

Nakosha

They named me Nakosha
The Unwanted One
Then, just a solitary lightning strike
of crime perpetrated
by a rusted IUD that broke
in my mother's shriveled, spent womb,
I now grace countless covers
proud flagbearers of the coffee table brigade.

In my village surrounded
by smothering fluffy stone giants
the cold air congealing between our palms,
many apprehensive presences roam in bondage,
waiting for penetrative reality
to descend and snatch
chunks of flesh
all sense of self
all pain all joy,
independently felt.

But I am free unlike them others
for often I have heard mother
entreat the *chakwa* to do the needful
and save on the pomp, the loss
in wedding me off.

The minstrel man from the hills
was here last moon.
he eyes me from the mucous crusted corners
of arrogant male lust
proclaimed me Devi
far above a single soul's carnal needs,
had not the exalted
bound within city walls
granted me freedom already?

Now I remain free,
the *chakwa* long since appeased me
secure in the relief
that the hills will cart me off her hands soon
even if no one else will.

But passing down the village for water
I still feel this need
to tug strongly at my skirt
and cover the dirty secret
she says I hide,
Devi or not.

Maharashtra, India
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chakwa - evil spirit adept at misleading travelers into losing their way
Devi - goddess

Subasini Sakhare is a 22-year old student from Maharashtra state in India who has been, by her own word—"attempting" to write poetry in the past three years. One day she came across Women in Action at the office of a local women's organization, liked what she saw, and decided to send us one of her poems. Nakosha came to Subasini through the powerful cover of a UNESCO photo-book on the girl child in India.