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JAGANNATH PRASAD DAS, PARAMITA SATPATHY

MY SARI

Here, I wrap myself
In a five-yard-long respectability
and bask in my own glory.

I don't remember
If I had begged for this glory
with folded hands
or had it been roughly thrust on me.
or it was the hesitant maiden gift
of a dreamy-eyed youth.

The other day
my sisters were vainly boasting
of their easy comfortable clothes
in the geometry of simple words.

But I had kept silent.
How could I have
explained to them that my robes
were divinely ordained?

I returned home that night
shredded the saree to pieces
And chanting a mantra for each single one
consigned them to the wind.

One piece was to provide a patch
for the torn skirt of the rag-picker woman,

another to cover up
the naked mutilated body
of the woman raped and
discarded in the village grove

One more for the burns ward
of the Government Hospital
to cover bed number ten
on which lay the bride
who could not get enough dowry

And, last of all
to be stitched to the skimpy top
of the bar-maid serving drinks
to half a dozen customers
in the five-star Hotel

In the morning,
I found all the pieces back,
joined in a conspiracy
to engulf me again

But, yet
bits of my back, waist and breast
are left bare
which even this five-yard sari
is unable to hide.

(Translated from Odia by J.P. Das)



BIO-NOTE

Translator: **JP Das** or **Jagannath Prasad Das** is an eminent litterateur from Odisha who has dominated the Odia literary scene for over forty years. His literary oeuvre comprise poetry, plays, short stories, novels and essays. He has been adorned with Saraswati Samman, Sahitya Akademi Award, Nandikar Award and many others. Born in 1936, Das lives between Delhi and Bhubaneswar.

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Poet: **Paramita Satpathy** is an influential voice in Odia literature. She has written poems, novels and short stories and has published around twenty books in Odia, English, Hindi and other major Indian languages. She has received the prestigious Sahitya Akademi award in 2016 for her collection of stories *Prapti: A Boundless Moment*. Besides she is honored with Odisha Sahitya Akademi Award, Bhartiya Bhasha Parishad Puraskar and many others. She joined Indian Revenue Service in 1989 and at present is working as Principal Commissioner of Income Tax in Delhi.

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