jealous  
of the charisma of your deep-set hazel eyes,  
and the waterfalls of Srinagar even yearn  
to bathe in the dust of your milky-white feet.

...

To me, she had the most beautiful eyes and feet that a human being could possibly possess. Little did I know at that time that the two were en route to manifesting as my fetish, eventually. I was 12, she was 14. Little did I know at that time that my inclination to fall for older girls was being nurtured and was to become my permanent ally, eventually. One day, after school, I mustered up the courage to give her the poem. *I like it*, she said.

During this journey,  
I've come to realise the following though:

i)

Poetry is the string of yarn—  
embroidered with  
multishaped and multicoloured beads, art.

ii)

Irony is existence's dearest attire—stain-proof, crease-proof et cetera. Yes, that the thoughts and words are fascinating cosmoses in their own rights. But the so-called influencer itself even needs

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<sup>8</sup> Ramadan is the Holy Month of Fasting for Muslims.

(some other form of) an influencer. To put it rather poetically:  
for the so-called muse to be rendered a muse, the prerequisite is  
the existence of (some other form of) muse. Id est: language as  
the vahana,<sup>9</sup> in case of thoughts and words; imagery, in case of  
muse. 'Why' we would (probably) never know and learn.

#### 4. Epilogue

Indeed, it has been an endeavour  
pregnant with all manner of sounds, colours, smells and tastes—  
worthy of an experience in every life  
regardless of the nature of Karma.<sup>10</sup>

Rest assured: none of this and that  
has ever been taken for granted on my part.

Nonetheless, prior to the inevitable epilogue  
(the one that all living things are decreed to have),  
as I remain focused on finishing up  
composing this ekphrasis, glued to my workstation (at home)  
—inhabited by chocolate brown desktop,  
separate journals for verse, ekphrases, aphorisms and notes,  
sketch books,  
charcoal pencils,  
oil pastels,  
books,  
notebooks (A4/A5)  
led pencils (including mechanical ones),  
fountain pens,  
ballpoint pens,  
miscellaneous stationary,  
and of course, the marvel that computer is  
and its partner in crime, the printer—

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<sup>9</sup> 'Vahana' is a transliteration of the word वाहन from the Sanskrit language, which means a 'mount' or 'vehicle.'

<sup>10</sup> 'Karma' is a transliteration of the word कर्म from the Sanskrit language, which means 'deed' or 'action.' In the Hindu philosophical tradition, the phenomenon of karma is interpreted in the context of cause and effect and relates to reincarnation, or 'rebirth.' For example, good karma results in a good next life and vice versa.

I am, but compelled to ponder:

*amidst the mist  
of what has been and is being done,  
if the best is yet to come?*

## Biography

**Saad Ali** was born in Okara, Pakistan in 1980 C.E. He has been brought up in the UK and Pakistan. He holds a BSc and MSc in Management from the University of Leicester, UK. He is an existential philosopher-poet. Ali has authored three books of verse (so far) i.e. *Ephemeral Echoes* (AuthorHouse, 2018), *Metamorphoses: Poetic Discourses* (AuthorHouse, 2019) and *Ekphrases: Book One* (AuthorHouse, 2020). By profession, he is a Lecturer, Consultant and Trainer/Mentor. Some of his influences include: Vyasa, Homer, Ovid, Attar, Rumi, Nietzsche, and Tagore. He is fond of the Chinese, Greek and Arabic cuisine. He likes learning different languages, travelling by train and exploring cities on foot. To learn more about his work, please visit [www.saadalipoetry.com](http://www.saadalipoetry.com).