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POETRY

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MRIDULA GARG

In Between

He sits in between doors
 Half open, half shut
 Half out, half in the room
 No one can come in or go out
 Without circumventing him
 He is not a sentinel
 Only an irritant, an obtrusion
 No one can ignore
 Like an itch or abrasion
 Not a wound or ache
 Claiming the mind with pain
 Only present, in the way,
 Useless but not ignorable
 Like a wrinkle in the dress
 A white hair in a black mane
 In the way, present,
 Half in half out
 In between

STRAW

I know there is no such thing
 As a lifeline
 For one adrift
 If I believe in life everlasting
 I do not need a line
 If I would rather be done
 I do not want it.

There are moments of weakness
 That make me clutch at straws
 Knowing they are straws
 The last one perhaps
 to break the camel's back
 Inscrutable beast of burden
 No one has a care for

Every year such moments seize me
 At time of my son's departure
 I grope for straws

I seize the first one
Which comes to hand
Knowing it is a straw not
A lifeline, there is no such thing

It is not hysteria
This clutching at straws
Plain human need
Is silence the best response
Or two words better
I understand!

Inscription in the Sky
(Translated from Hindi *Asman ki ibarat* by the author)

Sitting in the rain
Under the balcony roof
What do you read, book or magazine?
Book...magazine...do I look crazy
I read the script in the sky
Allah is a consummate artist
Changes the colour of font
Every six - seven lines
Yes, the colour is always grey
Vibrating with so many shades
Cavort in the rain to know them
Cream grey, silver grey, azure grey
Smoke grey, murky grey
Grey like the pulsating breast
Of the dove with many tints
Of grey, like brave warriors
These clouds never turn back
Without pouring rain,
The more it rains, the more
The clouds change their shades
All through the night and the day
Unexpectedly the rain ceases
Negating the shafts of lightening
Poor clouds can't keep up
They scatter hither and thither
Blue cobalt black lines piled one
Upon another, sloping upended Illegible.
Heavenly father turns into a child
Unable to read his own handwriting
Wipes it clean then opens his colour box
Covers the sky with monotonous cream
Then writes afresh in a curving arch

In colours ...one...two...three...nine
You call it a rainbow
Name it what you will I know
The divine child has overturned
His whole box of colours
He collects them as if centuries
Await him, spills some cossets some
With the sweep of the hand clears it all
The firmament now shines like silver
People call it sunshine, you too?
It is but a closed box of colours
I'll wait for it to unfasten...then...
Watch the spectacular play of grey



BIO-NOTE

Mridula Garg (born 25 October 1938) is an Indian writer who writes in Hindi and English languages, and is a writer who has explored almost every genre in Hindi. She is credited with writing 8 novels, 4 plays, 4 collections of essays, 1 memoir of fellow writers, 1 travel account and 90 short stories. Her latest work is her debut novel in English called “The Last Email” published in December 2017. Her works display both a wry sense of humour and self-reflection. She was awarded the Vyas Samman in 2004 for her novel *Kathgulab* and Sahitya Akademi Award in 2013 for *Miljul Mann*. She received the Hellman-Hammet Grant from The Human Rights Watch, New York in 2001. She also received the Ram Manohar Lohia Samman from U.P Hindi Sansthan in 2014

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