

# The Creative Launcher

Journal Home URL: <https://www.thecreativelauncher.com>

ISSN: 2455-6580

Issue: Vol. 7 & Issue 2, (April, 2022)

Publisher: Perception Publishing

Published on: 30 April 2022

Peer Reviewed & Open Access: Yes

Journal DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.53032/issn.2455-6580>

©The Creative Launcher (2022). This Open Access article is published under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0 International License <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>, which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. For citation use the DOI. For commercial re-use, please contact editor on: [thecreativelauncher@gmail.com](mailto:thecreativelauncher@gmail.com)

Licensing:  <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>



**Article History:** Complete article received: 20 February 2022 | Revised article received: 10 March 2022 | Accepted: 19 March 2022 | First Published: 30 April 2022

∞: [Research Article](#)

---

## Making Visible the Invisible: An Analytical Elucidation of Tishani's Poems

---

**Dr. Gunjan Saxena**

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Bareilly College, Bareilly, U.P.,

Affiliated to MJP Rohilkhand, University, Bareilly, U.P.

Email Id: [drgunjansaxenably@gmail.com](mailto:drgunjansaxenably@gmail.com)

ORCID Id: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5101-7158>

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53032/tcl.2022.7.2.05>

Pages: 42-49

---

### Abstract

Tishani Doshi channels her unique potential into her creative work as a scholarly Indian poet, passionate artist and astounding dancer. She converts dexterously the bitter realities of life into words and scatters literary gems liberally in her poetic realm. Her 'overlapping concerns' through creative writing (poems, novels) and rhythmic movements make her subsequent career unparalleled. Although Tishani is deft to articulate her literary caliber through poetry and novel

both, yet poetry provides her the nuts and bolts of expressing the abstract feelings into words with concrete images. Her poems leave indelible impression upon the mind of the reader. The minimal words of poems contain plethora of philosophy and provide the possibilities to widen our imagination. She dares to ponder over umpteen baffling questions related to pre-natal existence, post mortal destination, our real abode etc. While pouring out her bubbling genuine notions particularly in poems, she appears to unwrap life's those mysteries which remain incomprehensible or unrevealed for a layman. Through her treasure trove of poetry, she tempts us to fumble the hidden philosophy regarding isolation, crisis of identity, nostalgia, rootlessness and nervous exhaustion with fluctuation of moody unhappiness. What makes the poems worth reading is the coating of spiritual belief and mysticism upon them. The comprehensive analytical articulation represents conspicuously the screeching of an alienated soul yearning for a perennial settlement in this cosmos.

**Keywords:** Perennial Settlement, Real Abode, Mystery, Empathy, Deity, Entity

In an interview with Nicholas Wroe, Doshi elaborates her notions, "I have always been interested in how the body connects to the wider world, which is then linked to questions of belonging and what is meant by concepts such as 'home' and 'elsewhere'." (web) Her poems conspicuously illustrate her artistic elegance loaded with innate intelligence and power of meditation. Her latest collection of poems 'A God at the Door' contains 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' aroused by perturbing news from all over the world during lockdown. Really speaking, Doshi seems to showcase the balmy effect of poetry during unbearable, tangled crisis of life. Various painful pandemic news compelled her to soothe the people through motivating and encouraging them with the circulation of poetic vibes. She emphasizes in the poems of this collection how we can overcome the adverse situation and how we can connect ourselves to the inner cosmos. As its title indicates, the God (in the form of hope, positivity and expectancy) remains always at the threshold (of life's umpteen phases). It depends upon us to welcome or to neglect Him. The presence of God indicates the presence of a spiritual, candid existence that lies within our reach. Our negligence to comprehend his being, quickly brings pessimism. So, here the poetess evaluates the mysterious aspects of our own entity with startling images and vital conceptions. Simultaneously, she endeavors to highlight the possibilities of overcoming the prospect of neutrality and unawareness towards deity, inner beauty and divine light. In her poem 'Listening to Abida Parveen on Loop, I Understand Why I Miss Home and Why It Must Be So,' (poem no 50) from the collection 'A God at the Door', the psycho synthetic mood of the poetess seems to seek a way to resolve inexplicable mysteries and ineffable queries. As its title indicates, it was penned after relishing the Sufi song sung by Abida Parveen. Ab initio, it seems to contain a plethora of multiple meanings which flow incessantly. If we have a minute reading of this spontaneous utterance, we find in it an outcome of hollowness, trepidation, righteous anger and aching empathy. Various aspects of life are interwoven through vivid images in it. Every line seems a connector to another one and every image proves to be co-related with threads of theme. She continues to reveal the naked realities

of life with minute details spontaneously. The very first line of the poem hints unquenched hunger and scarcity of spiritual feast in the life. The restlessness as well as anxiety of a human heart that is entangled in autarchy of a fixed format of life, is obvious in these lines- “This frugal diet of living / is getting to me” (92).

She enumerates our chase towards futility and materialistic achievements. She expresses her desire to neglect them and come out of worldly race. Her inner consciousness does not allow her to take participation in cutthroat- competition of the present era in which humanity, morality and spirituality prove like dry ‘wind of desert’ that remains teasing her to ruminate the celestial need in life. In this reference, we are reminded of Wordsworth’s oft-quoted lines where he lays emphasis that our efforts are centered on earning and spending rather than in seeking and finding the ultimate goal-

The world is too much with us,

Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers. (Wordsworth 21)

She plainly explains that she is not in the race of worldly pursuits, which compels her to sacrifice sanguine relations, effortless jovialities, filial attachment and so on. She frequently provides weightage to the human relations as well as the robust environment enough to revitalize inner strength. During an interview with Feroz Rather, she articulates – “Home is where my people and dogs are. My parents. My brother. My sister. My husband. My friends. But it’s also the Bay of Bengal. If there’s a physical anchor, then it’s this ocean that I grew up with. Life giving, raucous, moody, beautiful. All my ideas of happiness are tied to those memories.” (web) She admits that just for relishing pomp and shows of artificial life, she has to-

renounce house

mother father husband sibling succulent child

to go in search of better hummus and woollen blankets

to choose one dog and run for the border

I’m not sure this contest was made for me.” (92)

As a matter of fact, a bizarre quest remains lingering in the depth of heart and mental equilibrium is disturbed due to inexplicable scarcity in life. This happens only when the requirement of soul is heeded with more enthusiasm in the comparison of earthly pleasures. The words of Tennyson in ‘Ulysses,’ begin to echo in such ardent moments-

How dull it is to pause, to make an end,

to rust unburnished, not to shine in use!

As though to breathe were life! (web)

The frequent use of ‘what if’ in the beginning of each line, highlights those umpteen obstacles, negativities, unwanted situations and involvement which keep no importance for her or we can say that they should not be heeded enough to depress and demoralize us. The fact is that there is no use of lament what we have not and what we have lost. She seems adamant to rejuvenate each and every moment of life even in the adverse circumstances-

What if I felt my heart was taken out of me

I could begin each day with praise

could serve and work without once uttering  
the word home (92)

It is known to all that nothing is reliable in this world and nobody is content with what he has. It is human psychology to wail and complain for lacunas and scarcities throughout the life. If we were given the power of flying creatures, even then we would not relish our liberty to soar and gain new heights rather we again remained pining for our roots and stability in order to satisfy our inner quench-

What if we were birds forced to spend  
our lives in air to mate and sleep  
on the wing to rope round and round  
the earth in circles and have screaming parties  
what if we were never meant to settle  
would you still search out my beak mid-air  
would you still find me (93)

Here the poetess begins to analyze the pivot thought of perennial settlement. She opines in an interview with Mariyam Haider “*The idea of home is always a fragile one.*” (web) She sighs for homesickness- *We are homesick everywhere even when we’re home.* (93) In fact, the tender, poetic heart of the poetess is filled with spiritual thoughts and she realizes that our real home is heaven from where we have come in this world just to travel for an allotted tenure. This line of thinking tempts us to remind one of the famous lines of *Surdas*, the Hindi poet who utters in his poetic collection *Sukhsagar*-

*Mero mann kahan anat sukh pavai  
jyon udi jahaj ko panchhi phiri jahaj par aavai.* (web)

This restlessness and anxiety are well-delineated by her when she exhibits the deep philosophy in very simple words- *we are empty things/ that need filling we are always lost in love never found.* (93) Thus, she successfully takes us in the realm of familial relationships, loss, affection and renewal of emotions that are disposed of due to time and distance. A good poem is always a pellucid expression of amalgamated emotions and the poetess seconds this conception in the interview with Mariyam Haider, *Poetry is very elastic and allows different expressions. I want to do a lot more of it.* (web) That’s why, with dexterous efforts, she articulates her philosophic conceptions in so simple and beautiful diction as we can peep into her mind and imbibe every fluctuation of emotions conspicuously. In order to know the ultimate truth regarding real abode of soul, she imagines her old age and shows her readiness to face it. Simultaneously, she clarifies the fragility and mortality of the world. We find the image of ‘declining tooth’ which is not only a symptom of old age but also the symbol of inevitable changes in this mortal world–

What if this minaret was like the last  
tooth in my head unsteady  
and enflamed with devotion what if I’m finally old  
and ready for the plant of rejuvenation  
but no one’s offering it to me (93)

Ultimately her thought reaches at its apex and she concludes that due to experience and maturity in old age, we can anticipate some apparently unsolved mysteries. Only a wall or hindrance of body remains between soul and supreme being. As soon as this obstacle is overcome with a sudden hit of death, our real home, heaven or God (as philosophically all are synonyms) can be perceived clearly-

We're at that moment in the journey  
 when we've hit a wall and the only way to scale  
 it is to use your voice with its inflections  
 and ditches its rough grain and longing  
 what if god on the other side of the wall  
 was equally alone and in need of company  
 What if we replaced god with home (94)

At this crucial junction, the soul of the poetess is quite fearless and "ready to become nothing." She longs for dissolving her existence into eternity and accumulating divinity forever. In fact, her imagination provides wide platform to take rest in the real home and to reconcile with God. Here her concepts go parallel to those of Emily Dickinson who anticipates her death not only courageously but also amicably in her well-known poem- 'Because I Could Not Stop for Death'. In most of her transcendent, restless poems, her concentration remains on fumbling and fetching inner longing, itch and aspiration out and thus her poems become the source of enshrining the veiled ideas. She claims in 'Contract' (Poem no.1), the opening poem of 'Girls Are Coming out of the Woods' that her poetry is to- turn the skin inside out, to reinvent every lost word, to burnish, to steal, to do what I must in order to singe your lungs (2). She usually lays emphasis on 'turning inside out' while expressing her thoughts in tranquillity. Her 'What the Body Knows' (Poem no.2) from the book 'Countries of the Body' is a perfect example of mirroring the eternity of psyche as well as the fragility of corporeal frame. To reveal the truth, she philosophically imagined the body to be danced in a darkened room. In fact, 'the body' emerges as the main persona in the poem. It is elaborated as a haunted character harassed by the burden of dreams, aspiration and reality simultaneously. It remains engaged in exploring a better understanding of the world around it and perennial settlement too. In other words, the whole physique appears to be a mystical or bizarre entity as it discloses the spiritual penchant that is suppressed by the weight of umpteen adverse circumstances, expectations and responsibilities. It results in pain that is suffered by an individual and is released in the form of cries and screams. Here she elaborates-

skin can face the light in fractures,  
 Slip like shadow through skeleton walls,  
 Begin to cry-really-to scream  
 About the tarnished weight of dreams. (3)

Perhaps Wordsworth has surmised that culmination of redemption, i.e., a stage of meditation in which one communes with one's. Maker after being indifferent towards corporeal frame. In 'Tintern Abbey', he seems to attain-

that blessed mood,

In which the burthen of the mystery,  
 In which the heavy and the weary weight  
 Of all this unintelligent world,  
 Is lightened: - (Wordsworth 52)

Though death is a physiological phenomenon, yet it is intermingled with various ecclesiastical convictions and religious ideology. The inevitability of death, hypothetical concept of heaven and hell, reincarnation and rebirth are ubiquitous and universal. All such mysteries seem to be revealed after analysing her poem 'The Countries of the Body'. Doshi is also of the opinion that any divine idea or pious thought leads us to ourselves through our bodies. She ends the poem with hypothetical concept that our real abode is in paradise and our life tenure is just a transitory visit in the world. Ultimately life force i.e. soul amalgamates in Supreme Being. The traditional image of tree with its roots upward indicates this philosophy- *roots above/ Boughs beneath, feet caving into wonder/ It's how the world reverses itself*' (4). The poetic calibre of Doshi perfectly knows how to express the inner feelings and multi-shaded psycho-synthetic mood in words enough to portray the exact working of consciousness. In 'Lament I' (Poem no.17) from the collection 'Everything Begins Elsewhere', she represents the dichotomous effect of affluence and poverty on an individual's life. The opulence of urban houses proves to be a dream like status for the persona residing in rural, scantily furnished mud digs. The tragic figure of the poem intends to earn livelihood in the city. There he realizes that his misfortunes and deprivation cause shame and inhibition for his entity.

I wonder,  
 how to describe my home to you:  
 the short, mud walls,  
 the whispering roof, the veranda  
 on which my whole family  
 used to spread sheets and sleep. (17)

Meanwhile his wife paints their house 'white' so that it can look brighter than the neighbours'. Situations become pathetic and ironical when she is beaten by her husband for her 'foolishness'. Now this miniature wish of his wife compels us to ponder over the beggarly life of poverty stricken and underprivileged persons. Have they no right even to smile in trivial jovial moments of their simple lives? The arrival of monsoon makes the situation worse and more piteous as it discolours not only the whitewash of the walls but also the flickering aspirations of having somewhat better life in future. The jubilation of farmers indicates that the same thing (monsoon) may be beneficial and deleterious simultaneously to varied persons. The poetess endeavours to manifest here that the penury and scarcity of substantial physical provisions can be an obstruction to the outright survival of an individual. Such unfavourable discrepancies which disturb the stability and worth of one's being, insist to explore perennial settlement-

I want to open my mouth like my son,  
 and swallow things whole-  
 feel water filling all the voids,

until I am shaped back into existence. (17)

As a crux of matter, Doshi possesses such poetic genius which opens the mind, feeds the imagination, teases us to ruminate and ultimately provides satiety and delight with her unique art. Her bizarre experiments regarding the poetic theme and artistic boldness empower her achievements and it can be seen in the necrophiliac fantasy of ‘Love in the Time of Autolysis’ (14) from the collection ‘Girls Are Coming Out of the Wood’. Here she again deals with one of her favourite concepts - the fragility of the body. The factual consequences of the dead body of being converted into ‘farm’ after death, provides her a bizarre but innovative theme to express it with poetic flavour. Actually, instead of having decay in toto, the corpse gets colonised by the microbes, known as the process of autolysis in Biology. In other words, another life begins from the deceased, which we usually think a complete pause or an ending. In the poem, the poetess intermingles two themes- celestial bond of eternal love and decay and decrepitude of the body. She does so just to emphasise the relation between human and the universe. Amazingly she has done poetic post mortem of the tender feeling in quite tranquil way. Though this love poem seems slightly gruesome because of its macabre tone yet it is charismatic as love is always powerful reciprocal. She utters-

The sky will be  
here soon to adorn her ears with you.  
She is jealous of our history, of our  
afternoons of whispered Ungaretti. (10)

With these words she endeavours to connect the microcosm to the macrocosm. The cosmos is within us and we are made of star stuff. We can think ourselves as infinitesimal individuals in span of life but in fact, our own entity is affixed to the cosmos. *Yajurveda* reveals this philosophy in one of *shlokas* that the structure of the human body reflects the structure of the cosmos. This conception suggests that human beings are not separate ones. They are the part of the network that has no beginning and no end. As is the physique, is the cosmos. About this mystic knowledge, Doshi expresses her views in Poetry Special Issue of The Punch Magazine - Writing these poems made me think about borders- porous and non- porous, inner and outer, micro and macro, the collapse between the you and the I.”

In a nut shell, her deep thoughts in poems cater us to ponder particularly about home and real abode, love, penchant, expectation and non-materialistic achievements as well as role of body and ideal identity in the universe. Amazing fact is that the source of all such baffling philosophies for her is the trash of routine life and daily detail. Dexterously, she brings them into the poetic realm and convert them into aesthetic poetic lines. In her view, poets are always ‘the seekers, the seers and the diviners’. Keeping this notion in her mind, she continues to observe, imbibe and pour out those minute, hidden facts which other people skip. Thus, her poems seek ways to ‘make visible the invisible’.

### Works Cited

- Doshi, Tishani. “A God at the Door”. Harper Collins, India, 2021.  
Doshi, Tishani “Countries of the Body”. Westland, 2008.

- Doshi, Tishani. "Everything Begins Elsewhere". Harper Collins, India, 2012.
- Doshi Tishani. "Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods". Harper Collins, India, 2017.
- Doshi, Tishani. "This May Reach You Either as a Bird or Flower". Poetry Special Issue, Jan 2021, (curated by Shireen Quadri and Nawaid Anjum) The Punch Magazine. <https://thepunchmagazine.com/the-byword/poetry/tishani-doshi-this-may-reach-you-either-as-a-bird-or-flower-and-other-new-poems> .
- Haider, Mariyam interviewed Tishani Doshi. "The Idea of home is always a fragile one." Asian Review of Books, 23 Feb.2020, <https://mariyamraza.medium.com> . accessed on 4 January 2022
- Rather, Feroz interviewed Tishani Doshi. "A Storm in the Body." Southeast Review, 18 November 2018, [www.southeastreview.org](http://www.southeastreview.org) . accessed on 29 December, 2021.
- Surdas. 'Sukhsagar' <http://kavitakosh.org> . accessed on 10 January, 2022.
- Tennyson, Alfred Lord. 'Ulysses'. <http://www.poetryfoundation.org> . accessed on 10 January, 2022.
- Wordsworth, William. "Select Poems of William Wordsworth". ed. William J. Rolfe. American Book Company, New York, Chicago, 1889.
- Wroe, Nicholas interviewed Tishani Doshi. "I can go out alone at night but the dangers don't go away." The Guardian, 27 July 2019, [www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com) . accessed on 31 December, 2021.