

## **Blood is the Colour**

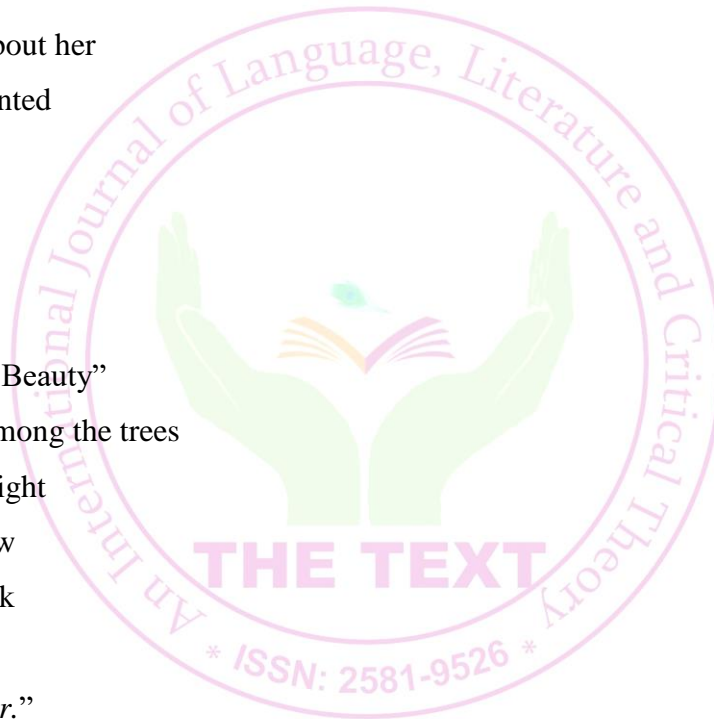
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Blood is a rainbow colour –  
In a psychedelic trance it paints all red  
Bloody Mary served in glasses  
Is no more a queen who kills  
But a drink you have with friends  
“Blood,” I shout.  
Ears hear – birth, life, pain, death... birth...  
All, countless swirling shades of red  
A baby cries his first cry bathed in blood... Life!  
A woman wails, washes her blood stained hands... Guilt!  
I hid the red spot on my white skirt, cried my way back home... shame!  
After two months of worrying and sobbing blood stains on my underpants... relief!  
Not bleeding, pregnancy test showed two lines... hope and happiness!  
Blood stained bed sheet, Mami bawled... loss, pain, anger, despair!  
Bloodshot eyes, blood red faces, hands that hold guns and sword-  
Hatred painted grey streets red.  
Running through my body and his, it's not pure or impure but red  
When we broke those barriers blood canonised our bed  
Consummation, creation, all dipped in blood  
Blood of the goddess Kamkhaya  
Blood of Christ  
Blood of martyrs and saints  
All is blood, all is red.

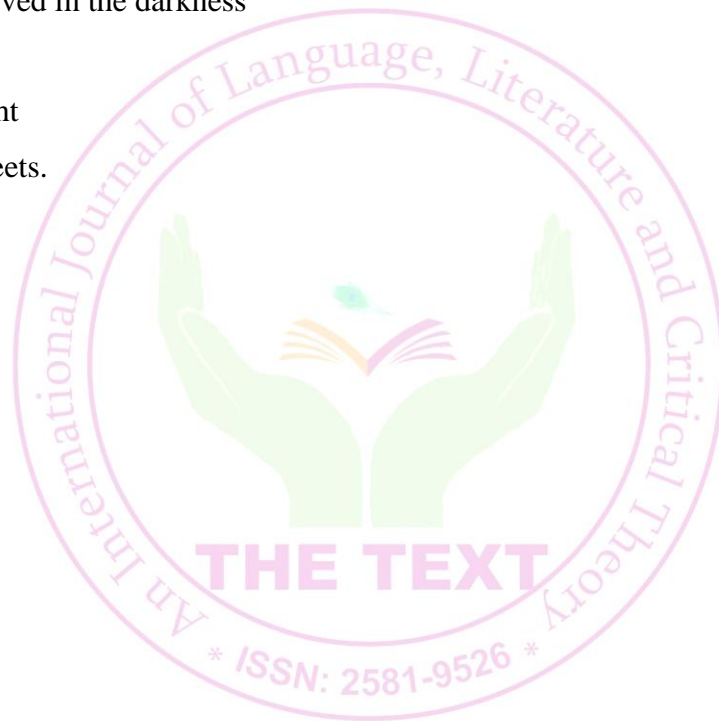
## Of Witches and Women

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Her long hair swinging  
Her hips swaying  
Her lips whispering  
Sweet notes in the air  
Grandma told me about her  
Of her lips; blood tinted  
Skin, pale as death  
Her large eyes  
Beckoning men  
To suck their soul  
“Terrible! Terrible! Beauty”  
She moved freely among the trees  
Walked out in the night  
I, behind the window  
Covering in the dark  
Waiting  
“Grandma I love her.”  
“Fool! Women do not love witches.  
Women love men.”  
“But ...” silence  
*My Heart, bear this secret*  
She and I lie in a swoon  
No margins between us  
I burned when she was on stake  
Turned to ashes



Stripped naked  
Tied and thrown into the water  
She and I both left to drown.  
We rose from ashes  
Learning to leap with broken bones  
Breaking chains  
Bleeding, swimming  
We turned the water red  
Together we have lived in the darkness  
Ever since  
Sneaking out at night  
In corridors and streets.



## Pilgrimage

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I reverberate with the Ganga aarti  
The bells of Haridwar chime in me  
I bleed with the Goddess at Khamkhya  
I blaze into fire at manikarnika and rest in ashes  
I cross the shanties covering my nose  
the drains form a pool there  
For the crows to bathe, and children to shit.  
The stalls are all decorated  
The red of vermilion, the red of hibiscus  
The red of blood in the kapal from which Kali drinks  
The goddess is bathed with rose petals in Vridavan  
The black of the dump yard  
The black of flies that hover over sweets  
The black algae on narrow streets  
The black ash that covers the karai \*  
I see mouth weathering rabri of Beneras  
The pedas of Mathura, the delicious laddu of Tirupati.  
The coconut shells,  
the abandoned paper boxes once adorned by sweets,  
the trampled flowers, once a garland  
mix with the damp ground the grey mud and the mulch  
to create an abominable art which no one sees  
This grey takes me to ashes  
To Shiva, to Natraja, he dances to destroy and create,

The grey takes me to ashes, to the kumbh  
I can't move! Can't breathe! The crowd sweeps me.  
I feel like a wave in Harr ki paudi  
I don't decide, I move towards the sea.  
The grey takes me to Naga sadhus  
Smearing ash on the body,  
With their hair tied in locks  
The chilum in their hands brings me back to Shiva  
Transformed, no more seated beside Parvathy  
Now a vairagi, the lord of the ones who don't belong  
In trance they seek Shiva  
As women do by fasting on Shivaratri.  
The Kumbh will end, people will leave  
The leaves which carried diya still floats  
And children use magnet to collect coins  
offered to the Gods in the depths of the river.

