

### *When basements get submerged*

It is the end of April in London  
No, the cold 'outside' does not bother me much  
But borderlines always blur and blend  
And I fear the winter that lurks 'within'.  
The sky is a monochrome of grey  
That drips its untimely angst  
Like words coming from an angry lover left and lost.  
I rush to my room, close the door and cover myself in sheets  
For I have heard the 'The Grey' walking round colonies in a reckless feat  
Touching and infecting "one here and there with his icy fingers"  
Like O' Henry's Pneumonia, it conjures and lingers  
'The winter of discomfort' already took 'the last leaves'<sup>1</sup> away.

Back in Delhi,  
They say that it's hot but the sky is evergrey.  
And over call,  
My friend quoting Daughter's Youth says –  
"If you're still breathing fresh there, you're the lucky one.  
As most of us are heaving through corrupted lungs"

I laugh when my Dominican manager at the superstore jokes -  
"People should be buying hay fever tablets by now"  
But, to every passing customer, he says with a sigh –  
"The weather, this country is in crisis, oh my my"  
My face falls solemn  
I wonder about Dominica' common  
It is not grey there,  
But what about the curse of raging blues?

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<sup>1</sup> A reference has been made to O Henry's The Last Leaf

I met a customer the other day who still does not believe in this change

I wish he could talk to Jessie and Patouma<sup>2</sup>

Who cannot grow maize in farms of Malawi anymore

Or to Yurshell, who has been living in a tent since Iota.

Sometimes, one's entire hope hinges on a narrow 1.8-mile square island

And then, in a wave it gets washed away leaving a no man's land

For Tuki Rani, shelter is still a distant dream

She does not understand climate change- its science or politics

And the mother of two daughters curses the river

For tearing her world apart at the seams.

At least, back then when Thomas Hardy lamented the 'Spectre Grey'

He still heard the Darkling Thrush serenading a joyous ray

But alas! Now Rula Manti from Greece says—

“We no longer hear birds in trees and cicadas”

The wildfires in Greece took them away!

The Dixie Fire also scorched Ken's Music Land

O that, even summers could be black!

With these thoughts as I sit in my room,

I failed to notice that the inner side of the duvet is Grey

A frightening thought grips my mind-

Was I always climate change (+)?

An accomplice and a victim?

When the fire alarm goes off,

And the neighbour's house is ablaze.

It is not a question of who's more vulnerable

Nor of shifting responsibilities and blame.

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<sup>2</sup> All the names used are from real life stories - [COP26: Six stories from around the world on how climate has changed people's lives | World News | Sky News](#)

“Don’t you dare look out the window, darling everything’s on fire”<sup>3</sup>-

Can keep one safe and sound only in the fiction of Hunger Games.

Collective actions and accountability are the way ahead

Because these days, even basements get submerged.

So, I write this poem

The realities must be heard.

- **Aish**

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<sup>3</sup> A reference has been made to the song ‘Safe & Sound’ by Taylor Swift from The Hunger Games