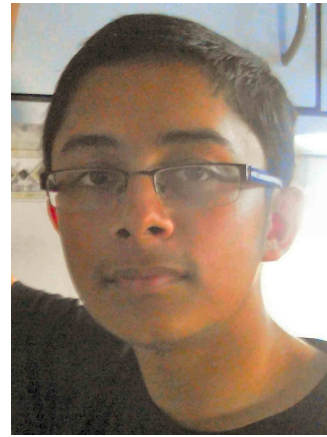


A Cruel World but Merciful Death

By Abhishek Ghosh



On a vacant, carefree week-end,
While sitting on the balcony's end,
I am reminiscing this afternoon, with disbelief in my eyes,
Because I have been cheated with too many lies.

Adjoining my majestic skyscraper building
There have always been mounds of urban refuse,
Somehow arranged into homes,
A slum without an inch to spare,
To which none of us have shown enough care.

But this afternoon, every memory comes rushing back,
I cannot forget that innocent girl
As I watch the bulldozers raze to the ground---
All the happy homes
Reduced once again, to a mound!

Earlier on the street,
I met the same girl who haunts me now,
Her eternal, gentle smile
That always graced those thirsty lips,
Had unconsciously dissolved my own worries.

I watched her smile and it truly rang through the air,
It even drowned the bemoaning of her distraught neighbour.
She had nothing---no parents, no house, no joy,
Her existence seemed to be only worth her labour.

And yet we are told God never hurts innocent children?

She had no identity and lived in the border of life.
She earned every meal,
And had no reason to be punished,
And yet her hopes were made to kneel
To the whims and fancies of corrupt contractors.

While I have no reason to complain---
I lead a happy life with loved ones,
Yet, I have never managed to keep
My gratitude shining as bright as a thousand suns.

I ran to her and held her hand,
But she was the one who hushed my fears,
I learned to smile amidst adversity that day,
Her eyes were dry and lacked any signs of tears.

I didn't want that moment to pass.

When all of a sudden, her breath staggered,
Her face started to become pale,
And then, she stopped breathing,
I was so helpless, I was only seething.

On her face, I saw a faint, serene line,
That gave me the courage to move on,
The memory is gradually leaving me now...

This experience has emboldened me,
I can face my daily woes without complaining,
But now I know why she was smiling!
All her sorrows were taken away
By the merciful God, in an instant of pain,
When she was too young to blame God for everything,
At the tender age of nine.