

**KAMAYANI SHARMÄ**

## **Their Talk Is No Talk**

If I could place my ear  
in just the right direction  
and use it as a butterfly net  
to gulp down all the murmurs  
and rumours, I would know.

Oral insects held aloft by thin,  
quiet tinsel cobwebs of sin.  
They flutter past, becoming noisier  
as they near my eager ears.  
And they are my magic minions  
for they glide into the whirls  
and spools of my ears and scratch  
on the flesh – with ticklish tiny fingers –  
all that they've heard in the air  
between two breaths and a pair of lips.  
fairies and spies and bugs...all one.  
They etch out the hearts of those they  
hear onto my pink, soft flesh.  
and I know the voice; I know the speaker.  
So intimately and disdainfully.  
and jealously.  
Like an extinct love affair.

Communication between my messengers  
and myself – winged critters and grown child –  
is like a dream – thoughtless and vivid.  
Those who are the targets of my espionage  
remain aloof, from themselves and from  
each other.

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Their talk is no talk.

I, who am a stranger, know them deeper  
than they comprehend their selves.

In buses, with the window to one side  
to escape the abyss on the other.  
In cafes, sipping noisily and slowly,  
To involve attention in the mug.  
On a stroll, waiting for gaps in  
soliloquies to begin another, only  
to despise the moment created for it,  
which has passed.

Their talk is no talk.

The world has grown old and conversation  
has been exiled to oblivion.  
No longer the acme of civilisation...  
Rhetoric to sense the universe with.  
Periscope, almanac, compass.  
The instruments of the human race lost.  
As are we now. Unsure in this jungle  
and stumbling through alien forests.

Ah. But they are not alien.  
They are the same. The landscape remains.  
It is we who have become intruders  
into our own pasts and truths.  
We are no longer the same race.  
Lost within our silences and grunts.  
Like animals.

We have returned to beasts.  
They fear our forms...  
But they recognise our fears.  
For they are theirs too.  
And so we return to them,  
ashamed and sheepish,  
affecting power.  
But when they bark,  
we bark. Our howls of pain  
are the same. Yelps of ecstasy

exact.

Their talk is no talk.

Nor is ours.

My winged friends tell me.  
They are mute.  
Hence they are true.

