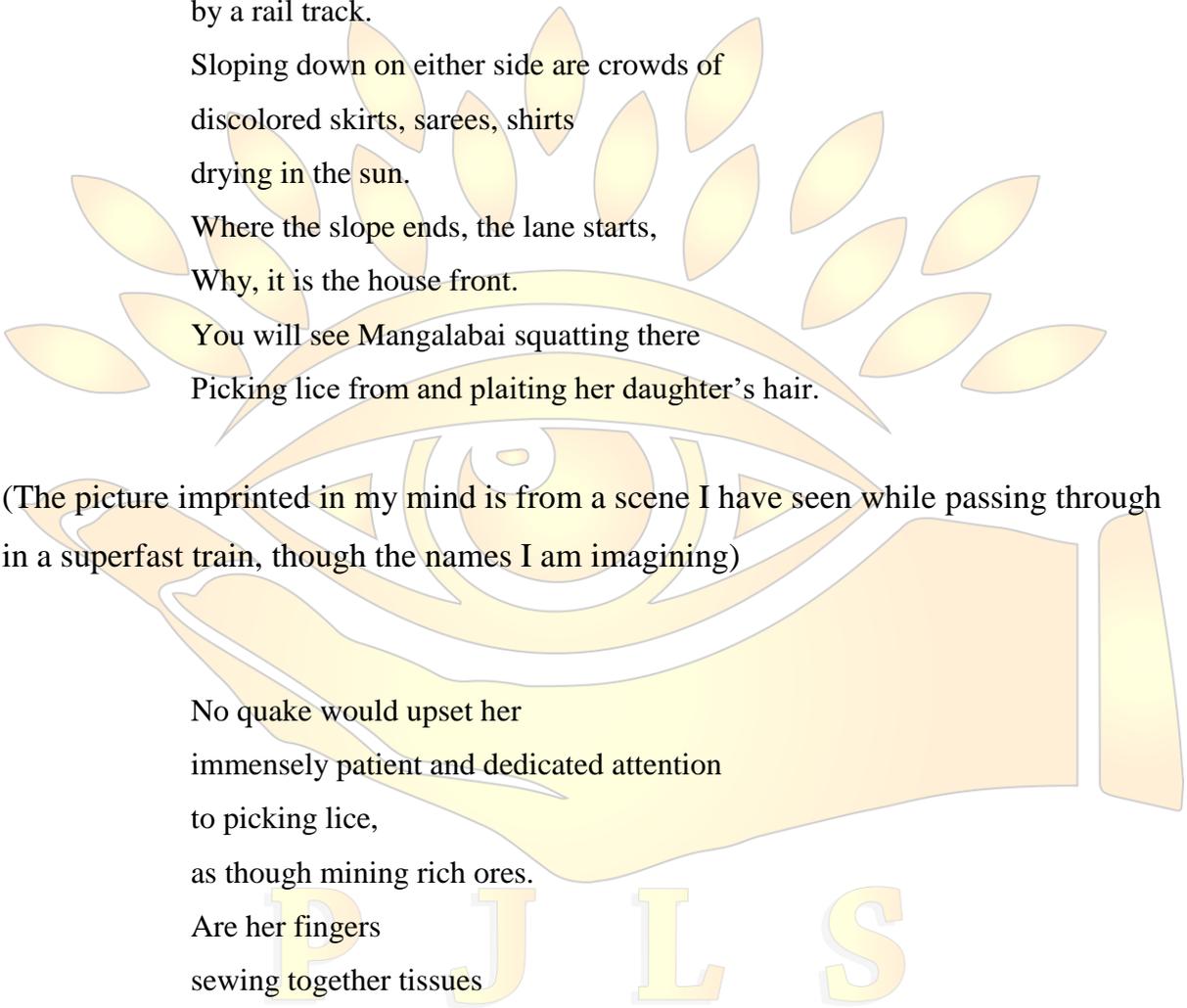


## 1. Imagining her and her Love

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The Rajiv Gandhi Colony is split  
by a rail track.  
Sloping down on either side are crowds of  
discolored skirts, sarees, shirts  
drying in the sun.  
Where the slope ends, the lane starts,  
Why, it is the house front.  
You will see Mangalabai squatting there  
Picking lice from and plaiting her daughter's hair.

(The picture imprinted in my mind is from a scene I have seen while passing through  
in a superfast train, though the names I am imagining)

No quake would upset her  
immensely patient and dedicated attention  
to picking lice,  
as though mining rich ores.  
Are her fingers  
sewing together tissues  
in a brain surgery?

(I have reached the station by now, been picked up by the company sedan, and  
cruising toward the office on Dole Patil road... the mother's fierce lice-picking  
concentration spurs my imagination... the child's name could be Meena)

They are framed by  
Their slum-dwellings  
Their furious strategies to survive the day  
the pitiless horizon of the city  
hearts ravaged by the anxieties of existence

(My vision is being fully absorbed by this picture)

City's bazaars, ponds, bewitching malls  
grand villas, grave highways...  
the hills, mountain peaks, deserts,  
and the oceans beyond them  
and the cloud, and the sun further beyond  
and the star-studded sky enveloping all these

Aren't as large as  
The rapt eyes  
intent upon lice-freeing her daughter's hair  
and... and...

her love.

\*\*

P J L S

## 2. Breaking bloody news

The road this noon is a hot arena  
Where small riches are scattered:  
A purse with one handle,  
A sandals ansthethumbloop  
an abandoned cloth bag  
stuffed with brinjals and green chilli,  
a walking stick with a curved grip,  
and a corpse  
streaming blood.

Some of the wounded  
sink  
in solitude into coma  
with no sign of help on the way.

Police, rifles, sloganeering organisers  
--all  
Have fled leaving this road to bear  
The sin of bloodshed  
All alone.

Present here with the fresh corpses  
Are the media  
Diligent and busy  
With the live  
Coverage of the  
gore.

And...

This poem.