

# Lapis Lazuli

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**RASHMI BHARDWAJ**

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**Sleep – a balm**

After all the devious plots of the day  
Sleep is a balm  
It quietly embraces you  
Comforts you like a mother  
And we fall sleep enshrouded in death

In these intimate moments of death  
The thoughts of the cruel sun next day  
Do not seem frightening  
Who will plot once again  
To give us over to the crowd  
The crowd has jeers, hunger, hope, our dreams  
And a strong padlock  
Often sleep breaks that lock too  
And we fall asleep safe with our dreams.

The infant smiling in his sleep is God  
Who can fall asleep at any time  
A man and a woman look at him with envy  
They yearn for sleep  
They should put down the weight  
of their ego filled heads  
and fall asleep for some time  
On waking they will be new and fresh  
Ready to face the day and live again

Like a strip of sandalwood  
Sleep cools our boiling foreheads  
And absorbs all the heat of our heart

Sleep is an excellent poem  
To be yours all it needs, is a clear heart  
And a little thirst

Lapis Lazuli

### Smog in the city

On the Buddh chowk of the city stand four Buddhist monks  
Together, leaning against each other's backs  
Bowed heads, closed eyes, hands raised in the mudra of forgiveness  
Their faces are painted with despair  
This might be a delusion or a figment of my imagination  
But after every suffering of the city  
New lines of pain get etched on their faces  
After every new crime of the city  
Their heads bow down a little more  
And I can see dark shadows of shame there  
They must be grateful to the sculptor  
Who shut their eyes and saved them from the crime  
of witnessing a wanton city

The tireless crowd running around them  
Is filling its soul with a dark smoke  
It is in a hurry to reach somewhere  
When in reality it is tied and just going around in circles  
The monks see this crowd as an excuse to forgive everyone  
Who is busy conspiring to turn humanity into statues

These four monks standing on the crossroad of a sick city  
are the mute witnesses of its daily suicide  
Buried with the shame and despair of being unable to act  
They too are dying a little each day

### BIO-NOTE

Rashmi Bhardwaj is a young poet and writer based out of Delhi. She holds an M.Phil. Degree in English literature and a Diploma in Journalism. She is enrolled in a doctoral program in English Literature. She is currently working as Editor-in-chief at the prestigious Vani Prakshan. She has worked with several prestigious newspapers and has taught at Galgotias University as an Assistant Professor. Rashmi won the Jnanpith Navlekhan award in 2017 for her debut poetry collection – “Ek Atirikt A”. Her writings regularly appear in several newspapers, magazines and literary blogs. She anchors and conducts several literary programs apart from being an invited speaker for several others. She also runs a bilingual web-zine called “Meraki”. When she isn't reading or writing, Rashmi can be found spending time with her daughter and dog.

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