

## Selection of Poetry

*Shubhanku Kochar, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University*

### GOOD BOY

Let's go for a walk,  
Ok;  
Let's go for a movie,  
Oh!  
Are you busy?  
Let's go out for dinner,  
What!  
You are not feeling like eating.  
Can we just sit and talk,  
O no!  
You can finish assignment tomorrow,  
It is Sunday tomorrow,  
Is it not?  
Can we talk over a phone call?  
O.M.G.

You are expecting guests;  
Sorry,  
I am sorry,  
I will pray and go to bed  
Without complaining  
Like a good boy  
That I am,  
As mother repeats again and again,  
Yes,  
I am a Machine,  
A Robot,  
A Statue,  
I do not feel anything,  
I am a good boy,  
GOOD NIGHT.

### I LAUGH

I laugh  
At your ignorance.  
When you can not ,  
See that I can not see.  
When you try to make me sit  
Without  
Realizing that  
I can stand without any problem.  
When you say:  
I do not look like Blind people,  
I do not talk like Blind people,  
I do not walk like Blind people,  
I do not resemble Blind people,  
As if,  
Being a Blind is a formula,  
There is no  
Language,  
Theory,  
Template,  
Process,  
Of being a Blind.  
Yes, I am Blind,  
Like:  
You are tall,  
Short,  
Fat,  
Skinny,  
White,  
Black,  
Brown,  
Good,  
Bad,  
And  
Anything.

## JUST LIKE YOU

I am a Human being-  
Just like you.

I have my own Dreams and Desires-  
Just like you.

I have broken and fulfilled Promises-  
Just like you.

I also Weep when hurt-  
Just like you.

I also Laugh when happy-  
Just like you.

I also crave Success-  
Just like you.

I also fear Failure-  
Just like you.

I am not  
A Puppet,  
A Soft-toy  
A Pillow  
An Artifact,  
A Monument  
A Door,  
A Window,  
A Table,  
A Chair

Or

Devine,

I am a Human-Being  
Just like you.

I wish you understand this,  
Before it is too late.

# Reflection on Shubhanku Kochar's Poems

*Nathalie Lamprecht, Charles University, Faculty of Arts*

Shubhanku Kochar's poems make use of simple, though effective language throughout, never failing to convey emotion. Written in free verse, the three poems speak to a variety of themes, including childhood trauma and life as a person with a disability.

Partly written in dialogue form, the poem "Good Boy" appears to portray a strained parent/child relationship. Throughout the first part, one person is repeatedly reaching out to the other, being rejected each time. Even a phone call takes too much time, as the other person is expecting guests. It appears that the adult persona present in the poem always prioritises other activities over spending time with their child. As a result, the child persona of the poem learns to "pray and go to bed/ Without complaining/ Like a good boy". To shield themselves from the pain of the parental rejection, the speaker of the poem tells themselves "I am a Machine,/ A Robot,/ A Statue,/ I do not feel anything.". Although this poem does not outright reference disability, it shows the impact one's upbringing can have on one's mental state as an adult, touching upon themes of trauma and neglect.

Despite the ostensibly positive title, evoking laughter and joy, the poem "I Laugh" speaks of the deep frustration felt by the poem's speaker regarding their treatment by people unable to understand their blindness as a mere part of their entire being. A variety of responses to encountering blindness is touched upon, including being treated like a weak or sick person: "When you try to make me sit/ Without/ Realizing that/ I can stand without any problem.", and being questioned about not looking or acting blind:

When you say:

I do not look like Blind people,

I do not talk like Blind people,

I do not walk like Blind people,

I do not resemble Blind people,

The author plays with his words, making brilliant quips such as "I laugh/ At your ignorance./ When you can not,/ See that I can not see." Furthermore, he is able to express strong emotions through simple language, which is remarkable. Despite no clear negative phrasing, the poem resonates a certain (justified) anger, when it points out that there is no right or wrong way of being blind and that one cannot be reduced to blindness.

Finally, in the poem "Just Like You," Kochar highlights society's prejudices and superstitions when it comes to people with disabilities and speaks out against them. Particular focus is placed on the treatment of disabled people as passive, as akin to material objects that can be manhandled and are unable to move and act on their own accord, like "A Puppet,/ A Soft-toy." The poem cleverly points out, using just a few lines, that not only is the speaker of the poem a well-rounded human being, but also that this fact is not always apparent to the people surrounding them, which is criticised. The phrasing of the poem is reminiscent of Shylock's much-quoted speech in William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*: "If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die?"<sup>1</sup> Both aim to call to another's mind the fact that being different from a perceived norm doesn't make one less of a human—both are successful in doing so.

Overall, Kochar's poems speak to the ambiguous feelings experienced by a person with a disability in interaction with the non-disabled world in an accessible, straightforward, and honest fashion.

<sup>1</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Project Gutenberg online, Act 3, Scene 1, <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1515/pg1515-images.html>.

